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To Our Friends of Friends

Bulletin 3: The Our Hospital Site Selection Farce

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Al Thomas's week



(Reproduced with the Kind Permission of the Artist)

Al Thomas's wonderful cartoon in last Friday's edition of the JEP says it all. Little did he realise when he drew it that it would be published immediately in advance of the Government's announcement of the withdrawal of three of the five sites from the Our Hospital (OH) sites shortlist.

The OH site selection process was clearly flawed from the outset when it became clear that the selection panel was made up entirely of non-Jersey bureaucrats. For reasons best known to themselves, this panel pointedly mis-evaluated the various sites against the criteria carefully set out by the Citizen's Panel. This slight-of-hand then enabled the removal of both the St Saviour's Hospital and Warwick Farm sites (highly appropriate sites, shortlisted since 2011) and the inclusion of three (highly inappropriate) sites that the panel never intended to be taken seriously; Five Oaks, Millbrook or St Andrew's Park.

These were clearly included to elicit the adverse responses that they received, resulting in their obvious and predictable removal, narrowing the field to just Overdale and Peoples' Park.

It is our view that the someone in the States should lodge a proposition to have Warwick Farm and St Saviours Hospital included in the shortlist. If the Political Oversight Group (POG) can remove three sites, the POG can add two sites, especially ones that are States owned and large enough to build an uncompromised OH.

The Peoples' Park

However, do not think that Overdale is a 'done deal'. There is a strong belief, particularly among the Council of Minister politicians and those on the POG, that the OH should be built on Peoples' Park

It should not and Connétable Crowcroft is, quite rightly, very protective of it. There will be a very public fight over this and so there should be. Peoples' Park, an area of 22,784m², has been rejected twice by the States as a site for the OH, in 2017 and 2019. It is a heavily compromised site, requiring a two-storey basement, topped, according to the project team's 'Kit of Parts'¹, by a six-storey main hospital. Again, according to the project team it only has limited room for expansion (15%) and its parking will be remote, in Patriotic Street car park. Imagine what that will be like with the elderly and young mothers, children in tow, struggling through the backstreets of St Helier to access our new, compromised hospital during the winter gales?

It gets worse. In 1947 the General Hospital consisted of the granite building on Gloucester Street. The hospital, as we know it today, was completed in 1987, forty years later. The new hospital is scheduled to have a 45-60-year life. A hospital is a building which is never finished, it is constantly evolving. Are we really going to build Jersey's largest ever capital infrastructure project on a compromised site when a compromise is not a solution?

Overdale

Overdale will be the most expensive site to develop. It will require a new entrance from the Inner Road, through the King George V Homes and an 800 space, multi storey car park built into the hillside to the east of the King George V Homes. And that is only the start. The site will have to be demolished and levelled with the two fields to the east, across the existing road to be purchased, presumably compulsorily, giving a total site area of 97,349 m².

The original plan was for ROK-FCC, the Jersey and Spanish consortium contractor charged with developing the OH, to survey the five sites to assess which was the best site and, most importantly, the cheapest to develop. That aspiration has clearly gone. With active opposition from three Connétables and with reports and propositions to be taken in the States on Tuesday 8th September, the politicians on the POG were between a rock and a hard place and had to act.

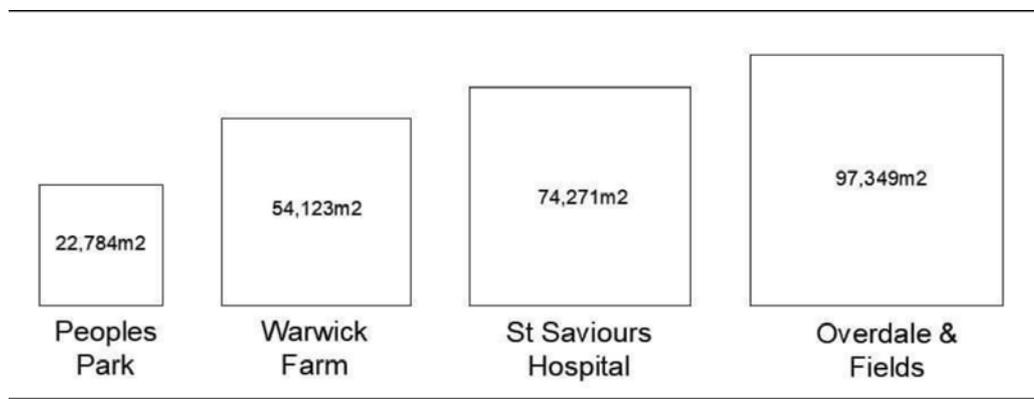
¹<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Planning%20and%20building/ID%20Our%20Hospital%20Kit%20of%20Parts%20report%2020200722%20CB.pdf>

Summary

A comparison of the site sizes in square meters (m²) is set out below. The Peoples' Park is neither big enough nor good enough to construct the OH on. It is compromised. If the eventual site is Overdale, we could have worked that out eighteen months ago. Thus, we have wasted time that we do not have and more money, although not nearly as much as the £45 million that was wasted on the last Future Hospital Project.

The dismissal of Warwick Farm and St Saviour's hospital sites by our bureaucrats is plainly wrong and all three sites (Overdale, Warwick Farm and St Saviour's hospital) should be tested by ROK-FCC for their geological suitability, their cost of development evaluated and the results then presented to the States for a final decision.

Site Areas in Ascending Area



(Sources: Peoples' Park & Overdale: "Our Hospital Site Shortlisting Report" July 2020; Warwick Farm & St Saviours Hospital: "W S Atkins-Currie Brown-Fusion Report" May 2013.)

As always, we invite your comments and suggestions.

"Friends of Our New Hospital"

Chair - Brigadier Bruce Willing CBE

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