

**FIELDS 263 AND 263A, GROUVILLE: RE-ZONING AND ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR SCHOOL
RECREATION FACILITIES**

**Lodged au Greffe on 27th November 2001
by the Planning and Environment Committee**



STATES OF JERSEY

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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

- (a) to approve the rezoning of Fields 263 and 263A, Grouville, as shown on drawing No. 92/01/34 from the Agricultural Priority Zone to use for school playing fields;
- (b) to authorise the Planning and Environment Committee to negotiate with the owners for the purchase of the land at a fair and proper price to be agreed with the Finance and Economics Committee;
- (c) to agree in the event of it not being possible to reach agreement on a fair and proper purchase price, the Planning and Environment Committee should be empowered in exercise of the powers confirmed by Article 4 of the Island Planning (Jersey) Law 1964, as amended, to acquire the land by compulsory purchase on behalf of the Public in accordance with the provisions of the Compulsory Purchase of Land (Procedure) (Jersey) Law 1961, as amended;
- (d) to authorise the payment or discharge of the expenses to be incurred in connection with the acquisition of the said land and all interest therein and the repayment of all legal expenses from the Land Acquisition - Major Reserve Vote C0904;
- (e) to authorise the transfer of the administration of the land described in paragraph (a), once acquired, to the Education Committee; and
- (f) to authorise the Attorney General and the Greffier of the States to pass on behalf of the Public any contracts which might be found necessary to pass in connection with the said properties and any interests therein.

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

- Notes:
- 1. The Education Committee welcomes the opportunity to acquire sufficient land adjacent to Grouville School, in order to provide adequate recreational facilities.
 - 2. The Finance and Economics Committee's comments are to follow.

REPORT

Grouville School has to be re-developed in order to cater for projected increases in school numbers, which will include a new nursery unit. In the absence of any local open space guidelines for schools, the Education Committee refers to the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) Guidelines for Schools Bulletin No. 82 (1996). Under these guidelines the school should comply with the set standard areas for external space, which currently it would not without additional land. Other fields in the area have been investigated but none were found to be as suitable as Fields 263 and 263A to provide the facilities required.

The Planning and Environment Committee believes that the whole of both fields should be acquired to provide appropriate provision of external space for the school. This would take account of any possible future needs for the school or changes in guidelines and is in accordance with good planning principles. The Committee believes it would be short-sighted to rezone just the barest minimum space for the current number of school pupils.

Acquisition of both fields will create an opportunity to provide safe pedestrian routes to the school.

The Committee did consider an earlier suggestion to acquire only part of the two fields, but rejected that notion because it would leave two small unviable plots of agricultural land and would be a constraint on future development of the school for any reason. Too many of our schools already suffer in this respect.

The school is currently restricted in external PE activities to what can be achieved on the hard play areas and the small grassed area, which is not sufficient for most team games. These hard play areas are not ideal for sports for which grass is best suited and this inevitably seriously restricts the curriculum which can be offered to the children. To augment the very limited space currently available, the school has in the past transported children by bus to F.B. Fields or Le Boulivot. This now happens more and more infrequently due to the limited availability of the facilities due to other bookings, high cost and wasted travelling time. Acquisition of both fields would provide approximately 8,450 square metres of new external space conveniently and safely located adjacent to the school.

The acquisition of Fields 263 and 263A is imperative if the school is to expand as required and to meet the necessary standards required of it. The fields are capable of being developed as playing fields and a play area to provide a seven-a-side mini soccer pitch, informal and social play areas and a hard play area that could double up as a parent over-spill car parking area when required.

An application has been submitted to the Planning and Environment Committee to change the use of Fields 263 and 263A from agricultural to playing fields. The area is approximately six vergées. In consideration of the application, the Planning and Environment Committee has taken into account the policies contained in the Island Plan and the impact the loss of land would have upon the viability of the agricultural holding which currently leases the land.

Island Plan policies

The Island Plan policies relevant to the proposals are Policy C025 and Policy C026.

Policy C025 states -

“There will be a presumption against the permanent loss of agricultural land for the development or other purposes and positive support will be given to the agricultural industry.”

There is, however, an acceptance in the Island Plan that community needs may be such that the Committee may find it necessary to override the general presumption.

This is set out in Paragraph 2.65 of the Island Plan- Presumption Against the Loss of Agricultural Land.

“2.65 It must however be accepted that in some circumstances the need to meet other community requirements may be overriding and agricultural land will be lost. Whenever this is likely to be the case, full account will be taken of the likely agricultural impact. In particular, account will be taken of the agricultural land quality based on the sole classification as devised in the survey stage of planned preparation, and the impact on the economic and viability of individual farm holdings. This policy will be implemented in close consultation with the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee.”

Policy C026 states -

“When considering development proposals, full account will be taken of the agricultural land affected and the impact on the economics and viability of individual farm holdings.”

The Planning and Environment Committee, before considering the application, consulted the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee and received correspondence which expressed the view that the Agricultural Land Sub-Committee did not wish to see the fields taken out of agricultural use, for whatever reason. The report advised that the land was “possibly the most viable in the area as it consists of south-facing, very productive early land. However, the impact to the present farmer’s holding will be minimal as the six vergées accounts for approximately 2% of the total area farmed”. The Agricultural Land Sub-Committee whilst resisting the loss of land for whatever reason also expressed the view that a corporate approach should be taken via a States debate.

Planning issues

The Planning and Environment Committee fully understands the concern over the proposed loss of the agricultural land, however it is equally alert to the space requirement of the primary school and nursery which has no playing field, and their equally valid concern of creating a safe environment for the pupils.

The Committee decided that in the circumstances the needs of the Education Committee outweighed the presumption against the loss of agricultural land. It was also mindful that as the land was to be used as playing fields it could feasibly revert back to agricultural use some time in the future. The Committee was fully aware of the proposals to re-develop Grouville School in order to increase its capacity and an essential element of this was the provision of the playing field facilities commensurate with its size.

Implementation

The use of Fields 263 and 263A is critical to the further development of the school. The Committee is seeking from the States the power to compulsorily purchase the land if agreement to purchase at a fair and proper price cannot be reached with the owners.

There are no additional manpower implications for the States.