

STATES OF JERSEY



MILLBROOK PLAYING FIELDS AND ADJACENT AGRICULTURAL FIELDS TO THE NORTH: PROTECTION FROM DEVELOPMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 7th August 2020
by the Connétable of St. Lawrence

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Council of Ministers to remove the Millbrook Playing Fields and the agricultural fields to the north from its shortlist of potential sites for Jersey's new hospital

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. LAWRENCE

REPORT

Save our important Open Spaces

I believe that most States Members will share my concern at the inclusion of the Millbrook Playing Fields, and agricultural fields to the north, as a potential site for the new hospital.

I am grateful to those fellow States Members, and to the many other Islanders, who have contacted me to voice their opposition to the site, all of which is within the Green Zone.

We recognise the public amenity value and importance of retaining, for the benefit of this and future generations, the Millbrook Playing Fields as Protected Open Space.

It is the last open green space from West Park to beyond Beaumont and its designation of Protected Open Space within the Island Plan gives it, I understand, the highest level of protection against development.

The importance and value to us all of open green space cannot be over emphasised, be that within our town or, as in this case, within our suburbs.

I do not intend to refer specifically to the many Island Plan policies that would be contravened by building on this site.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Citizens' Panel themselves acknowledged those contraventions by referring to the detrimental impact the hospital would have, particularly on the historic and built character of the area.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, that is one conclusion reached by the Panel with which I agree.

The context of this area is modest and suburban, with nearby buildings closely framing the proposed site. Many of those nearby buildings have protected status themselves, as Listed Buildings.

The recent In-Committee debate on the Island Plan made reference to the need for greater protection of our Listed Buildings. Support for that is being voiced not only by States Members but by heritage groups as they join our call, yet again, for greater protection and preservation of our historic built environment.

Interestingly, that extends beyond merely preserving or enhancing the buildings themselves.

It includes their settings and their contribution to the local scene, which may be very important; for example, where it forms an element in a group, park, garden or other townscape or landscape.

Millbrook Playing Fields and the agricultural fields to the north are within the settings of St. Matthew's Church (the Glass Church) and Coronation Park, both Grade 1 listed. It could also be argued that Bel Royal Slipway and the nearby Occupation Casemate, both Grade 2 listed, fall within those settings that must be preserved or enhanced.

It is difficult to envisage a scenario whereby a hospital building on the site would enhance or preserve the setting of these, and the many other Listed Buildings within the area.

It is not difficult though to envisage a hospital building being an overwhelming and harmful feature, completely out of context and detrimental to the character of the area.

Although not known formally as a park, and being retained in private ownership, the Protected Open Space of Millbrook Playing Fields has immense amenity value.

It is used and enjoyed by thousands of Islanders every year. Charity car boot sales are held weekly from March to September; at other times the space is used for various recreational, sporting and keep fit activities.

Correspondence from the Jersey Battle of Flowers Association strongly objects to losing the Millbrook Playing Fields as it would have a significant effect on the Battle which, as we know, annually attracts nearly 20,000 spectators (many of whom are tourists), as well as involving thousands of local volunteers and participants.

Put simply, the Battle of Flowers Association believes that the loss to them of Millbrook Playing Fields would mean that they would have to significantly scale back the Battle of Flowers (which would make it unviable) or cancel it altogether.

They cite the great loss that would be to Jersey's tourism industry, to our Island community and to our heritage.

Notwithstanding the loss of Protected Open Space and Green Zone, the detrimental impact on our built historic environment (Listed Buildings), the potential permanent cancellation of the Battle of Flowers and the huge economic impact that would have, not least on our tourism industry, there are additional barriers to this site remaining on the shortlist.

The individual sites are in multiple private ownerships; unwilling sellers and restrictive covenants are an impediment to easy acquisition, ensuring the likelihood of protracted legal wrangles.

It is almost certain that the only way the States could acquire the sites would be by way of both lengthy and costly compulsory purchase.

If that was to be the case, it brings inevitably into question whether the site would be available for use by March 2022, the date we are told by which everything must be finalised in order to deliver the stated objective of a new hospital by 2026.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have listed only a few of the many viable objections that can be, and have been made, against the inclusion of this site on the shortlist for the new hospital.

I and other States Members have been contacted by people from across the Island who want to have this open vista preserved for their enjoyment and for that of future generations.

It is clear from the representations made that this site would not facilitate civic pride, regeneration nor the essential protection of the natural or historic built environment.

Accordingly, I ask Members to support my proposition and request the Council of Ministers to remove the Millbrook Playing Fields, and the agricultural fields to the north, from its shortlist of potential sites for Jersey's new hospital.

Financial and manpower implications

If this is supported, there could be a cost-saving to the public purse as the likelihood of compulsory purchase and associated legal fees would become unnecessary.