



Councillors vote against rezoning Tank Field for Gaelscoil

by Eoin English

CORK'S city councillors voted last night against rezoning part of a sports field which would have paved the way for a new gaelscoil.

The Department of Education needed 23 of the city's 31 councillors to support the rezoning of two-acres of the 11.8-acre Tank Field on the city's northside, which is zoned public open space, to allow it build a new 16-classroom school for Gaelscoil an Ghoirt Alainn.

The Educate Together school has been based in temporary prefabs located in Brian Dillons GAA club car park nearby since 1998.

But after a 45-minute debate, the 29 councillors who attended the meeting voted 13 for the rezoning, and 15 against. The Lord Mayor abstained.

The department is now expected to appeal the decision to An Bord Pleanála which overturned a previous council vote against rezoning a slightly larger site on the Tank Field for the school.

Lord Mayor Cllr Terry Shannon called on the department to engage now with the city council to find a resolution to the divisive issue which has split the local community.

City Hall's public gallery was packed for the debate with teachers, parents and other supporters of the school on one side of the chamber and opponents of the project, including representatives of the Montenotte Park Resident's Association, on the other side.

Veteran Cllr Jim Corr (FG) said the current city development plan clearly states a presumption against development on public open space.

"For the council to agree to materially contravene and build on this site will reduce further public open space in the city — that's a fact," he

said.

But city manager, Tim Lucey, said there are always competing objectives in a city development plan.

"We also have policy to support the Department of Education in the provision of schools," he said.

"On balance, this material contravention is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area."

Cllr Tim Brosnan (FF), whose two daughters are past pupils of the gaelscoil, described the new school as "improper and unsustainable" in planning terms because of falling populations levels in the area.

He also criticised the department and its planning consultants for their handling of the first planning application, which omitted high tension power cables crossing the site.

Cllr Sean Martin (FF), whose son attended the school over a decade ago, said he supports the rezoning because there are no alternative sites available.


"People landed on the Tank Field out of necessity," he said.

Cllr Joe Kavanagh (FG) said: "There is no argument about the need for the school. How and where is the problem."

But he said the council has a duty to preserve the city's green spaces. "If we proceed with rezoning, we are setting a dangerous precedent," he said.

Cllr Mick Barry (SP) described it as a "disgraceful situation" and criticised councillors for "throwing out pious platitudes in order to evade their responsibilities".

The Department said it wants to study the vote in detail before commenting further.

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| <p>■ Cork North-East Ward Cllr John Kelleher — for Cllr Tim Brosnan — against Cllr Ted Tynan — against Cllr Joe Kavanagh — against</p> | <p>against Cllr Tony Fitzgerald — against Cllr Michael Nugent — for Cllr Joe O'Callaghan — for</p> | <p>■ Cork South-Central Ward Cllr Lorraine Kingston — for Cllr Emmet O'Halloran — against Cllr Seán Martin — for Cllr Mick Finn — for Cllr Fiona Kerins — for</p> |
| <p>■ Cork North-Central Ward Cllr Mick Barry — for Cllr Catherine Clancy — for Cllr Patricia Gosch — against Cllr Kenneth O'Flynn — against Cllr Thomas Gould — for</p> | <p>■ Cork South-East Ward Cllr Des Cahill — against Cllr Laura McGonigle — for Cllr Denis O'Flynn — against Cllr Terry Shannon — abstained Cllr Chris O'Leary — against Cllr Kieran McCarthy — against Cllr Jim Corr — against</p> | <p>■ Cork South-West Ward Cllr John Buttimer — for Cllr Mary Shields — against Cllr Michael Ahern — absent Cllr Brian Bermingham — against Cllr Henry Cremin — for Cllr Ger Gibbons — absent</p> |