

Why does Great Ormond Street Hospital continue to develop the Great Ormond Street site?

The above is the title GOSH have given to their recent (22/12/22) addition to their application for a new Children's Cancer Centre. In it they give two main reasons for why it is essential for them to develop their existing site, with special reference to Phase 4 of their (unpublished) development master plan. These are that moving away from where they are would mean:

1. *duplication of the significant financial investment in existing buildings and equipment on the site*
2. *clearly compromis[ing] the world leading clinical work that GOSH undertakes locally, nationally and internationally, in the field of children's healthcare*

These are retrospective arguments. The key, underlying issue of where space for future growth can be found on the existing site is simply not discussed.

GOSH says:

- *There are over 60 different clinical specialties at GOSH; the UK's widest range of specialist health services for children on one site.*

New medical specialties have arisen constantly since the Hospital was founded, and will continue to do so, probably at an accelerating rate as the possibilities of gene therapy expand in most clinical specialties. There will also be completely new specialties: for example, it is certain that Covid will be followed by other pandemics and that these will give rise to new specialties like treatment for long-covid's successors, or the psychiatric and behavioural consequences of lockdowns. **Where will these specialties be housed?**

- *More than half of our patients are referred to us from outside London and a small proportion come from overseas.*

GOSH sees extending its national and international reach as a key objective. The 'small proportion' of overseas patients, besides bringing substantial treatment fees, also leads to very substantial charitable donations – the Zayed Centre for example attracted donations of over £60,000,000.

Expansion means more beds, and while the confusingly named Children's Cancer Centre – evidently not just for cancer patients – will provide some, attracting more patients will naturally create a demand for more wards. **Where will the space come from?**

- *Our vision, which sets our direction, is helping children with complex health needs fulfil their potential.*

Great Ormond Street, like Holborn as a whole, has high levels of pollution – the AccuWeather record for today (9 January) says current air quality is 'Fair' but that 'sensitive groups may experience minor to moderate symptoms from long-term exposure'.

GOSH's patients are more than 'sensitive' – most are acutely ill. GOSH says: *Having access to outdoor space is proved to reduce patients' length of stay in hospital and create a far more therapeutic care environment.* There is some small provision of outside space in the CCC plans, but making it available to their patients means these patients would be exposed to damaging pollution. **If GOSH's patients are to benefit from unpolluted open air, where will the space come from?**

- More space for ICUs, wards with state-of-the-art facilities for patients and parents and carers, better play and breakout spaces are all urgently needed.

All these are seen as essential for the whole hospital by GOSH to bring their facilities up to the highest contemporary standards. Better facilities would mean that individual wards would have to be bigger. **Where will the space come from?**

- More beds would mean more ambulances and other hospital vehicles.

There is already no adequate provision for hospital vehicles. Currently long stretches of the public highway are used as an ambulance park. One of GOSH's own objectives, supported by the majority of the local

community, is that Great Ormond St itself should become traffic-free. There is no suggestion that the master plan will take account of this and provide parking space within the campus – so **where would space for hospital vehicles come from?**

Moving to a new site will be very expensive obviously. But

- There can be no doubt that what is now an inadequate site will become progressively less adequate as new specialities, treatments and standards of care demand more and more space.
- The option of putting ever-increasing pressures on the local community by cramming more and more towers onto the site will be seen as unacceptable.
- The argument that moving is impossible because of the amount of capital already invested in the site becomes redundant when it is recognised that the site is no longer adequate.
- Spending large sums on the CCC would be irresponsible since its useful life would be very short.

The Hospital's management will inevitably be forced to move to a new, greenfield site out of Central London, or forfeit its status as a world leader in paediatric care. It would therefore be in their longer-term interest as well as in the interests of the local community for this application for the CCC to be rejected.

We acknowledge that GOSH is recognised internationally for the excellence of its clinical and research work and we would not want it to lose this reputation. But it will if it persists in its dead-end -road policy of staying at all costs on its existing site. Its reasons for staying there are inadequate and unconvincing because they do not address the fundamental constraint: there is no space.

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