

Dear Members of Scrutiny,

We are writing in response to your call for evidence in relation to your review of the proposed preferred access route to Overdale.

As residents of Westmount Road, we have been watching with increasing concern developments in relation to Overdale as the new hospital site and the use of Westmount Road as the primary access route.

We should point out that we fully understand and support the need for a new hospital in the right location. However, we believe it should be built on the most cost effective site which minimises the impact on both residents and the landscape / environment. It is our firm belief that the current proposals do not achieve these ends.

Westmount Road is a quiet, tranquil area with significant historical value. As a result of the proposals, irreversible damage will be done not only to Westmount Road, but also to surrounding areas including People's Park. Whilst well intentioned, the efforts to save People's Park now look like a futile exercise as the negative impact on People's Park will be hugely disadvantageous for its future use as a community amenity. This impact has never been fully explained to the residents of Jersey and People's Park as it is currently known and utilised as a green amenity space, will disappear, remaining as a diminished patch of grass surrounded by busy roads with a complete lack of parking.

In our view, there has been minimal effort to listen to or address our concerns and no engagement whatsoever to discuss the compulsory purchase of our property, despite the obvious impact on us.

As you can imagine, this episode has caused us considerable personal stress. As a mid-30s couple, we should be looking forward to some of the most exciting years of our lives. Instead all we are experiencing is stress, a future of disruption and sleepless nights over the next five years and beyond. I can count on one hand the number of decent nights' sleep we have had since the announcement of the preferred access route.

We, like many other people were shocked and concerned with the minimal time the States Assembly actually took to discuss the proposition in identifying Overdale as the preferred option last November. It can hardly be called a debate, as it almost passed 'on the nod' with little discussion or questioning. This is despite the obvious lack of transparency and factual information, particularly with regard to the lack of availability of the costs of the proposed access route that is a key element of the biggest infrastructure project Jersey will arguably ever undertake.

Are all members of the States Assembly even familiar with Westmount Road and what the access route proposals and the Overdale build will entail? I cannot conclude they can be, given the amount of available transparent information and the length of the debate. We feel that one of the problems throughout the process of choosing a new hospital site has been a total lack of consultation and taking account of the views of Islanders. It is as though this has been a singular campaign and opposing views have been rushed through or cast aside negating any effective engagement on effective consultation and decision making. There have been significant views and bodies opposing Overdale and the access to the proposed new hospital, but people I have spoken to, and ourselves as residents who will be directly impacted with both the hospital and the proposed access route, feel we have been hitting our heads against a brick wall. This was compounded by the insult we felt of the lack of a proper debate in November when the time set aside was ignored and, for what could well be want of expediency as the hospital saga has been going on for far too long, has resulted in what, in our opinion and the opinion of many others we have spoken to, poor decision making that will have significant negative impact of the Island both in financial and environmental terms.

As taxpayers, the direct impact on us notwithstanding, we are also hugely concerned at the financial implications of Overdale and the Westmount Road access route. We simply do not believe that given the work involved, that either the access route or hospital build will be completed within the quoted budget.

The proposed access route will remove the bowling club from its site, significantly reduce the amenity which is People's Park, destroy the historic aspects of Westmount Road itself, impact negatively of the visual aspects for people living in the new apartments opposite People's Park, destroy the homes and environment for people living in Castle View and Hillcrest and cause considerable congestion for traffic when the hospital and crematorium are taken into account. Parking is chaotic at present when there is a service taking place at the Crematorium, so with the added congestion caused by hospital traffic, the scenario is going to be unbelievable.

Access for pedestrians and cyclists is going to be extremely difficult and for many impossible, particularly for the aged and infirm who would have to navigate a very steep hill or flights of steep steps. The plans do not take account of Island Green objectives either in terms of building the access route or travel to a new facility.

At a time of economic crisis, compounded by the latest shut down of the economy, the considerable costs involved in the Westmount Road access route and Overdale simply cannot be justified. Why have other more viable sites with better access that don't require the same level of compulsory purchase, such as Warwick Farm or St Saviour's Hospital, not been given proper consideration? Jersey is hardly a large Island and locations other than at Overdale, either in St. Helier or outside it, can have quick and easy access at a fraction of the cost that Overdale will incur. You will be in a far better position than us to consider whether due process has been followed, but it appears Overdale and Westmount Road as the primary access route was pre-determined from the start and arguments were constructed to that end.

Thank you for listening to our concerns and we appreciate the work Scrutiny is doing to both review and challenge the decisions made to date. We are happy to provide further information or discuss directly as required.