

CM13.6. Potential Suitable Locations for a New Single-Site Hospital - Considerations and Information Package

DATE	27 November 2024	FIL REFERENCE	FIL23/01997
CONFIDENTIAL	Yes		
FURTHER ENQUIRIES	Frank Zaknich CEO	PHONE	0408 099 551
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide Councillors with a list of potentially suitable locations for a new Albury Wodonga single-site hospital, as resolved at its meeting of 14 October 2024.

Background

At its first ordinary meeting on 14 October 2024, the newly elected Council resolved that Council:

1. *Note that the planned redevelopment of Albury Hospital is not adequate to meet current, let alone future community needs, and that planned and promised services have been cut since the project was announced;*
2. *Supports the development of a fully funded, new single-site hospital for the Albury-Wodonga region in a suitable location in either Albury or Wodonga that, at a minimum, meets the requirements established by the 2021 Clinical Services Plan;*
3. *Calls on the State Governments of New South Wales and Victoria to pause the current redevelopment plans for the Albury Hospital and redirect efforts towards a fully funded, new single-site development in Albury-Wodonga;*
4. *Urgently seeks assurances from the New South Wales and Victorian State Governments to allay the fears of our community that the \$558 million investment allocated to the Albury Hospital will not be in jeopardy regardless of the form the new hospital may take;*
5. *Continues to call on the State Governments of Victoria and New South Wales to immediately provide interim solutions, such as modular wards and theatres and step-down beds, to address the ongoing capacity deficits;*
6. *Urgently communicates this position to the New South Wales and Victorian Ministers and Shadow Ministers for Health and the Federal Minister and Shadow Minister for Health;*
7. *Notes the positions already adopted by Wodonga Council, Indigo Shire Council, Alpine Shire Council, Towong Shire Council and Federation Council, and seeks opportunities for collaboration in relation to this matter;*
8. *Requests that the CEO:*
 - a. *produce a report by no later than 30 November 2024, that identifies potential suitable locations for a new single-site hospital;*
 - b. *use the Council's communication channels, including but not limited to the AlburyCity website, social media channels, and newsletters to inform the community of this decision.*

As specified, the resolution requested that the AlburyCity CEO produce a report which identifies potential suitable locations for a new single-site hospital, by no later than 30 November 2024. The CEO Note provided in relation to the Notice of Motion, which prompted the resolution, highlighted that the report would be listed for consideration at this 9 December 2024 Council Meeting and that it

would not include detailed analysis of each site and its servicing capabilities. Rather the report would identify potential Albury sites, owned by Council or other government owned land, that could be subject to further investigation by Health Infrastructure NSW and form the basis of further advocacy.

This resolution follows various iterations of master plans and clinical services plans developed over the last four years both by Albury Wodonga Health (AWH) and Health Infrastructure NSW (HINSW). The AWH/Victorian master plan (early 2022) appears to not have been released publicly^[1] and is possibly at odds with a more recent HINSW master plan (October 2023)^[2]. These opposing views^[3] have heightened the attention of the cross-border community, with strong interest from various advocacy groups depicting a level of dissatisfaction and inadequacy with the HINSW master plan. These community advocacy groups have eagerly awaited the release of a detailed concept plan from HINSW, which became publicly available in August 2024^[4].

The detailed concept plans have not delivered fully on the original commitments announced by NSW and Victoria's Premiers in October 2022^[5]. This announcement provided for \$225 million contribution from both states, in addition to \$108 million which was already committed by NSW and Commonwealth governments.

The original announcement included a new clinical services building, operating theatres, a helipad with direct access to the intensive care unit, emergency department, neonatal care, a new 32 bed mental health ward as well as the expansion of outpatient and specialist spaces (for treatments such as dialysis). In the time elapsed from the Premiers' announcement to the detailed concept plans, it appears that the funding parcel can no longer deliver on all elements of the original announcement.

^[1] [Albury Wodonga Hospital not funded in Vic Budget - ABC News](#)

^[2] [2023-Master-Plan-Report.pdf.aspx \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

^[3] [2023-Master-Plan-Report.pdf.aspx \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) – page 9

^[4] [Albury-Wodonga-Regional-Hospital-project-2024-Concept-Design-Report.pdf.aspx \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

^[5] [Victoria and NSW governments commit to \\$558m redevelopment of Albury Base Hospital - ABC News](#)

^[6] [Albury Wodonga Hospital to be redeveloped on one site - ABC News](#)

A summary of the timeline of events below is based on publicly available documentation:

2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2015: Finalisation of Cancer Centre and developer contributions to ACC for water and sewer upgrades.
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2020: Following years of advocacy from ACC to the NSW Government – Council endorsed the <i>Borella Road & Riverina Highway Corridor Strategy</i> – providing a strategic approach to long term growth of the regionally significant corridor and assist in seeking funding to upgrade intersections.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 2021: Announcement by AWH Chief Executive that Albury Wodonga Health two campuses will be redeveloped into a single site. [6] - December 2021: Completion of the AWH (Conrad and Gargett) Master Plan report, (followed by an Addendum in August 2022, involved an assessment of both greenfield (new unidentified site) and brownfield (Albury Hospital site) options).
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 27 October 2022: the New South Wales and Victorian Governments jointly announced \$558 million for the redevelopment of the Albury Hospital Campus. - 2022: Better Border Health commences public campaign relating to inadequacy of current infrastructure.
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - February 2023: Health Infrastructure (HI) engaged Hassell as the principal design consultant, responsible for architectural, landscape architecture, and interior design aspects. - March to April 2023: HI consultant Hassell conducted a thorough review of existing documentation and undertook a series of visits to assess the site. - May to July 2023: Hassell developed and assessed various long-list options for the Master Plan in collaboration with Health Infrastructure, NSW State Design Review Panel (SDRP), and Albury Wodonga Health (AWH), leading to the identification of a short list and the preferred Master Plan position. - October 2023: Hassell (HINSW) Master Plan released.
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - August 2024: Release of HINSW detailed concept plans, showing shortfall from original announcement to detailed design, and Wodonga Entity Service Plan. These documents demonstrated the single site hospital previously announced was not going to be achieved, raising further community concerns. - November 2024: Community and stakeholder engagement summary on the concept design released by HINSW. This document summarised and responded to community and stakeholder feedback provided following the release of the concept designs. Included in this summary in response to the question whether the hospital will be built on a greenfield site is <i>“No. The project is funded as a major new hospital redevelopment on the existing Albury campus and there are no plans to consider another site.”</i>

Council recently received correspondence from the NSW Health Minister, The Hon. Ryan Park MP (refer Attachment 2), and the Acting CEO of HINSW, Emma Skulander, (refer Attachment 3) in response to its correspondence issued as an outcome of Councils resolution of 14 October 2024.

Issues

Following the expressed dissatisfaction with the detailed concept designs, and the abandonment of a new single-site hospital concept, advocacy on both sides of the border for a new single site hospital on a new site, as opposed to retrofitting the existing site, has gained traction.

The criteria for the site selection (existing site) undertaken by HINSW included the following: *“It is understood that the site selection was based on availability of existing infrastructure, co-location with the Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre (AWRCC), partial retention of existing built assets, suitability of site and programme considerations. As a result, the greenfield site option was discounted, and for the purposes of this report, it has not been reconsidered. By choosing the brownfield option, the AWH aims to ensure a more efficient and integrated healthcare facility that will cater to the needs of the community effectively.”* – page 9 of HINSW Albury Campus Redevelopment Masterplan Report: [2023-Master-Plan-Report.pdf.aspx \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/2023-Master-Plan-Report.pdf.aspx).

The resolution of Council did not specify the criteria to guide the identification of potential locations that may be suitable for a new single site hospital. Officers have reviewed the Clinical Services Plan, which has not provided any further insight into planning and land identification other than potential size.

HINSW’s “How to Build a Hospital: ([How to build a hospital - Health Infrastructure NSW](#)) - provides details on the steps for preparing to build a hospital – which starts with a future-looking clinical services plan that provides the basis for decision making on any hospital build (page 8). Following this stage, detailed master planning occurs, which usually considers unique elements of the area (e.g. airports) and access to existing infrastructure and health networks.

Further to this, Wodonga Council has also previously undertaken a desktop analysis which appeared to focus on road accessibility and vacant land and identified *“large tracts of land that could be a potential greenfield site for a single-site hospital with direct access on to Bandiana Link on the Hume Highway. There may also be similar greenfield sites in Albury that council be investigated”*.

For the purposes of providing consistent criteria for matters within the remit of local government, the following criteria have been used to identify sites within the Albury LGA:

- **Size** – Preferably no less than 8 hectares.
- **Ownership** – Land owned by Council, Crown Land or Trustees.
- **Access** – Good existing access or potential for access.
- **Planning** – Likely to provide a compatible use in locality.
- **Proximity** – Within LGA but not isolated from community.
- **Infrastructure** – Road, Water and Sewer availability.

Sites smaller than 8 hectares have also been provided, noting there are options to build up as opposed to out. AlburyCity has been approached by a private landholder in confidence in relation to a potential site, the details of which will be referred to HINSW for follow up if of interest.

From a planning perspective, Hospitals are defined as a *Health Services Facility*.

Health Services Facility means a building or place used to provide medical or other services relating to the maintenance or improvement of the health, or the restoration to health, of persons or the prevention of disease in or treatment of injury to persons, and includes any of the following—

- a. a medical centre,
- b. community health service facilities,
- c. health consulting rooms,
- d. patient transport facilities, including helipads and ambulance facilities,
- e. hospital.

The planning permissibility of Hospitals is currently determined by *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* as well as the provisions of *Albury Local Environmental Plan 2010*. They are currently permissible with consent in the following zones:

- RU4 Primary Production Small lots;
- RU5 Village;
- R1 General Residential;
- R3 Medium Density Residential;
- R5 Large Lot Residential;
- E1 Local Centre;
- E2 Commercial Centre;
- E3 Productivity Support;
- MU1 Mixed Use; and
- SP2 Infrastructure (where related to the identified purpose).

Other factors include:

- **Permissibility** – some sites may require rezoning for hospital and/or support services.
- **Support services** – access to accommodation, public transport, shops, medical specialists, etc. is required to support visitors, patients and workers.
- **Impacts** – impacts upon surrounding areas such as traffic, demand for services, need for specialists suites, etc.
- **Infrastructure** – upgrade of water and sewer infrastructure likely required for all sites.
- **Clinical Services** – needs to meet requirements of 2021 Clinical Services Plan.

A range of sites were identified as being potentially suitable and worthy of further assessment against the criteria outlined above. These included:

- Albury Wodonga Equestrian Centre;
- Albury Racecourse;
- Albury Showground;
- Waterworks Road Land (Riverina Hwy);
- Vacant land on Young Street;
- Albury Airport (western side);
- Alexandra Park Precinct;
- Vacant Council land on Kremur Street;
- Vacant Council land on Kaitlers Road;
- Department of Defence Land (Wirlinga); and

- Thurgoona Education Precinct.

All the identified sites have various considerations including current use and potential impact to existing community infrastructure, which is likely to create impacts for those community groups. It should also be noted that there are opportunities likely to be available on land that is privately owned, however without criteria that allow the narrowing of options and knowledge of market interest in consolidating or disposing of land, this is beyond the scope of Council's capacity and should be the subject of a formal process undertaken by HINSW. Further and notwithstanding, any identification of suitable privately owned site options may trigger a range of considerations including potential compulsory acquisition.

On review of all sites that were identified for consideration against the criteria, four were considered as most likely to satisfy the criteria if subjected to further investigation. The remainder were eliminated due to location or accessibility, planning compatibility, lack of support services, flood risk or intensity of existing use. The four sites listed below were considered the most likely to be of potential interest to HINSW, despite any other constraints that may exist. They included:

- Albury Wodonga Equestrian Centre;
- Albury Racecourse;
- Albury Showground; and
- Young Street Land.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – If sites currently supporting community or public infrastructure were of interest to HINSW for a new single-site hospital, the cost of securing alternative land and providing this infrastructure elsewhere may be considered the responsibility of Council, which presents a financial business risk.
- **Corporate Risk** – There is significant corporate reputational risk in Council identifying potential Council or government owned sites for a new hospital that may be currently subject to use, management and formal lease arrangements by others, including community groups. Doing so may create a perception that Council is recommending the sites, rather than drawing attention to their potential for further consideration, which is the intention. Nevertheless, the sites may present as opportunities if the community's desire is for a new single site hospital on a new site, therefore they are worthy of consideration by HINSW.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Environmental Risk** – Consideration of environmental risks associated with identified potential sites will need to be considered by HINSW in undertaking any future due diligence.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – Advocacy for health infrastructure is identified in the adopted AlburyCity Advocacy Strategy, however no specific budget allocation for further investigation of sites and their suitability is provided for in the adopted Four Year Delivery Program.

Engagement

There has been no community engagement by Council in relation to this matter given decisions regarding the selection or investigation of any potential sites for a new single site hospital rest with HINSW.

The question regarding the suitability of the current site has however been raised by community members through the consultation HINSW has undertaken.

Relevant stakeholders of the four sites selected for further consideration by HINSW and in support of Council's advocacy efforts, have been contacted informing them of the Council report and the identification of their site as being potentially suitable for a new single site hospital.

Options

That Council:

1.
 - a. Receive and note the report; and
 - b. Utilise the potential suitable location information package to support further joint advocacy for the establishment of a new single site hospital in collaboration with Wodonga Council. **Recommended.**

Or

2. Seek amendments to the potential hospital site location information package. **Not Recommended.**

Conclusion

The August 2024 release of the detailed concept plan for the Albury Wodonga Regional Hospital Project from HINSW, combined with the Wodonga Entity Service Plan, have raised further concerns in the community that what will be delivered by the \$558M is not as announced by the NSW and Victorian Premiers in October 2022. Further, that Albury Wodonga's health services will not be able to meet the current and future needs of the regional community.

At its meeting of 14 October 2024, Council resolved to continue its advocacy in relation to the Albury Wodonga Regional Hospital Project, including for a new single-site hospital on a new site. Council requested a report identifying potential suitable locations for a new hospital.

Given no criteria has been identified in the resolution, a standard set of criteria was developed based on best information available. This has guided preparation of a list of potential suitable locations which is provided at Attachment 1.

Should these sites/locations be considered potentially suitable by Council, the information can be utilised to support our further advocacy for a new single site hospital in collaboration with Wodonga Council and others.

Recommendation

That Council:

- a. receive and note the report; and
- b. utilise the potential suitable location information package to support further joint advocacy for the establishment of a new single site hospital in collaboration with Wodonga Council.

Attachment

1. Potential Hospital Sites – Information Package – Council Report Attachment (DOC24/287326).
2. Correspondence from The Hon. Minister Ryan Park – Albury Wodonga Regional Hospital – November 2024 (DOC24/287728).
3. Correspondence from Acting CEO Health Infrastructure NSW – 20 November 2024 (DOC24/287721).