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MEP joins Maze controversy

25 June 2007

Allister calls on DOE Minister to de-list 'Shrine buildings'

MEP Jim Allister has entered the Maze controversy by calling on Environment Minister, Arlene Foster, to de-list the buildings which, if retained, will be the focus of the intended IRA shrine.

The hospital and other buildings were listed in early 2005, as the Maze project was unfolding. Thereafter, they have become a central part of the controversial scheme. De-listing would permit them to be demolished and thereby much of the political sting could be taken out of the Maze project.

In his letter today to Arlene Foster, Jim Allister says:-

"I write to urge you to initiate steps to de-list the various buildings on the Maze Prison site which were listed in 2004/5.

I believe the decision taken to list these structures was overtly political and unwarranted in terms of the architectural and other criteria relevant to such a designation. Moreover, the decision, being politically divisive, was not in the interests of the community as a whole. In this latter regard please advise if the decision was equality proofed, pursuant to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

To many it is incongruous, wrong and simply preposterous that B1 or any status should apply to these ugly buildings. Considering that buildings like Campbell College and the Linenhall Library epitomise such status, there patently is no architectural justification for these listings. Nor, I suggest, is there a sustainable basis in historic interest to warrant this status. The fact that the hospital wing was the location for serial suicides is of insufficient historic moment.

If, as I suspect, the primary motivation in listing these buildings was political – motivated, I suspect, to placate demands from Sinn Fein – then, by failing to de-list you become complicit in this unseemly episode. I trust, therefore, you will move to de-listing.”

Commenting further on the Maze controversy, Jim Allister said:-

“It is clear that this politically-driven scheme is fundamentally flawed. The continuing absence of a business case suggests the DCAL Minister’s attachment to the Maze scheme comes not from full and objective evaluation of all the options but from a pre-conceived preference. When some of his gauche comments are factored in, there would seem to be rich pickings for a judicial review challenge to any ultimate decision to rubber stamp the Maze.”

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