

24TH JUNE 1885, No. 1673, JUDICIAL.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper :—

From R. F. CHISHOLM, Esq., Consulting Architect to the Government of Madras, to the Chief Engineer, Public Works department, dated Chepâk, 23rd May 1885, No. 265.

I have the honor to enclose, for your inspection and consideration, a careful survey of the site proposed by the committee appointed by Government in G.O., Judicial, No. 2318, dated the 10th September 1884, for the new High Court.

2. I am in correspondence with the Registrars of the High Court on the subject of the accommodation to be provided in the proposed new building; pending the preparation of the schedules, I would respectfully solicit the Government to reconsider the question of the site.

3. The committee appointed by Government to report on the best site avowedly only considered the "open" sites, they do not say what sites they examined and why they rejected them; neither do they give any reasons for preferring the site selected.

I have examined the site carefully, and I should be failing in my duty as Consulting Architect if I omitted to point out that the site seems objectionable from many points, though, of course, the value of these objections are matters of opinion.

4. I consider the site badly chosen for the following reasons :—

- (1.) On account of its costliness.
- (2.) Because it will close the direct line of road from the principal thoroughfare in Black Town, Thumboo Chetty street.
- (3.) Because it encroaches on the maidan. I will consider each of these objections separately.

5. If the selected site is built on, the light-house battery must be removed, say, at a cost of Rs. 35,000, for the building being directly behind the battery would form the butt for erring shot and shell, indeed the building would be to the battery as the target is to the bull's eye, clearly indicating its position at night. The committee selected this particular site for the battery because no buildings were in its rear.

6. About 1,100 yards of the South Indian line would have to be taken up and reconstructed at a probable cost of Rs. 15,000, making a total of Rs. 50,000 to be met before a sod is turned.

7. The second objection, the closing of the direct line of road of the principal thoroughfare in Black Town, is so wholly without precedent, one is forced to the conclusion that the committee simply overlooked it.

8. The third objection is perhaps the most serious one. It will not be long before the natives of Madras appreciate open air sports as keenly as the Bombay people, and those who have witnessed the simple pleasures of the thousands who resort daily to their fine esplanade will accept the jealous conservation of this open space, which by right belongs to the people, as a simple act of duty.

9. As an old resident, I have watched with regret the gradual encroachments on this maidan. The row of glaring, hideous, white-washed buildings have repeated themselves proglottis like, month after month, along the west side of the esplanade to the

vide minutes of a meeting of the Committee
printed with G.O. No. 1066 Judicial
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remote north-west corner, they have actually turned it and are now sectioning eastwards! Then the place was cut in pieces by the South Indian Railway, whose locomotives vomit smoke through the very centre of the meadows, as if life consisted only of money making and fuss. Again the foreshore has become a timber depôt as far as the lighthouse, and the north-east corner of the esplanade itself is a sawyers' yard and carpenters' shop, while a portion is literally given up as a receptacle for brick rubbish!! This esplanade should be to the poor of Black Town what Chepâk is to the west end of our city, and it seems an act beyond thoughtlessness for a committee to lose sight entirely of these considerations.

10. There is another point not embodied in my objections, because it is beyond my professional province. I allude to Fort St. George as a refuge in case of local disturbances or civil war; surely such a place would be invaluable, and if so, it does not require a militarily constituted brain to see that every building within gunshot is a ready-made attacking battery. This question, however, I gladly leave to those capable of dealing with it.

11. Now, with regard to available sites in Madras, there are two other open sites and of course an unlimited number of occupied ones.

12. The open sites are; the Pudupet maidan and the space next the Central Railway terminus. I will dismiss the latter because although it is more conveniently situated it is inferior by reason of being closed in on two sides by the General Hospital and the Central Railway station. The Pudupet maidan is, in my opinion, the finest building-site in the whole of Madras—a site which it would be impossible to close from the prevailing winds owing to the proximity and position of the river. The only objection I have ever heard raised against it is that mentioned casually by the Registrar of the High Court in his letter, No. 2051, of the 22nd July, "it is doubtful whether the site originally selected would meet the convenience of the public." I fully admit that the attorneys and solicitors would be inconvenienced because it is essential that their offices should be located in the midst of the mercantile community, but for the judges, jurymen, and indeed almost every one but the attorneys, the central position is a positive convenience and would be a public gain in the wear and tear of horses and carriages. In the case of merchants it is difficult to decide whether the Pudupet maidan would be a convenience or otherwise; one or two merchants to whom I spoke seem to prefer Black Town, but each one admitted that if he had a case of sufficient importance to take him personally to the High Court he would go there at once without visiting his office in which case the central site would be the most convenient. Be this as it may, I merely point to the Pudupet maidan as the finest site in Madras for a public building, and beg that it may be rejected only with good and sufficient reasons.

13. The occupied sites are of course expensive, but so much good is effected by clearing a site that the expenditure may always be looked upon as a good investment of public funds, and if the reasons for rejecting the Pudupet maidan are good and sufficient, I would suggest the advisability of taking up the plot I have shown on the plan marked E F G H; if possible as far back as the Bank of Madras.

14. It is hardly necessary for me to enlarge on the excellencies of this site or to point out that, with Patcheappa's Hall on the one side, and the Agra Bank on the other, such a building centrally situated would raise the whole character of the city and form a grand centre for laying out the esplanade as a public park, the only objection which can be raised is on the score of expense, but I have shown the selected site will cost Rs. 50,000, and this will go some way towards purchasing and clearing the blocks alluded to.

No. 179 E.

Forwarded, through the Judicial department, for the consideration of the committee appointed to report to Government as to the site in Madras best suited for the proposed new High Court buildings.

Mag 2
2. To the site recommended by the committee (*vide* proceedings of Government, Judicial, dated 24th April 1885, No. 1066), Mr. Chisholm states three objections, which probably received full consideration before the committee arrived at their decision.

3. The first objection, that the erection of the High Court buildings on a site immediately to the north-west of the lighthouse would necessitate the removal of the lighthouse battery and the realignment of the South Indian Railway, appears to be valid, in so far that the cost of the new buildings would *pro tanto* be increased.

4. The second objection does not appear a very weighty one, inasmuch as the proposed closing of the thoroughfare in question would apparently cause inconvenience to only the small amount of traffic which passes between Fort St. George and Thumboo Chetty street in Black Town. To no other traffic would the adoption of the proposed site cause apparent inconvenience.

5. The third objection, the encroachment on the esplanade, is the one to which Mr. Chisholm attaches most weight, but it must be observed that the alternative site recommended by him, in the Pudupet plain, would in like manner encroach on one of the open spaces which are now available to the Madras public. It must also be observed that the closing of the thoroughfare already alluded to would add to the esplanade nearly as much space as the construction of the proposed new buildings would take from it.

6. With respect to the site suggested by Mr. Chisholm in paragraphs 13 and 14 of his letter, it must be pointed out that the plot of land recommended by him, E F G H, is considerably smaller than the plot, A B C D, selected by the committee.

OOTACAMUND, (Signed) J. SHAW-STEWART, Colonel, R.E.,
3rd June 1885. Secy. to Govt., P.W.D.

To the Judicial department, with papers in original.

ORDER—dated 24th June 1885, No. 1673, Judicial.

The papers will be forwarded to the committee on the High Court buildings, with the request that the question of the site may be reconsidered. When Government approved the lighthouse site they were not aware that its adoption would necessitate a realignment of the South Indian Railway. In consideration of the great expense that this would involve, the Government are now disposed to think that the site between the Agra Bank and Popham's Broadway, indicated by Mr. Chisholm, would be a very suitable one.

(True Extract.)

John Hunter

Chief Secretary.

To the President of the Committee on the High Court buildings, with the plan.

" Public Works department.
Copy to the Registrar, High Court.

Exd. J. Wright.

9.12.03
 1798-3-6-85
 1155W - 15 May 185 - 773-C
 822 E - 25 Oct 184 - 11 Apr 185
 2425W - 1-10-84
 2193W - 5-5-1884
 359C - 21 Feb 185
 645D - 14 Mar 185
 675D - 18 Mar 185
 No. 1663 Way 17-7-85
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Recd. 10/7/85

Encl.

G.O., 24th June 1885, No. 1673.

No. 1663 Way 17-7-85

JUNE.

High Court—New Buildings.

Forwarding certain papers to the committee on the High Court buildings, and stating that the site between the Agra Bank and Popham's Broadway, indicated by Mr. Chisholm, would be a very suitable one.

1798-3-6-85 papers