

STATES OF JERSEY



ANN COURT SITE: PETITION

Lodged au Greffe on 27th November 2009
by Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to agree that the current plans to use the site of Ann Court, St. Helier, for a multi-storey car park should be abandoned; and,
- (b) to request the Council of Ministers to bring forward proposals within the North of Town Masterplan to the Assembly on an appropriate alternative use of the site.

DEPUTY J.A. MARTIN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

I am a full supporter of the Town Park and was one of many who helped in the late 1990s to obtain over 16,000 signatures on the petition which was presented to the States of Jersey on 2nd December 1997 and stated –

“To His Excellency General Sir Michael Wilkes, K.C.B., C.B.E., Lieutenant-Governor.

To Sir Philip Bailhache, Bailiff, President.

To the Members of the States of Jersey.

The humble petition of the inhabitants of the Island of Jersey shews –

- (a) *there is substantial public support for a public Town Park with underground car park (“the Town Park”) on the land currently comprising the public car park at Gas Place and the private car park occupying the site of the former Gas Company offices and workshops, the whole situate between Bath Street and the new Gas Company offices (“the entire land”);”.*

I remember very clearly that 9 out of the 10 people who signed did so only with the guarantee that there would be parking at the site – and this was to be put underground.

The residents in the district are not happy with the new plans, and this was made clear to me and the other Deputies of St. Helier No. 1 and No. 2 districts in the recent elections. The only people who have, to date, been consulted by the Housing Department were the residents living at Ann Court who have now moved out of the area; this simply is not how the States of Jersey should treat people and it is not consultation.

Over 12 years later and with one outside consultant’s report from EDAW, the plans have changed, and the people and the States are being told that the only way to deliver the Town Park is by replacing a perfect site for housing with a 800 space car park, as stated in the Annex to the Draft Annual Business Plan 2009 on page 69 –

“The redevelopment of multi storey car parks is progressing in line with the EDAW Report that concluded that a new multi storey car park at Ann Court should be constructed to serve the commuter, resident and shopper at the northern part of St. Helier. This project will be progressed through the planning stages in 2009.”

Firstly I would remind members that the commuters and residents who presently park at Gas Place have not been consulted. Secondly, the residents in the area of Ann Court have not been consulted (and by ‘area’ I mean not only those who will have to live with this on their doorstep, but also the surrounding area of St. Saviour’s Road, Wellington Hill (already log-jammed with the school run), James Road, Royal Crescent, and many more). Finally, no-one has spoken to the Market Traders and the shoppers who currently give their custom to the shops nearby and the market. Will this be the end of the market as we know it?

The plan to turn Ann Court into a car park and replace 230 chargeable spaces at Minden Place and 386 at Gas Place stems from a number of Ministerial Decisions. The plan goes against the needs identified for the regeneration of St. Helier and has been put forward without sight of an overall integrated Transport and Travel policy document.

The question may rightly be asked – ‘whose agenda are we working to?’ Are we, through a Travel and Transport Plan that the States have not even seen, working to a car accommodation policy?

Anyone who has seen the New Direction (ND) document and is in support of it could not also support this planned car park. ND is trying to get small parking areas at the edge of town and encourage people to take more exercise, not only for their own health, but also for the benefit of the residents of St. Helier, who are fed up with the noise, nuisance and pollution caused by traffic movements all day long as people look for somewhere to park.

If there is a need to replace the resident parking at Gas Place, I am informed that planning permission was given in May 2007 to create a temporary public car park on the Ann Street Brewery site. It involved the demolition of the buildings in the middle of the site, but not the buildings fronting St. Saviour’s Road and Ann Street.

Why has this not been progressed? It must be fully evaluated. Would it provide enough parking for the residents who park at Gas Place? That must be the priority. There is also the continuation of residents’ parking schemes which could help these residents who now park at Gas Place. What other choices are there?

Meaningful and current consultation needs to be carried out with the commuters and residents who park at Gas Place. Who are they? Where do they come from? Where do they work? Is Ann Court a viable alternative for them? This is now happening under the North of Town Masterplan.

I would like to suggest that if we do need more car parking in the North of Town, why is an extension to Green Street (where there is space) not being considered? If there is money in the Car Park trading account, a study should be carried out to add to the 603 public spaces there. If commuters have a little longer walk to the office then they will also get a little fitter. Also, Green Street car park is directly connected to the ring-road with easier access via the roundabout.

Ann Court should now be at the top of the housing refurbishment list, as it has been in the pipeline for many years, and it was previously agreed that some of it would need to be demolished and some of it refurbished. The site could be used to create a flagship scheme for housing, which could be financed by a number of methods. Either reinstate it to the capital programme for housing or look to a private/public partnership.

Early this year a Masterplan for the whole of the North of Town was created and is now out for consultation. I would ask the Assembly to note the alternative uses for this area. I ask the States to wait for the consultation to end and ask the Council of Ministers to bring forward proposals from within the North of Town Masterplan to the States so we can progress the Town Park. The public own the land at Ann Court and should therefore be consulted before a decision is made regarding the best future use for this valuable site.

Financial and manpower implications

The Housing Department estimates that they will lose £471,500 rental income from Ann Court in 2009, so in 10 years it is safe to say that they will lose over £5 million in rental. The matter is already out to consultation so there are no additional manpower implications in adopting this proposition.

