The Third Round Table Discussion about the FIS Building Plans End in Consensus.

Last Monday, on 7 March 20912, the third round table on the FIS building plans took place.

The round table was convened as a result of a controversial discussion and strong opposition raised by the residents in the northern area of Oberursel about the possible plan to build a new FIS sports center in a protected section of the city forest.

The mayor states: “The city, but also Frankfurt International School, tried to reach a consensus from the very beginning. In order to do this, we invited all interest groups to join us for a round table discussion to see if we could find a compromise. Participants at the round table were representatives from Oberursel, FIS and the political parties, the environmental groups BUND and SdW, and the chairman of the Citizen’s Initiative.

While the purpose of the first round table was to provide background on the project, the second meeting went into a detailed and intensive discussion about the 10 alternatives. It was already obvious at this second gathering that there would be no support for building the center in the woods. Attention was focussed instead on two solutions that were to be researched thoroughly before the third round table took place.

The location of the center for both of these solutions is on the northwest side of the FIS campus. They differ in that one is located along the Hohemarkstraße near the B455 bridge. The second alternative is on the other side of the campus near the grass sports field and located partially in the woods, but not in protected woods.

Professional Assessment of the Alternatives

The professional assessment of the two alternatives determined that the solution along the Hohemark was not viable from the point of view of traffic and city planning. In addition, the Historical Preservation Authority made a statement that a building permit for this location was not probable.

The Citizen’s Initiative and the environmental organisations disagreed with these assessments and came to the conclusion that the objections submitted by the city and traffic planners were not valid. They also disagreed with the appraisal of the Historical Preservation Authority, saying that this had been made based on false facts.

The alternative 4.8 on the sports field was also viewed critically. Here the objections came from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Forest Authority.

The Solution

The final positive outcome was made through the input of the special planners and from StadtBauPlan and Frielinghaus architects. Through moving or turning the
building, a more optimal location could be achieved and thereby the amount of woods affected by the building reduced.

The third round table ended after 2.5 hours of discussion with statements from all participants. All felt they could support the version 4.8 as a compromise, but that it needed further adjustments, for example they would like to see the direction of the building turned. FIS agreed to investigate further adjustments.

In his final comments, the mayor emphasized the positive nature of the discussion: “We need to see where the discussion started and how far we have come. We moved from a building project involving 8000-10000 m² of city woods to a piece of property located mostly on school property with a minimal encroachment on the natural surroundings. I see as positive the manner in which the discussion was led and the conclusions to which it came. It was positive because the participants contributed in a constructive way with one another and found a good solution. The dialogue around the round table showed a willingness to talk with and listen to one another, but also to accept different opinions and to look for consensus in controversial situations.”