

Dear Vienna Times and especially dear Mr. Hochwarter,

We find it is not in compliance with the basic rules of journalism to interview one party of a disputed issue and to print this statement as the pure truth without even the slightest investigation regarding the other side of the problem.

Nothing has been said against the erection of a concert hall for the Viennese Boys' choir!
The objections raised concern the site only!

Prior to this, the same residents and their groups halted the plans for building sports grounds and facilities for the Jewish club Hakoah in the Augarten.

Hakoah was given a good site by the City of Vienna **elsewhere** to mutual satisfaction.

The elected authorities for both districts adjoining the Augarten unanimously (all representatives without exception) demanded that nothing more be built into the regal park of Augarten.

The history of the site with the relevant figures:

The whole regal park of Augarten was a gift of the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II. „For all people for their recreation“ (not a literal translation, nota bene „people“ not „subjects“!). The exceptions seem to be the private quarters both of the Emperor and of his staff. The baroque staff houses were still inhabited by civil servants until the late 1960s.

In 1968 the whole site was declared to be for construction WIIG (closed buildings max. height 12 metres) and WIIG f.ö.Zw. (closed buildings max. height 26 m for public buildings only! A school was planned).

In June 2000 (between 1968 and 2002) National Heritage Protection became a law.

In 2002 the declaration was modified to construction site BB6 (BB under especial reference, i.e. not specified, 6 defines height of walls max. 5 m and additionally 4,5 m for roofing.) No definite part of the site was declared for building because several small additions to the existing baroque buildings were planned.

The site was **never a declared parking lot!** Parking was possible only for the purpose of building the Vienna Underground No. 2 and according to the law only allowed for the duration of building activities (2001 until May 2008).

As soon as Underground construction ceased, both the Film Archives Austria and the neighbours made a garden of the site, which has since been extensively used both by Viennese and foreigners.

The choir did get the **go ahead from one single authority** to build, but have completely disregarded a whole series of relevant laws and regulations and quite especially the Viennese local ones:

e.g. Tree protection regulations; general regulations concerning parks, gardens and green spaces; basic water regulations (deep holes were drilled before obtaining permission), objections by owners of adjoining houses were not considered, The decision of the National Heritage Office (Denkmalschutzamt) is disputable because the garden as part of a National Heritage park was not even mentioned! The **constitutional law** (i.e. of a higher order than mere building site declarations) on National Heritage demands that such buildings may only be erected if there is no alternative. Only the representative of the choir, who cannot be interested in alternative sites (see below“) was asked .

Most questionable of all are the terms of the lease: the choir pays 10000 Euro per annum for over 1000 square metres of building site in the heart of Vienna. This is less than most hot-dog stalls pay for some 20 square metres! The reason given for this scandalously low amount cannot be taken seriously: the building will become Federal State property after over 60 years! Incidentally, the exact terms of the lease are a closely guarded secret!

Original comment by Mr. Nettig, now president of the boys choir company:

„The site is not public property, it belongs to the Federal Republic of Austria.“

It is the policy of the private company Wiener Sängerknaben (Viennese Boys' Choir) to denigrate anyone opposing their plans (eg. calling them a few „professional trouble-makers“ or accusing them of deliberately disseminating wrong information).

Any conscientious journalist can investigate and verify (or falsify) the facts stated here.

As a matter of fact the Greens are only one of many varied groups active on this issue.

The main groups are:

Aktion21

www.aktion21.at

ZVR 972506203

(for citizens' rights in all Vienna)

Initiative Denkmalschutz

www.initiative-denkmalschutz.at

ZVR 049832110

(National Heritage Protection initiative for the whole of Austria)

Verein Freunde des Augartens

www.baustopp.at

ZVR 4444 88 679

(in the 2nd, 20th and 9th district of Vienna, with many members living elsewhere,

active since 1998 against buildings of all kinds in the regal park Augarten)

Josefinisches Erlustigungskomitee
(artists commemorating the Emperor)
Mag.art. Raja Schwahn-Reichmann
www.erlustigung.org

Plattform Augarten

Mütter und Väter für den Augarten
(parents for the Augarten)

Prominent persons (from both Austria and abroad)
amongst others: actors, authors, cinema artists, musicians and politicians (such as the President of the Forum-Alpbach, Dr. Erhard Busek)

Some ten thousand people have signed a petition for the preservation of the site as a garden.
As one Englishman said: „How could it be possible to erect a concrete building in the Hampton Court gardens? I can't understand what is happening here!“