

ISLAND PLAN (P.69/2002): FOURTH AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 25th June 2002
by Senator L. Norman**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

150

2002

P.69 Amd.(4)

Price code: B

ISLAND PLAN (P.69/2002): FOURTH AMENDMENT

In paragraph (b) after the words “Policy H2 of the Plan,” insert the words -

“with the addition of the following site -

12. Fields 516, 517 and 518, St. Saviour (approximately 25 vergées)

SENATOR L. NORMAN

REPORT

Introduction

It is interesting to consider which of the services provided or facilitated by the States of Jersey is the most important. Clearly the provision of health facilities has a very high claim, as has social security and education.

But I think it could be justly argued that housing is the first priority. Shelter, security and safety create the well-being, which reduces the pressure on health service requirements and encourages the development of the individuals by learning and academic advancement.

Indeed, the Housing Committee's vision is -

“Shelter is a fundamental human need and good quality housing for all is an essential foundation for the social well being, health and economic prosperity of a community. The Committee's long term goal is for an Island where all residents have access to good standard, secure and affordable homes.”

While demand for homes continues to outstrip supply, that is just what that vision will remain, a vision.

Unless we have the courage to face the reality that unless we allow supply to come into balance with demand - in fact, need, - then house prices will continue to escalate, adding to the misery, frustration and feeling of hopelessness expressed by so many of our young people, many of whom are expressing their desperation by leaving their Island home for, hopefully, a better and certainly a more affordable life elsewhere.

This proposition offers the States the opportunity to tell the Island that once and for all we intend not just to pay lip service to the “housing problem”, but despite courting unpopularity in some quarters, we are prepared to zone sufficient land to meet the proven housing need. There simply is no other way.

The final draft of the Island Plan fails even to attempt to achieve this. Paragraph 8.53 admits this failing by stating **“The Planning and Environment Committee intends to provide sufficient land and opportunities to provide for 90% of the 3,180 requirements as estimated for the qualified sector.”**

This is a deliberate policy of ensuring that supply remains restricted, thereby maintaining escalating prices, penalising the less well-off and perpetuating the sellers market.

This failure, to meet only 90% of the need, is of itself ambitious. To achieve this minimum level of failure will require all of those sites being proposed for development in the plan not only to be approved by the States, but also to be developed within the timescale required. This has never happened before (indeed, there has already been lodged a proposition to remove three fields from rezoning), and therefore is a serious weakness in the Plan. It simply seeks to achieve less than the minimum requirement, and thus has no hope of success.

The purpose of this proposition is not solely to provide for between 90 and 120 homes (depending on the mix to be approved by the Planning and Environment Committee) for first-time buyers, but to make it clear to the Planning and Environment Committee, that the States, representing the people of Jersey, expect proper provision be made to house the population decently and adequately.

The site

I have attempted to be very careful when deciding which of the sites rejected by the Planning and Environment Committee to bring forward for consideration by the States. I settled on these fields because, in my view, the benefits, socially, environmentally and economically grossly outweigh any disadvantages in developing the site.

It is not only my view that this site is eminently suitable for first time buyer homes, but it appears to find favour with the Planning Office. I quote from the feasibility study which they kindly provided to me -

“The site is well located close to a main distributor road, adjacent to the existing built-up area of St. Saviour/Five Oaks.

As such a development on the site would benefit from its accessibility to a range of necessary community facilities both in the immediate vicinity and at Five Oaks. Accessibility to facilities is further enhanced by available/potentially available public transport, which offers a convenient short bus ride into town.

Despite the size of the site and its elevated location, it is effectively enclosed on three sides by existing housing development and is bounded to the north by Grainville playing fields. The site is, to a considerable extent screened from public view, by this established peripheral development together with hedgerows and differences in ground levels. It is not, therefore, particularly prominent in the local landscape, or the wider landscape.

As a result, with careful and sensitive planning, generous tree planting and thoughtful layout, a development could be integrated into its surroundings with minimal visual impact. (It certainly need not (as some fear) visually close the natural break in development between the top of St. Saviour's Hill and the housing around Five Oaks.) Indeed, such a development could be regarded as an extension and logical "rounding off" of the existing built-up area.

The site is relatively flat, is generally unrestricted in size and shape and the owner is willing to develop the land for Category A housing. Although most services can readily be provided, unfortunately an adequate water supply will not be available until system developments have been completed. These are presently planned for completion by the end of 2004."

The study goes on to say under the heading "LANDSCAPE VALUE" -

"Situates on 'topland'/plateau to the north east of the town.

Although the land is high and is exposed to long distance views from the north, views from more immediate public areas are surprisingly restricted. The site is, in part, enclosed by residential developments along the surrounding roads, including Birches Avenue to the west. Where there are gaps in the existing developments along the public roads to the north and south, views to the site are restricted by changes in ground level and established hedgerows. The site is exposed to immediate views from La Chasse Brunet.

It is considered that a sensitively designed new development with extensive tree planting, need have minimal impact on the wider landscape."

In layman's terms, the feasibility study appears to be telling us -

These homes would be -

- adjacent to a main road and public bus routes;
- within walking distance of the Parish Church and Parish Hall;
- within walking distance of several banks, a chemist, post office and a range of local shops;
- within walking distance of sports playing fields and a small public park;
- within walking distance of the Parish primary school, the local 11-16 secondary school, the 14-18 selective school, the three existing Catholic schools, the fee-paying colleges and the further education college;
- screened from public view, both immediate and wider;
- on all mains services on completion;
- easy to develop;
- provided with the minimum of delay as the owner is prepared to develop the land for first-time buyers.

These facts alone should make the rezoning of fields 516, 517 and 518 irresistible, but there are, in addition, several other planning gains which make the re-zoning even more attractive.

Planning gains

Earlier in this report I pointed out that the only properties in this area which would be exposed to immediate views of the site are approximately six homes in La Chasse Brunet.

This exposure would be totally ameliorated by sensible landscaping, but in order to assist these homeowners further, the owners of the fields is are prepared to cede to La Chasse Brunet homeowners, free of charge, a significant proportion of Field 518 for communal or private amenity facilities or even car parking.

All traffic to the new homes will be able to route via St. Saviour's Hill, avoiding La Chasse Brunet and Patier Road.

In addition the owners are prepared to cede to the Parish of St. Saviour, free of charge, sites for up to ten retirement homes for the benefit of local parishioners of the Parish's choosing.

A satellite clinic for Jersey Family Nursing and Home Care will also be provided for the benefit of the local community.

Further the owner is prepared to provide a landscaped amenity area on Field 516a.

But most significantly the owners are prepared to provide on this ideal site 2/3-bedroom first-time buyer houses at a price of £160,000/£170,000 at today's values.

Members will realise that this is some £40,000 **below** the prices being achieved for first-time buyer homes on sites most recently zoned for this purpose, some of which are only a few hundred yards from this site. This will set a new benchmark price for Category A homes, and give hope for hundreds of our young people who justly aspire to own their own homes.

Lest anyone be sceptical about these prices being achieved, the owner is prepared to enter any appropriate covenant or agreement with the States of Jersey to give us comfort. This includes selling the site to the Housing Committee (or Housing Trust), if required, at £40,000 per housing plot. This is a 50% discount to the current market rates. Thus the client will be the Housing Committee (or Housing Trust) who will be able to ensure the promised prices are delivered.

The owner is also prepared to offer the Housing Committee full allocation rights over the completed dwellings (except those provided by the Parish, if they accept the offer) to ensure that only those persons approved by the Housing Committee are offered one of these homes.

A schematic plan to give an indication of what could be achieved is available for inspection in the States Bookshop and will be displayed in the States Chamber on the day of debate. As members will note, the Plan shows clearly to the east of the site the area that the owner would be prepared to cede to the residents of La Chasse Brunet and to the west the area which could be used for amenity space and for landscaping.

Conclusion

If we, the States of Jersey, the representatives of the people, are to meet our strategic objective to ensure that all residents of the Island should be adequately and affordably housed, then we must get off the spiral of escalating prices. We must at least bring demand and supply into balance. To achieve this, sites not currently in housing use must be rezoned to that purpose.

I contend that if this site is not rezoned, a site which is as perfect as we could reasonably hope to find, then very few sites will be rezoned and the misery and discontent will grow.

If this proposition is not adopted, the message will be very clear. We, the States of Jersey have a Housing Strategy, we even have a Housing policy, but nevertheless, we will not provide the homes we know are needed.

I think we can do better than that. I know our young people deserve better than that.

There are no additional financial or manpower implications for the States arising out of this proposition.

