



MEETING OF JOINT OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, 27th October 2016

OPENING STATEMENT

From CONNOLLY FOR KIDS HOSPITAL GROUP
Submitted 24th October 2016

We are here to alert you to the consequences of the gravely mistaken decision to locate the new Children's Hospital on the St. James's site and we want to expose the ongoing political sham of trying to defend the indefensible.

It seems that only members of a medical and academic inner circle and some politicians are refusing to recognise the scale of the disaster to come if this is allowed to proceed. A Red C poll found that 73% of the public think St. James's is the wrong site, 19 City and County Councils agree, as do almost all health care professionals. A staff survey in Crumlin Hospital in November 2015 showed that 84% thought St. James's was not the best site for the Children's Hospital. Well over 60,000 people signed a petition (given to the Taoiseach last July) requesting that the Children's Hospital be built at the site of the Connolly Teaching Hospital in Blanchardstown beside the M50 and that the Children's Satellite Urgent Care Centre (which is planned for Connolly), be built instead at St. James's. In other words: Flip the Sites.

We want to categorically state that flipping the sites would SAVE TIME, SAVE MONEY and, crucially, it would SAVE lives. The hospital can, if there is the political will to do it, be constructed at Connolly within three years from the date of the decision and at a saving of approximately €200M. If the sites are 'flipped', work already undertaken at St. James's would not be wasted. Crucially - the Connolly site also offers space to grow, which is just not available at St. James.

We recognise that the job of the Hospital Development Board is to get the hospital built on the site chosen by Government. They had no part to play in site

selection but unfortunately, have been put in a position where they appear to feel they have to make false and misleading statements to counter valid criticisms and major shortcomings of the site. A national advertising campaign in local area newspapers last month was riddled with incorrect statements. How are people like Liam McEntee's parents from Galway to feel about their needs being dismissed by the Board's cavalier attitude "only 1.45% of inpatients come from Galway"?

FLAWED DECISION

It is most important for the Committee to know that the An Bord Pleanála decision cannot be used to justify the choice of site. It was a decision based solely on planning law. It avoided considering how the Children's Hospital would function - it was not the Board's role to determine whether the building was fit for purpose as a hospital now or into the future. That responsibility lies with the Department of Health.

We wish to point out that no report, either national or international, ever recommended the St. James's site - NONE.

The reason given for choosing the St. James's site was '*the over-riding priority of best clinical outcomes for our children*'. This reason had no basis in fact and no evidence could be found to support it.

More recently, the person who recommended the St. James's site to Cabinet, Senator James Reilly, said that the '*primary clinical driver*', for the decision, was that children with very rare diseases could be treated by St. James's Adult Hospital consultants and not have to travel abroad. This is false, and it is nonsensical.

There is no evidence of ANY advantage for child patients if a children's hospital is built beside an adult hospital.

We wish now to highlight a few of the important issues in addressing the location of a Children's Hospital which is to last well into the 22nd century.

MATERNITY CO-LOCATION

The critical co-location for a Children's Hospital is with a Maternity Hospital, NOT an adult hospital. As advised by the most senior paediatric intensive care specialists in the country, to proceed with the Children's Hospital without a co-

located Maternity Hospital will result in avoidable deaths and disability of many new-born babies.

We contend that it is simply not possible to construct a full service Maternity Hospital_ at St. James's without negatively impacting on the functioning of the other hospitals on the site. An Bord Pleanála specifically excluded assessment of whether a maternity hospital would fit on the site. The Committee will be interested to hear that the area identified for the 'notional' Maternity Hospital is half the size of the existing Coombe site. Furthermore, this small site would have to be shared in a nine story building with an Emergency Department, an Intensive Care Unit and new Facilities Management hub- all for the Adult Hospital.

The obvious optimum location for the Children's Hospital is beside the new Rotunda Maternity Hospital which will be built at Connolly.

SPACE FOR EXPANSION

This is a fundamental consideration in all hospital development world-wide. The Children's Hospital in Toronto doubled in size every 10 years since the 50's. Crumlin increased by 75% in 15 years. However, it turns out that before a brick is laid the Children's Hospital is too small.

The severe lack of space on the site means that many important elements of the build have had to be scaled down - the Children's Research building and the Family Accommodation Unit are already smaller than was requested, with no expansion space for either building.

The size of the paediatric laboratory has been described as "Too small - akin to placing an engine for a Mercedes into a Mini - impossible" by senior scientists in Temple St. It appears designed to fail.

Only 41 additional beds will be provided despite a projected growth in patient numbers of 13% between 2012 and 2021. By the time it opens it will already have proportionately fewer beds than in 2012. Because of lack of space, the cut-off age for admission is the eve of the 16th , not the 18th, birthday.

COSTS AND DELAYS

We know it is 25% cheaper to build on a green field site than in an urban location. The St. James's site is particularly costly due to the amount of preparatory work required - 13 functioning Adult Hospital departments have to

be demolished to make room for the Children's Hospital, a multiplicity of underground cabling requires re-routing once it is accurately located. The relocation of the Drimnagh sewer alone will cost approximately €18M. What's most shocking is that due to the extensive excavation required, the cost of each additional parking space being provided at St. James's is over €130,000. In contrast, the cost of each surface parking space at Connolly would be €2,000. How could such extraordinary spending on parking spaces be justified when such money could be used for medical equipment? The €200M saved if the sites are flipped is more than enough to build the new Rotunda Maternity Hospital. It's impossible to envisage a fully functioning children's hospital opening in 2020 as promised. It's quite simply not going to happen - there is evidence of delay already. Delays cost money - and in this case they cost lives.

ACCESS AND PARKING

Access to the St. James's site is a major problem. We know that 90% of child patients arrive by car. The narrow roads around St. James's are so congested that ambulances are regularly blocked and cannot get past other vehicles. The Air and Sea Rescue Helicopter can't land at St. James's because the site is too small, in fact, there's not even space for a taxi rank.

Parking at St. James's will pose enormous problems for parents of sick children. Despite the Hospital Development Board claiming that parking spaces will be trebled, the parking provision at St. James's turns out to be worse than what was on offer at Crumlin alone in 2010. The Adult Hospital will lose over 600 spaces. There will be NO parking spaces at all for the 'notional' maternity hospital - NONE.

STAFFING

We agree with the CEO of the Hospital Group Board on one point alone. She has, at last, admitted that there will be serious staffing problems. Clinical excellence requires excellent staff. However, staff are already leaving the adult hospital in droves. What lies ahead for the Children's?

SOLUTION

Connolly is the ideal site - though none so blind as those who will not see. It offers 145 acres for tri-location of Children's, Maternity and Adult hospitals

and future expansion of all three, with 50 acres to be retained as parkland. The M50 has a hard-shoulder which emergency vehicles may use. Connolly is on a slip road off the M50/N3 Interchange.

Following the economic crash we were told that "*We are where we are, because no one shouted 'Stop!'*". Actually, many did, but no one wanted to hear it. We are shouting 'Stop' and we will continue to shout until reason prevails. We know this hospital will fail - with terrible consequences. If you allow it to happen, you will share responsibility for those consequences.

We ask you to urge the Minister for Health to make the right choice for the Children of Ireland and immediately set in motion the process of flipping the sites - the Children's Hospital to be re-sited at Connolly and the smaller Urgent Care Centre to be located at St. James's.

If the Minister fails to do so he should know with certainty that he will be responsible for the deaths of many children and the avoidable anguish of countless parents - your constituents, who will not forget that the blame for this decision cannot be parked at the door of An Bord Pleanála. Your constituents will remember that you, the politicians, had the power to change it and didn't.

End.