

# STATES OF JERSEY



## MILLENNIUM TOWN PARK: COMMENCEMENT IN 2010 (P.42/2010) – AMENDMENT

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Lodged au Greffe on 4th May 2010  
by the Council of Ministers

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STATES GREFFE



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AMENDMENT

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**PAGE 2 –**

In paragraph (b), for the words “in their entirety and no part of the site should be developed for housing or other uses” substitute the words “subject to the outcome of the debate on the North of Town Masterplan”

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

## REPORT

### Executive Summary

The Council of Ministers is committed to providing a town park subject to the North of Town Masterplan being discussed first.

Waiting to debate the North of Town Masterplan will not affect the delivery time of the Town Park in any form and therefore Members are urged to have a comprehensive debate on a Masterplan in six weeks time rather than a more limited debate on a park only now.

The North of Town Masterplan will be lodged au Greffe on 7th May 2010 and will be scheduled for debate on 22nd June. The Council of Ministers urges Members not to make decisions now which will prejudice the wider comprehensive debate on the North of Town Masterplan or indeed prejudices the Masterplan itself before the debate has even been had.

The time for debating the scale of residential development on this site, the car parking solutions required in the area and the wider public realm needs and regeneration needs, is through the Masterplan debate. A vote now in support of this proposition effectively means no North of Town Masterplan and a sub optimal solution for the North of Town Area.

The Masterplan will deliver more improvements for the North of Town, than the original town park proposal. It will deliver a permanent car parking solution for shoppers, it will result in major public realm improvements above £2 million in value, it will deliver much needed residential units and social housing units and it will be a broader regenerative catalyst across the area.

Seventy-six percent of respondents in the Masterplan consultation exercise supported the principles of the Masterplan and regeneration.

Forty-seven percent of respondents agreed with the tabled Town park proposals in terms of a framed park. Only 33% disagreed with the proposals, and 20% were undecided. There clearly is not therefore a ground swell against a park framed by development.

Sixty-two percent of respondents agreed with the Ann Court proposals of housing and open space, and only 20% disagreed. Over 2500 people signed a petition in favour of the North of Town Masterplan proposing a non car parking solution for the site.

Delivery of a park with no development has significant financial implications for the North of Town Masterplan and the need to find a permanent parking solution across the area.

The Masterplan is likely to result in a net gain of permanent shopper car parking in the North of Town area.

The Council of Ministers does not agree that a flat park across the whole space is the best solution because –

- the park would suffer from the setting of gas holders immediately adjacent and bounded by buildings that are essentially commercial. This creates noise and a perception of unease rather than refuge;
- experience elsewhere has shown that such parks become isolated and suffer from anti-social behaviour and are less respected by the community;
- the overall cost of the park and replacement of car parking would exceed the £10 million allocated and could require approximately £16 million more;
- thus the States would need to find an additional £16 million to deliver the Masterplan which would have to be taken from other projects;
- the North of Town Masterplan will propose permanent solutions to shopper car parking in the area and not temporary ones.

The Council of Ministers started the North of Town Masterplan to find the best way to make life and living spaces in that area better for people who live and work in the area.

The Minister for Planning and Environment will be lodging the revised North of Town Masterplan by 7th May 2010 and this will allow States Members to consider the whole area and decide the best way forward. The debate will be scheduled for 22nd June 2010. Taking the park out of this debate now will result in a second best solution which St. Helier will have to live with for many years. It is not worth risking that for the sake of a few weeks.

The North of Town Masterplan shows that a park covering most of the site that is framed by well designed buildings, and separates the new park and the gas holders will create a much better space and one which St. Helier will be proud of.

It also shows that a permanent parking solution for shoppers can be provided if the area is comprehensively planned.

The Masterplan which has been consulted on was considered and agreed by a Political steering group prior to public consultation. Along with the Minister and Assistant Minister for Planning and Environment, it comprised 4 Town Deputies and the Constable of St. Helier. The Constable did make his position clear at the group in terms of the town park, but the rest of the group supported the draft Masterplan prior to consultation.

It is a fundamental design and architectural principle that spaces need to be framed to provide context and a sense of place and identity. Much of St. Helier in this location is made of up traditional eighteenth century and early nineteenth century buildings with a formal relationship between spaces and buildings.

If the park is designed appropriately, taking advice from architecture and design professionals, there is the ability to create a space which people spill out into when living there, is treated as an extension to their living space, is visited for special

occasions as a destination rather than a through route and is used by all sections of the community.

For a space to work, it needs the correct context, needs to look and feel right, and has to be considered a refuge and safe by the people using it. It is felt that this can be created with limited framing, good design and appropriate transport solutions. Therefore, Members are urged to support the Council of Ministers amendment on this proposition.

## **Introduction**

The Council of Ministers is committed to delivering a suitably designed Town Park in line with the wider strategy of the North of Town Masterplan.

Any solution for the North of Town and the Town Park, must be affordable and deliverable. It must provide a wider regenerative solution, taking into account the needs of residents, transport users and the wider tax payer.

The amendment proposed, is therefore a sensible solution to the needs of all island residents.

The creation and delivery of the Millennium Town Park is dependent on a number of related complex issues. Firstly, the availability of funding, secondly the urban design solution for the area and thirdly, providing a suitable and acceptable permanent replacement parking solution for the parking spaces currently on the site.

It is precisely due to the nature and extent of these inter-related issues and the inability to secure an acceptable balance across all three, that delivery of the park has not been successful to date.

## **Context with the North of Town Masterplan and proposed Town Park solution**

The North of Town Masterplan project was commissioned in 2009 to consider these inter-related issues with a view of finding a balanced solution. A solution which will deliver significant public open space, major public realm improvements, parking and transport solutions and a well designed town area.

The Masterplan has been completed and has been through public consultation. The results of this public consultation, and re-instatement of £10 million into the capital programme for the Town Park following the States Assembly vote in September 2009, have resulted in a re-designed Masterplan.

That Masterplan will be lodged 'au Greffe' by 7th May with an expected debate on 22nd June 2010. The revised Masterplan will recommend development on the site but this will be reduced from that originally proposed prior to consultation. The revised Masterplan will recommend an open park on the Talman site and further open space on the Gas Place site. Part of the Gas Place site will however be required for development to frame the park and to create the necessary funding to deliver other elements of the Masterplan.

Delivery of a development free Town Park has never been as simple as remediating the land and laying the area to park. Without a holistic approach to design and transport, a parking solution will not be found.

The Town Park site currently accommodates 389 public car parking spaces in Gas Place car park and 230 private commuter car parking spaces in the Talman car park. Of the 389 public spaces, well over half are used by commuters.

Transport and Technical Services' Sustainable Transport Policy supports and encourages the continuance and growth of shopper car parking in the centre of town but seeks to reduce and discourage private and public commuter parking where possible. It also recognises that there is a continuing demand for public commuter car parking at its current level and is therefore committed to replacing 300 of the 389 spaces at Gas Place. It is therefore essential that any parking solutions suggested must be in line with the Sustainable Transport Policy and good planning and design principles must be applied at all stages of the development.

In line with the Sustainable Transport Policy the Masterplan proposals will seek to provide public car parking spaces and provide suitable resident parking spaces. This will be done underneath limited residential development at Gas Place, and fully underground at Ann Court. Further public and resident spaces will be provided at Minden Place. (These proposals include replacement numbers following demolition and non replacement of Minden Place). Again, and in line with the Policy, the Masterplan does not propose to relocate the commuter car parking spaces on the Talman Site.

Re-locating suitable public car parking from this site to another is costly and is one of the key reasons why the Town Park has not progressed in previous years. The North of Town master plan seeks to create enough value through development on other existing publicly owned sites in order to pay for this replacement parking, without the States needing to reallocate funding from other capital projects.

The Car Park Trading Account is designed to be used to replace existing car parks when they come to the end of their useful life. The fund plays a significant role within the Masterplan solution as Minden Place car park will be redeveloped as a result of the proposals. This fund is therefore not available to provide other parking solutions.

The Council of Ministers is therefore not supportive of a development free Town park as it does not provide a long-term sustainable replacement for the public car parking spaces on Gas Place. However, it does consider that some limited development only should be restricted to eastern end of the Gas Place site. The revised Masterplan due to be published by the Planning and Environment Minister, will propose less development than previously shown, and will allow the delivery of open space on the Talman/Gas Place site in 2011.

The Council of Ministers feels that it is vital to re-provide the public car parking that will be lost on this site, but in a way that reduces the financial burden on the taxpayer. Some development will therefore still be required, but a high percentage of the town park site can be kept open than initially indicated in the draft Masterplan.

It is also considered that some limited development which frames the Town Park is a much better urban design solution, and one which provides a good level of natural surveillance, thereby enhancing the useability and safety of any space provided.

### **Remediation**

Remediation of the Talman and Gas Place site is required before it is put to any future public use. This is the case whether the site is partially developed or whether it is unencumbered by development.

The Council of Ministers can confirm that a planning application for the remediation of the entire Town Park site is due to be submitted by Transport and Technical Services in May this year. Prior to any remediation works commencing on site a decision is required as to the final use of the site.

The Council of Ministers is committed to keeping most of this site open and free from development, but is committed to delivering much wider regeneration gains across the North of Town area. To do this, an element of the Gas Place site will need to be developed in order to help fund these wider benefits and to reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

Assuming that the park application will take nine months to develop, submit and determine this would mean work on the park could commence on site at the end of 2010. Remediation works would commence in the autumn in advance of these works with a completion date of the finished park in mid 2011.

### **Public consultation**

The Council of Ministers would support any public consultation that the Parish of St. Helier wishes to undertake on the formal design of the park, but any debate on the design of the park will need to take place within the design principles and parameters laid down in the North of Town Masterplan.

### **Timing and delivery**

The Council of Ministers is supportive of the aim to provide the Town Park. It has however taken the position that this must be delivered in a financially prudent manner and in a manner which is likely to benefit the transportation system and the wider urban design of the area. That is why the North of Town Masterplan is such a vital strategy.

The Council of Ministers is committed to commencing work on delivering the Talman Site and part of Gas Place as an open space in 2010 and completing before the end of 2011 within the available funds.

The Council of Ministers is also committed to delivering the North of Town Masterplan at the earliest opportunity following the States debate in June 2010.

### **Financial and resource implications**

If the States were to confirm that no development could take place on the entire Town Park site, and that full permanent replacement public car parking would still be



required via the Masterplan, it is likely than at least an additional £16 million worth of public funding would need to be identified, depending on the parking solution proposed.

This scenario is one which Transport and Technical Services previously attempted to solve by proposing a new replacement car park at Ann Court. This proposal proved to be publicly unacceptable and was one which the States could not fund.

The revised Masterplan with the majority of the Talman and Gas Place site as open space but with some limited framing development at the eastern end, when coupled with the other elements of the North of Town Masterplan, is considered financially neutral.