

Future Hospital development proposal – planning decision Q and A

1. Why has the independent inspector, Philip Staddon, recommended that the application for a new hospital development is turned down?

In his report on the public inquiry concerning application [P/2017/0990](#) for a new hospital development, the inspector states the proposal raises some serious planning objections that weigh against it in broad areas:

- the serious negative impacts the hospital development would have on the St Helier townscape and the visual amenities of the area
- the detrimental impact on numerous protected heritage assets
- harm to the amenities of neighbouring residential properties.

The inspector describes the proposed hospital development as ‘grossly out of scale... an over dominant, obtrusive and alien structure’. He considers the site area for the new building is ‘far too small’ for the floor space proposed, and regards the design as ‘fundamentally unacceptable’. He adds that ‘these are not measures that can be finessed away by clever design’ at a later stage.

In summary, the inspector offers support for the view that this is a suitable location for a new hospital – but not with these particular constraints and scope.

2. How did the independent inspector Philip Staddon reach his conclusions?

The inspector led a comprehensive planning assessment of the future hospital development proposals. This included site visits and a week-long public hearing in November 2017. There were 75 submissions to the inquiry. Following the public inquiry, the inspector has published an extensive report on his findings.

3. Why did the Minister decide to refuse the hospital development application?

The Minister accepted the case made by the applicant on the grounds of need, and the points made by the independent inspector’s public inquiry report about the existing site being a suitable location for a hospital. However, Deputy Steve Luce noted the comments of the inspector, that the proposed development would result in serious and lasting harm to the townscape of St Helier, to the historic environment and to nearby homes.

Furthermore, having considered the public inquiry report carefully, reviewed the evidence, and inspected the hospital site and plans again before making his decision, the Minister, Deputy Steve Luce, does not think the scheme as proposed is the only

possible solution. He has decided there is not sufficient justification to go against the States-approved Island Plan and accept such far-reaching negative consequences. In an accompanying Ministerial Decision confirming his decision to refuse the application, the Minister says 'The application site proposed is too small for a building of this size, although other combinations of land, and/or project phasing, could result in a different outcome. This would require a re-appraisal of the rules set by the Hospital Project Board, but is outside the scope of the consideration of this planning application.'

4. Could the Minister for the Environment go against the inspector's recommendation and approve the application?

Yes, decision makers can agree applications that go against the Island Plan if there is sufficient justification for doing so – in this case, that no other site and type of building were suitable. That hasn't been shown to be the case. Furthermore, it would require an acceptance of the serious planning harm and conflicts with the Island Plan that the inspector identified.

5. How long did the Minister take to review the inspector's report on the public inquiry?

The Department of the Environment received the report on Tuesday 2 January 2018 and it was given to the Minister on Wednesday 3 January. He made his official decision on Tuesday 9 January 2018.

6. Is the location itself acceptable for a new hospital?

Yes and the inspector's report acknowledges this. The Island Plan also clearly supports the principle of healthcare development on existing healthcare sites, as long as it is designed to integrate into the existing character and grain of the town and be relevant to the townscape of St Helier.

7. How has the Department of the Environment, as the planning authority, been involved in the new hospital project?

All applicants can get pre-application advice from the department. In this case, the applicant had assembled a project team that included professional advisors to assist in their decision-making process. Officers from the Department of the Environment worked with the project team from an early stage and provided feedback on the planning issues as relevant to the shortlisted sites. Planners also provided frequent input as the specific proposals emerged, with the planning risks identified and clear to those involved from the

outset.

8. The States Assembly agreed this site last year, what were expectations for the design of the new building?

The [proposition P110/2016](#) lodged on 19 October 2016 by the Council of Ministers agreed the current location as the preferred site and highlighted the following: 'The Future Hospital will enable the States of Jersey to create a legacy that respects, but does not revere, the past: a new building with a design quality reflecting the optimism with which the Island looks to the future. It will also be one that re-purposes the old to provide a foundation for the regeneration of part of St. Helier, both through the development of a health campus and through restoring to the public realm the setting of the original Hospital building.'

9. What was the Department of the Environment's guidance at this point?

A summary of advice from the Department's planning officers was included in proposition P110/2016 as follows: 'The Department has indicated that there are key policies within the Island Plan that support the choice of the proposed site in principle; but that there are challenges directly associated with the scale of the project that any proposal must address in order to be supported.'

Essentially, the public inquiry report and recommendations, and Ministerial Decision on the application has confirmed that the current scheme does not satisfactorily address those challenges.

10. What was the view of the Jersey Architecture Commission on the design?

The Jersey Architecture Commission stated its concern about the height and massing of the building. It advised 'The sheer scale, mass and height of this building remain a major challenge for the design team and a major concern for the Commission despite this being the focus of future health care in Jersey.'

11. How has the Minister for the Environment informed himself about this issue so he can make an independent decision based on facts?

The Minister, Deputy Steve Luce, views this as one of the most important decisions he has had to make during his time in office and has responded to this responsibility with the seriousness it warrants.

The Minister has considered the inspector's report very carefully. He has had several full briefings with officers, read the extensive documentation associated with the application process and the

public inquiry, and visited the site. Having taken all of this into consideration, he then took a number of days to make his decision to try to ensure it is in the interests of the people of Jersey.

The Minister acknowledges the need for a new hospital and supports its development. He is also aware that an enormous amount of work has gone into the development of this proposal. However, the report and recommendations make it abundantly clear that the positive weight given to the location of the proposed new hospital development is heavily outweighed by the serious negative impacts on the St Helier townscape, listed buildings and residential amenities.

ENDS