STATES OF JERSEY

PEOPLE'S PARK: REMOVAL FROM LIST OF SITES UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR FUTURE NEW HOSPITAL (P.3/2016) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 16th February 2016
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers calls upon States Members to reject the proposition.

Ministers do not wish States Members to remove choice from the Public of Jersey on such a key matter – one that will affect not just current generations, but generations to come, particularly as formal public consultation on the site options has not yet started.

In relation to the People's Park option presented during the current public engagement, a balance must be struck in Islanders' best interests between what works best as an excellent hospital, and ensuring that the appropriate amount of open space is available for residents in that Parish.

Ministers want all of the Public of Jersey to be able to give their views on whether that balance has been achieved by including the People's Park site option as one of those in the public consultation, and urge States Members to support the Public's right to do so.

1. Introduction

The site selection process for the future hospital has been a long and challenging one for both this and the previous Council of Ministers. The process has been necessarily extensive and exhaustive, and Ministers make no apology for taking the time to ensure that a sufficiently robust process has been followed for such a key decision for the future of the Island.

It is incorrect to suggest, as the proposition implies, that Ministers have not kept the States and the Public aware of their progress in site selection – the Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Social Services, and Minister for Treasury and Resources have all updated States Members and the Public at different times and in different fora in the past year, and this has received wide media attention.

Similarly, clinical directors and staff in the hospital have been highly engaged during 2014 and 2015 in the development of the acute service strategy and operational policies that have been prepared for, and have informed the specification of, the future hospital.

Ministers have been concerned about the cost and affordability of the future hospital, and have therefore taken steps to ensure that the size and scope of the hospital has been robustly challenged. This has resulted in significant reductions in the size of the proposed hospital needed to meet future demand, whilst retaining scope for future flexibility and expansion if required.

It is also the case that many of the elements that inform the decision are of a commercial nature that, if made public, would fundamentally undermine the ability of the States to run a competitive procurement process in due course. Unstructured release of any of these key commercial assumptions could easily cost the Island tens of millions of pounds.

Ministers required a fair and independent technical assessment process to be undertaken to ensure that the site evaluation would be fully robust and free from undue political influence. This has necessitated a 3-phase assessment process, with potential sites being subjected to site screening, and then a long-listing and short-listing assessment process,

with increasing levels of detailed assessment before political consideration of the outcome at each stage.

Ministers and officers have consulted with the Connétable and Officers of the Parish of St. Helier in confidence at each key stage of the site selection process – in 2012 on the initial short-list (when People's Park was reviewed as a location for an underground car park only to support an Overdale-based hospital); in 2013 on the previously preferred dual-site hospital at Overdale and the current General Hospital; and in 2015 when it became clear that a further site – People's Park – was worthy of detailed consideration.

Given that all of the short-listed sites are located in the Parish so as to be quickly accessible to the majority of the population, Ministers believe such consultation is critical to ensure that the Parish is fully aware of developments and can comment and influence the project approach and intent in the interests of its Parishioners. A partnership approach with the States and Parish working together for the regeneration of the hospital and the Parish must surely be in the best public interest.

Therefore Ministers consider it disappointing that the Proposition seeks to hinder such public debate and consideration before the facts have been made public. They would encourage the Connétable to engage with the public consultation in a positive and open-minded way, as Ministers will continue to do.

The extensive engagement and consultation process needed to ensure we choose the right site for the Island is underway. Given the momentous nature of the eventual commitment to a new hospital for the Island, the selection of the preferred site is a crucial one.

Therefore, this proposition is not a sensible one for States Members to support, as it could effectively remove one of the best-performing sites from further consideration, without the Public having an opportunity to consider its merits/demerits alongside those of other proposed sites. It would deprive States Members of the opportunity to take into account Islanders' views on the site.

2. Open space in St. Helier

Ministers acknowledge and appreciate the current level and importance of open space provision in St. Helier and its value for all Islanders, and this has informed key proposals within the Strategic Plan for the regeneration of St. Helier.

Ministers recognise the role the Connétable of St. Helier has played in seeking new open space and protecting existing areas in the Parish, and agree that such protection and new provision is a critical part of a thriving and healthy Island.

However, identifying the best future hospital for the Island is a 'once in several generations' decision – given that the life-cycle of the hospital is anticipated to be between 50–60 years. Such long-term decisions are taken infrequently; and this one is similar in scale for example, to that taken to develop the Queen's Valley Reservoir. Such decisions therefore require extensive public debate and consideration – not the premature closing-down of viable options.

All Islanders will depend upon a new hospital at key moments in their lives. Ministers therefore reluctantly accepted, having examined the alternatives in detail, that open

spaces would have to be considered as potential sites, always on the understanding that compensatory provision would be provided in each case.

Several public open spaces have therefore been reviewed for hospital suitability, and one, People's Park, has been short-listed and performs well against the alternatives. Ministers have examined and challenged in detail the proposed compensatory public open space that could be offered in exchange for People's Park, and believe Islanders should now be given the chance to decide whether this site offers the most suitable site for a future hospital for Jersey.

3. The value of People's Park

Ministers recognise and acknowledge the significance of People's Park – both as a historic space (hence its recent listing by the Department of the Environment) and as an important event space in St. Helier – and agree that the Park is highly valued by Islanders, as evidenced by the recent extensive public comment. Therefore, once People's Park was being considered for the short-list in October 2015, Ministers required the development of very significant compensatory open space proposals, including provision for equivalent large set-piece events, before accepting that the option could be put forward for public consultation on a comparable basis with the other short-listed sites.

The Connétable suggests that he cannot envisage how such compensatory provision would ever be acceptable to his Parishioners. Ministers respectfully suggest that they and all Islanders should be given the opportunity to consider the case for alternative open space provision with a more fulsome and detailed understanding of what is proposed and of the reasons why a future hospital is so critically needed and why People's Park is therefore one of the short-listed sites.

In summary –

- People's Park is the only short-listed site that would enable a hospital with optimal clinical departmental arrangements to be developed – a fact confirmed both by our own hospital clinical leaders and independent assessment (by Gleeds Management Services). Ministers consider this to be a critical factor for the long-term safety, sustainability and affordability of our future hospital.

- People's Park is one of only 3 of the short-listed sites that would be located in an area with excellent access and transport arrangements. Given the importance of such issues to patients, visitors and hospital staff, Ministers consider this option worthy of much further consideration by the Public.

- People's Park offers one of only 3 short-listed locations within the central built-up area of sufficient size and suitable location to develop a hospital quickly and affordably. Whilst the capital cost is not the only key consideration in developing a hospital that must operate efficiently for between 50–60 years, Ministers and hospital leaders consider that the current poor condition of the hospital means that this is a critical factor in identifying the best site for our future hospital.

Given these findings alone, recommending that this option is ruled out of further consideration prior to public consultation appears premature in the extreme.

4. Rumoured compensation

Ministers were surprised at the wording of the Proposition around compensatory park provision relating to the short-listed People's Park option. It was the intent of the private consultation with the Connétable of St. Helier last October to give the Connétable opportunity to make Ministers aware of what the Parish might consider appropriate compensation if the site was to be taken forward. During the meeting, the Connétable indicated what he believed might be appropriate.

Ministers believe that States Members and the Public would expect them to consider every opportunity in proposing both the short-list of sites for a new hospital, and also any associated compensatory proposals, and would understand that this should be conducted with due courtesy for the owners and custodians of sites.

It was the intent of Ministers to engage in a dialogue with the Parish to help shape and improve the proposals for the Public. However, once it became clear that the Connétable wished to make the content of the confidential discussions public, further meaningful discussion could not continue, and therefore compensatory proposals had to be developed in private until Ministers were satisfied that these provided reasonable compensation.

Now Ministers are satisfied, extensive public engagement on the short-listed hospital sites has commenced prior to the proposed formal public consultation. This consultation will include consideration of compensatory provisions required at all short-listed sites to enable the Public and States Members to consider these in the round before Ministers recommend their preferred site to the States Assembly.

In relation to the 3 open space sites included in the Proposition –

- Ministers did contemplate the Waterfront temporary car park site (which is also part of one of the short-listed sites for the future hospital) as potential compensation on the recommendation of the Connétable of St. Helier. However, Ministers were persuaded by the argument that better overall public open space provision could be provided by retaining the open space proposals already envisaged in the Waterfront Masterplan, in addition to significant compensatory park land elsewhere. They were concerned that there would be an element of public uncertainty in relation to the relative benefits of different options if 2 short-listed sites included the Waterfront temporary car park site. The People's Park option and proposed compensatory measures, if preferred following public consultation, would not affect the current Waterfront Masterplan in any way.

- In relation to the current General Hospital site (The Parade and Gloucester Street), Ministers disagree with the Proposition and consider that a substantial extension of the Parade could offer an event space of equivalent size, importance and quality to People's Park. Linkage with Parade Gardens could offer a significant, high-quality and strategically important park space with flexibility for many new types and themes of activities and events in a more central accessible location that could encourage even greater use than People's Park. Whilst the distinctive nature of People's Park could never be replicated,

new opportunities present themselves from this potential Parade Ground Park, that Ministers consider worthy of further public consideration.

- In relation to Gas Place, the Proposition implies that a public open space should happen here anyway, and not be linked with hospital development. Whilst the Proposition might hope this to be the case, the reality is that with public finances facing ever greater challenges, there is unlikely to be any foreseeable opportunity to pay for such a development unless it were to be part of the compensatory provision for the People's Park short-listed site. Ministers believe that, should the People's Park option be preferred, a park at Gas Place would offer the opportunity to address the shortfall in play, natural and community open space in the east of St. Helier. This could only be contemplated given the value for money of the People's Park short-listed option relative to the other short-listed alternatives and, to be clear for States Members, is not proposed in relation to any other short-listed hospital option.

5. Financial and manpower implications

Contrary to the Proposition, removing People's Park as a short-listed hospital site option has significant workforce and financial implications.

People's Park has been independently assessed as the short-listed site requiring the lowest capital investment.

Similarly, as the best-performing short-listed option in relation to clinical efficiency, People's Park offers workforce efficiencies that have been independently assessed (by Gleeds Management Services) as good as any other of the short-listed alternatives.

Therefore, were the States Assembly to agree to the premature removal of People's Park as an option, this could eliminate a high-performing financial and workforce option from the short-list prior to any public consultation taking place. This appears rash given the significant financial challenges facing the States of Jersey in years ahead.

6. Conclusion

The Proposition suggests that it is inconceivable that a compensatory package of open space could be found for the use of People's Park as the site for a new hospital, and that this is sufficient reason for requesting its exclusion from the site selection consideration altogether.

Ministers have had to consider <u>all</u> meaningful options for a future hospital and their consequences, when developing the short-list for our new hospital, and therefore want the Public and States Members to do the same before ruling out any option prematurely.

Ministers wish States Members to give the Public of Jersey the opportunity to consider the alternative open space proposals for People's Park, which they consider to be accessible, versatile and robust.

Ministers believe these should be considered, together with the proposals for the other 4 short-listed sites during a full and meaningful consultation period in accordance with States' best practice.

Adopting this proposition would deny all Islanders the opportunity to consider for themselves an option that has considerable merit.

The Council of Ministers calls upon States Members to reject the Proposition because –

- Ministers do not wish to remove choice from the Public of Jersey on such a key matter, particularly as the public consultation on the site option is yet to commence – all of us should have a say in where our future hospital goes.

- Ministers would prefer that the formal consultation is concluded and that States Members have had the opportunity to review its findings *before* a debate on any of the considered future hospital sites takes place – inclusion of People's Park as an option in public consultation will make for a better site decision by the States Assembly.

- The removal of the People's Park site option on grounds that the compensatory park provision would not be adequate pre-empts public consideration of this compensation in the forthcoming consultation.

- Ministers commenced a public engagement on 2nd February 2016, with a view to initiating a formal public consultation in March. Ministers believe the Public will want to have their say in the light of all pertinent information duly considered, before States Members determine a preferred option – anything less is not good consultation practice.

- The premature removal of the People's Park site option would eliminate the best-performing clinical option prior to public consultation taking place.

- It is for the Council of Ministers to propose the site for a new or refurbished hospital to the States Assembly under the requirements of the re-design of Health and Social Services, as agreed by the States in adopting P.82/2012 *(Health and Social Services: A New Way Forward)* on 23rd October 2012; and Ministers committed to do so in their joint response to the Report of the former Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel, S.R.10/2014 Res., presented to the States on 29th September 2014.

- If, following formal and appropriate public consultation, the People of Jersey do not wish to develop their new hospital on People's Park, this will be very clear from the outcome of the public consultation. However, removal of the People's Park option *now* by States Members would deprive Islanders of this choice in advance of the public consultation.

Note:
For the avoidance of doubt, the Minister for the Environment has not taken part in Ministerial Decision-making relating to the short-listing of sites, as he is likely to have a role in determining an application for planning permission on any of the short-listed sites.
Planning officers have provided some guidance on matters of planning policy to inform the process, but this has been absolutely on the understanding that those discussions are without prejudice to the consideration of any application for planning permission. The Department of the Environment's Geographical Information System and St. Helier 3D model have been utilised to help visualise each of the short-listed options and assist in the site selection process.