

The future of Fort Regent

As a personal comment from one who had three years on the Fort Regent Development Committee 1978-81, it has always been my view that we never spent quite enough on the totality of the project. The sports which fitted into the Fort's geometry were sited sensibly but the two which were in public demand, the swimming pool and ice-skating rink, were in the former case strangely sited at the top of the Glacis Field in an ugly and obtrusive building, and in the latter omitted altogether. Both should have been placed within the interior ground level. The Sea Cadet Corps should have been resited away from the Fort and nearer the water. Advantage should have been taken of the opportunity to use heat exchangers to at once freeze and warm adjacent amenities. The principle was understood and already in use in other places. but apparently was not seen to be relevant here, probably because other locations had already been agreed.

By 1978 not only had the major building work been completed, but there was a urgency to provide something for the Duke of Gloucester to do when his impending visit to the Island took place and that part of the project bearing his name was rushed into completion.

The question of access was frequently claimed to be a reason for moderate attendances. . The Pier Road Car park access was not well designed but coped with vehicular users very well though they were not given sufficient priority over other road users. The Snow Hill cable car was a gimmick with short-lived popularity and high maintenance. It should always have been a fine glass-enclosed escalator sweeping from somewhere in Snow Hill/Mulcaster Street to the other main entrance point but no one thought of that at the time and in any case the cost would have terrified the States.

I see no reason for other than upgrading and expanding the current uses of the Fort. Many of the users are more than content with the facilities and there are, I suspect, a number of other activities which could be introduced once the permanent nature of the Fort's purpose has been sanctified by the States as Jersey's Sports and Leisure Centre.

It has become clear that the existing Swimming Pool will have to go. Its condition is far beyond redemption and is the exemplar of neglect on a massive scale. It must, unfortunately, be demolished.

The States will then have the most valuable development site in their wildest dreams, family silver of unimaginable value. It must not part with it until there is absolute certainty about its future contribution to the Island. A multistar hotel is the obvious first choice and it could have wonderful catering, entertaining and leisure amenities; it might provide the art gallery some of us want very much; it might incorporate the genuine concert hall which the Gloucester and the Queen's Halls don't really provide.

The possibilities are infinite and the site value so high that inclusion of eminently desirable social amenities such as I have mentioned ought to be well within the scope of a front-rank developer likely to seize this opportunity to develop an iconic and profitable building. Surely this is an otherwise unrealizable goal for our Economic Development Ministry to dream about.

I submit these comments to your Scrutiny Panel and I have also copied them to Alan Maclean and James Reed whose interests are, I suspect not far from the Fort's future!

Sincerely

Don Filleul