



PRESS RELEASE

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Opposition have jumped the gun on Rooke site

The Opposition should not flatter themselves with the mistaken notion that the Government has advertised the Rooke site because of anything that they have said or done. The reality is that nothing could be further from the truth.

The Government, as the GSD did when in office, had long earmarked Rooke as one of a number of MOD sites that were to be relocated at a quicker pace in order to obtain the release of the area in question. The advertisement for Rooke has been ready for months and it was held back only because the Government was in discussion with other developers over different sites in Gibraltar, most notably the Eastside. The timing of the advert therefore had nothing whatsoever to do with the Opposition's statement a year ago about Rooke or the latest plans published by them for a stadium that doesn't fit in the area of Bayside.

Having said all that, it is somewhat presumptuous and turns the Constitution on its head for the Opposition to expect that whatever ideas they may have for whatever part of Gibraltar should be put on ice for no other reason that they have issued a public statement about it. It is the Government, and not the Opposition, that is elected to take decisions and to put its policies into practice.

The Constitution specifically provides that new commitments cannot be entered into once an election is called, but that has not yet occurred. Until then the Government is free to act lawfully in the disposition of land in the manner it considers to be in the best interests of the taxpayer.

It is also true that the GSD have once again jumped the gun. It is impossible for them to know what is going on the site and what public gain there will be because the process has just opened. Therefore all the comments that have been made are based on a complete lack of knowledge of what may emerge from the Expressions of Interest process which the Government believes will be better mixed used plans than anything the GSD has proposed.

Moreover, the GSD are the last people who have any right to complain. They directly allocated the area of the two naval grounds, opposite Rooke, to a private developer without any advertised process for Expressions of Interest. They did so at questionable public gain. It was this Government that took back a proportion of the site for public use. The Opposition do not have a leg to stand on.



It is also clear that the Opposition have forgotten, in their rush to criticise the Government, that their own policy and declared intention was to move GBC to Rooke!

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "I fully expect that the proposals we will receive for the use of Rooke will make much better use of that site than anything I have seen the GSD propose. Our own plans for the future of Bayside and other schools and for sports in Gibraltar will be published in our manifesto and are also much more exciting than anything we have seen to date from the GSD. Once again the GSD have jumped the gun."