

Our ref: T/30/2 SC  
Your ref: 39055 IEE/G1/BACU  
Direct Dial: 0131 472 7518  
email: [stewart.cargill@sportscotland.org.uk](mailto:stewart.cargill@sportscotland.org.uk)

**sportscotland**

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7 April 2005

Dr Brian Cuthbert  
Faber Maunsell  
Dunedin House  
25 Ravelston Terrace  
EDINBURGH  
EH4 3TP

Job No.	39055
8 - APR 2005	
FaberMaunsell -Edin-Ravelston	
Reviewed by:	JS
	JS
	BACU
Actioned by:	BACU
Date:	8/4/05
Copy to:	
File No:	309130

Dear Dr Cuthbert

### Glasgow Airport Link: Environmental Assessment, Scoping

I refer to your letter of 17 February 2005 and the above Environmental Scoping Report.

**sportscotland** has previously expressed its concerns about the impact of the GARL proposals on the playing fields at St James Park. I have attached a copy of our response dated 23 December 2004 to the SPT consultation exercise, which sets out the nature of our concerns and the requirement to mitigate for the loss of sports pitches at St James.

I have been involved in the consultations arranged by SPT and Renfrewshire Council on this issue. **sportscotland** would expect the Parliamentary Private Bill for GARL to include proposals to address the loss of sports pitches at St James. I have been advised by the Council that discussions have been held with SPT about the content and implementation of measure to address the loss of sports pitches. **sportscotland** has yet to see details of what this would involve. As the national agency charged with responsibility for advising the Scottish Ministers on sport and with particular responsibility for the protection of playing fields under the planning system, **sportscotland** has an important role to play in assessing the acceptability of any such proposals.

I apologise for the delay in responding to your letter, but should you require any further advice on this particular issue please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Stewart Cargill  
Senior Planner



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Caledonia House South Gyle Edinburgh EH12 9DQ tel 0131 317 7200 fax 0131 317 7202 website [www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)

Chairman Alastair Dempster Chief Executive Ian Taylor

*sportscotland* is the trading name of the Scottish Sports Council

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File Copy

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Direct Dial: 0131 472 7518

email: [stewart.cargill@sportscotland.org.uk](mailto:stewart.cargill@sportscotland.org.uk)

~~7 April 2005~~

23 December 2004



Glasgow Airport Rail Link  
FREEPOST NAT21436  
Glasgow  
G3 6BR

Dear Sirs

### **Glasgow Airport Rail Link**

I refer to the public consultation exercise currently being undertaken for the proposed Glasgow Airport rail link.

**sportscotland** wishes to register its strong concerns about the potential impact of the proposed development on the St James playing fields.

**sportscotland** is a statutory consultee on planning applications for development affecting playing fields. We play an important role in the implementation of the Scottish Executive's planning guidelines for the protection of playing fields as set out in National Planning Policy Guideline 11 *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space*.

NPPG 11 advises that playing fields should not be redeveloped unless it can be shown that :

- the retention or enhancement of the facilities can best be achieved by the redevelopment of part of the site which would not affect its sporting potential and its amenity value;
- there would be no loss of amenity and alternative provision of equal; community benefit and accessibility would be made available; and
- there is a clear long term excess of pitches, playing fields and public open space in the wider area, taking into account long term strategy, recreational and amenity value and any shortfall in adjoining local plan areas.

St James is one of the largest playing fields in the country. It is of crucial importance for sustaining football in Paisley and the wider area. It has space for 22 football pitches, with 21 pitches currently marked out, and is supported by a large block of changing accommodation. The Scottish Football Association recognises the importance of this facility and is similarly concerned about the impact of the rail proposals.

The preferred route for the rail link would bisect St James playing fields. Of the two construction options, a viaduct would probably require less of a land take than an embankment. However either option would result in a substantial loss of playing field area and a reduction in the number of pitches which could be provided.

A further concern is the impact of the proposed rail works on the drainage of the playing fields. Drainage conditions are already poor, presumably due to the low lying and level nature of the site and the high water table. Construction of a rail link could exacerbate the situation and careful consideration must be given to the drainage issue if the development goes ahead.

The construction phase for the rail link would severely disrupt the use of the playing fields, and would involve a much larger area than the line itself. The implications of a number of pitches being taken out of use for a considerable period during the construction phase and the difficulties in reinstating pitches afterwards following the impact of construction activity are important issues that would need to be addressed.

Prior to any approval for the proposed rail link a technical appraisal of the construction options should be undertaken to establish the implications for the playing fields in terms of the number of pitches which would be lost and the operational viability of the remaining area. Proposals should be drawn up for the provision of replacement pitches which could also involve the upgrading of existing playing fields. This is likely to require the identification of a suitable site for replacement pitches, which could prove difficult to secure. The new and upgraded facilities must be able to accommodate the long term needs of football development in the area.

In the event that the rail link is approved, the funding arrangements should include adequate provision for the development of replacement playing field facilities. Relevant options would need to be identified and costed. This should include the possibility of land acquisition costs as well as development costs. There should be no financial burden on the local authority or **sportscotland** to fund the replacement facilities.

**sportscotland** would welcome the opportunity to enter into discussions with Renfrewshire Council and SPT about the impact of the rail proposals on St James playing fields and to consider what options could best provide for the continuation and development of football as a key sport for the area.

If you wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Stewart Cargill  
Senior Planner