

STATES OF JERSEY



SPRINGFIELD STADIUM: MAINTAINING AMENITY SPACE

Lodged au Greffe on 14th July 2014
by the Connétable of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to –

- (a) maintain the same amount of open amenity green space in the grounds of Springfield Stadium in the course of the development of a 3G pitch;
- (b) exhibit at Springfield Stadium, before construction of the new pitch commences, full details of what it will look like, including photomontages, profiles and other necessary information so that the impact of the changes to the current pitch can be fully appreciated by residents and their elected representatives;
- (c) facilitate regular meetings with the local residents' association and elected representatives of the area in order that the needs of the local community can be taken into consideration both during the development of the project and thereafter.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Planning application number P/2014/0509 was initially refused by the Applications sub-committee of the Environment Department, against officer advice, on grounds which included *'the loss of green space around the pitch ... the manner in which the proposal would alter the character and community feel of the park; the removal of an existing mound; the loss of trees and the impact of the fencing.'* (Planning Applications panel minute, 29th May 2014).

The application was subsequently approved by a Ministerial decision on 27th June. While certain aspects of the project have been altered, in particular, the proposal to relocate the children's play area, and conditions imposed in respect of the loss of trees, the Applications sub-committee and objectors' concerns have not been addressed: the project will result in a net loss of open green space in what was designed and intended as a community park, and may have other impacts which are unknown at present due to the rushed nature of the application, driven by the need to provide the new pitch in time for the 2015 Island Games, and the incomplete documentation provided to objectors.

Notwithstanding the fact that a permit for development has been issued, the States are asked to request the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture not to proceed with those aspects of the project which will result in a loss of open amenity green space, to provide the details of the project which should have been available at the time of the application, and to commit to a regular consultation process with local residents and their elected representatives in future.

Springfield Park has been neglected by the Education, Sport and Culture Department over the years since the last Island Games prompted a flurry of investment in the facilities. Benches have been removed from the footpath through the park and the original herbaceous planting schemes have been gradually grubbed out; the department's view of the site as a sports ground rather than a park is also suggested by their efforts (rejected by Planning) to introduce overflow car parking into part of what little open amenity green space remains. The car parking provided as part of the original scheme has largely been used by the Department as a cash-cow to supplement its revenue budget; the new parking area in the discrete site within the adjacent gyratory system is entirely rented out while a significant number of spaces in the main grounds are also for hire. The Department now wishes to make radical changes to Springfield Park which are once again driven by the needs of the 2015 Island Games rather than by any wish to make amends for years of neglect.

Application number P/2014/0509 in its revised form seeks to alter the children's playground by making an incursion into what is presently open amenity green space, in order to allow for an expansion and rationalisation of car parking. There will be a more significant reduction in open amenity green space as a result of the creation of the 3G pitch with the creation of various tarmac areas.

The loss of open space is in contravention of Island Plan Policy SC04. The approval notice dated 27th June states that the increased community use of the pitch *'offers a significantly greater community and Island benefit than existing. As such, the proposal is considered in accordance with Policy SC04.'* This is an entirely subjective view which cannot be properly tested given the inadequacy of the supporting documents provided by Education, Sport and Culture. Brochure pages of the fencing system which it is intended to use to encase the pitch in a lockable cage give no reliable

indication as to the visual impact of the fencing on the surrounding parkland. The same criticism can be made of the addition of extra tarmac areas and parking. A project of such importance should be properly detailed and visualised in exhibition format in order that residents and their elected representatives can fully assess the impact of the proposed scheme on the wider community. I suggest that there is ample space in the Springfield Hall for this to take place, and that profiles of the proposed fencing should also be erected.

The improved functionality of the new type of pitch is not disputed; what is not agreed by residents or the Parish's Roads Committee, Deputies of St. Helier No. 2 District and the Connétable, is that there should be any reduction in open amenity green space in a part of St. Helier which is densely populated. They argue that any reduction in open space should be compensated for by additional areas being provided even if this means a reduction in the car parking areas.

As has already been explained, the Department has a great deal of rented-out parking in the vicinity of Springfield Park which could be used to offset any reduction in parking areas around the new pitch.

Arguments that the loss of open space should be resisted have been made by a former Town Surveyor of the Parish of St. Helier, the Roads Committee and Connétable of the Parish, Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier, and several residents. The most important objection, however, can be found in the report JPC Open Space Study commissioned by the Environment Department in 2008 which states on page 64 that "**Amenity Greenspace** – Provision varies from parish to parish, however, under supply in many of the rural parishes is offset by good supply to natural greenspace and/or beaches. The under provision of amenity greenspace is more of an issue in the parishes with larger urban areas, and this is the case in St. Helier (-11.67 vergées), and to a lesser extent St. Clement (-1.08 vergées)".

The final part of this proposition asks the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to put in place the good habit of consultation with residents and their elected representatives which will be necessary to ensure that the modifications which do eventually take place in Springfield Park are not forgotten about once the Island Games finishes in July 2015.

Financial and manpower implications

Depending on the number of parking spaces which may be lost in order to maintain the current amount of amenity open space in the park there will be an impact on the Department of Education, Sport and Culture's revenue budget. However, the exact amount of lost revenue from parking is impossible to calculate at this stage.