

STATES OF JERSEY



ISLAND PLAN 2011: REVISED DRAFT REVISION – APPROVAL (P.37/2014) – AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 17th April 2014
by the Connétable of St. Clement

STATES GREFFE

PAGE 2 –

After the words “the revised draft revision to the Island Plan 2011” insert the words –

“except that –

- (a) the following be removed from the list of sites to be zoned for Category A housing at Policy H1: Category A affordable housing sites (on page 245):
 - ‘5. Samares Nursery, La Grande Route de St. Clement, St. Clement, (10 acres/22 vergées);
 - 6. Le Quesne Nurseries, La Rue de Jambart, St. Clement (4 acres/9 vergées)’;
- (b) the revised draft revision to the Island Plan 2011 be further amended in such respects as may be necessary consequent upon the adoption of (a);”.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. CLEMENT

REPORT

It is not often realised that St. Clement is Jersey's smallest Parish, with a land area of only 4.2 km², some 50% less than St. Mary, the second smallest, which covers some 6.5 km².

On the other hand, St. Clement is home to 9% of Jersey's people, with a population of 9,221, giving a density of 2,142 persons per km² compared with St. Mary, which has a population of 1,752 and a density of 267 persons per km².

From the following table, taken from the 2011 Census, it can be seen that, despite being the smallest Parish by some margin, the density level in St. Clement is second only to St. Helier.

Parish Population and Density

Parish	Population 2011 Census	Per cent of total	Area (km ²)	Population Density (persons per km ²)
St. Helier	33,522	34	8.6	3,541
St. Saviour	13,580	14	9.3	1,471
St. Brelade	10,568	11	12.8	803
St. Clement	9,221	9	4.2	2,142
Grouville	4,866	6	7.8	594
St. Lawrence	5,418	6	9.5	552
St. Peter	5,003	5	11.6	425
St. Ouen	4,097	4	15.0	270
St. Martin	3,763	4	9.9	368
Trinity	3,156	3	12.3	253
St. John	2,911	3	8.7	320
St. Mary	1,752	2	6.5	267
JERSEY	97,857	100	116.2	819

This, I think, proves my assertion that this Parish has done more than its fair share in housing the local population, and it is no wonder that St. Clement wishes to resist any further significant development. Our population has increased by 1,025 (13%) in the past decade. No other Parish outside of St. Helier comes even close to this level of growth, except for St. Saviour, which has seen an increase of 1,089, but only 9%.

If the proposals in the Plan are allowed to proceed, and assuming only 3 persons per household, the population of the Parish will increase by 10% in one go. The social and physical infrastructure will find it very challenging to cope.

And incredibly there is nothing in the Plan to improve the social and recreational infrastructure in the east of the Island.

During my election campaign in the Autumn of 2008, it was reaffirmed to me that most Parishioners are opposed to further large-scale, inappropriate development in St. Clement, and this applies to residents from all parts of the Parish, including our more urban areas.

A Parish Assembly was held on 8th February 2005, when a proposal was put forward to provide something like 25 units of Parish sheltered housing on the Samarès Nursery site, on the understanding that the States Assembly would support the provision of 125 additional private sector houses on the site.

I was at that meeting, which filled the Parish Hall almost to overflowing, and the discussion was indeed lively, and the resulting vote was almost unanimously against the proposal.

There has been no change in the mood of Parishioners, as can be testified by the current and previous Ministers for Planning and Environment, who have attended meetings at our Parish Hall to discuss the potential development of these two Green Zone sites. The sheltered housing/retirement home scheme comprising some 50 units will now be going ahead on Field 274, La Rue de Lourderie. St. Clement is not ducking its social responsibilities.

The Revised Draft Revision 2011 Island Plan seems to regard demand and need as the same thing. They certainly are not. While I regard it as the responsibility of the State to assist those who are unable to house themselves, it is not the function of the State to attempt to fulfil a demand by creating unsustainable aspirations, and thereby fuelling a demand, which can never be satisfied.

The Plan fails to define “Affordable Housing” in precise terms, other than it “should meet the needs of persons on median incomes or below”. If, as has been widely mooted, the aim is to provide first-time buyer homes at under £300,000, demand will go through the roof, because everyone will want a piece of that action, no matter what restrictions be placed on resale.

We only have to look back at the previous States Loan Scheme, which, until the mid-1990s, had the States competing with private developers to buy land, offering first-time buyer properties at below market value and, to compound the issue, providing a subsidised mortgage. This generosity was welcomed by those able to obtain such a property, but created a demand and an aspiration which could never be met. I fear we have not learned our lessons.

But having said all that, there is no mechanism in the Plan for fixing a price for an “affordable” home, other than: “The eligibility of households to access affordable housing shall be determined by their assessment through the Affordable Housing Gateway.” The price, therefore, will be determined by negotiation between the developer and the potential purchaser, with those who have access to private loans or gifts, from family or others, having the obvious advantage to pay more than others.

Equally, there is no mechanism in the Plan to ensure that these so-called “affordable” homes are not lost to future eligible households. The Plan states: “conditions or restrictions **MAY** (my emphasis) be imposed to ensure that the benefit may be recycled or retained...”. There is no requirement for such conditions or restrictions or any advice on how, if they were imposed, they might be enforced.

I repeat, it is the role of the State to deal with need, not create an insatiable demand.

To most people's thinking, I submit, Affordable Housing, is low-price, first-time buyer homes. The proposals for St. Clement will do little to meet this demand, as the Plan proposes that 80% of the homes created in this Parish be for social rented housing. In other words, of the 305 units to be provided on the two Green Zone sites subject to this amendment, only 53 maximum would be for owner-occupiers.

Samarès and Le Quesne Nurseries, St. Clement

Both of these areas are in the Green Zone, the Zone which offers the highest protection against development outside of the Coastal Zone. The first-mentioned site also has, I understand, "agricultural conditions" attached, which I am surprised the Planning Department has not enforced, bearing in mind the current high demand for agricultural land.

Samarès Nursery was afforded Green Zone status only just over 2 years ago by a unanimous vote of the States, effectively on the proposition of the now Chief Minister, Senator I.J. Gorst. He was a St. Clement Deputy at that time. It is incredible that we are even contemplating a change at this stage, when even the housing need remains unproven as I shall show later.

The Le Quesne field has been in the Green Zone even longer. And what we should be asking ourselves is, if these sites did not have glasshouses on them, and if their owners had not neglected them and let them get into a ruinous state of repair, would we be even considering a rezoning?

The photograph of this site in the Appendix to the Plan is misleading in the extreme, as it does not show this Green Zone field in context. To assist members, here is the photograph that should have been provided –



Looking at this photograph of Le Quesne Nurseries, it is clear that this would be a monstrous incursion into the Green Zone, a wedge of massive proportions into a neatly rectangular set of open fields. How will it be possible to resist development on the fields to the south, north and east of this proposed incursion in the future?

Ground conditions and flooding

Some of the area proposed for development is on Samarès marsh and therefore the ground is soft and the water table high. Overdevelopment in the area has already caused flooding issues, particularly in the most recent development, Clos Lemprière, which is adjacent to Samarès Nursery. The gardens of Clos de la Mare are now also experiencing flooding even during periods of modest rainfall.

It is also suspected that this overdevelopment, and the additional surface water generated, has already been the cause of the undermining of Rue du Maupertuis, which has collapsed several times during the past 4 years.

To date, even after this all time, Transport and Technical Services have been unable to lay a new sewer. Their investigations have found that the ground in this area becomes very mobile when disturbed, to such an extent that even laying an “open-cut” sewer could cause a risk to adjacent properties. No solution has yet been identified.

More development in the area means more surface water entering the marshy area and threatening the integrity of the road and sewer network.

The owner of one field, also adjacent to the proposed site, is extremely concerned that the surface water drainage from his field, which currently goes through Samarès Nursery, will have nowhere to go, will back up and eventually breach the bank threatening to flood any new homes on the proposed site.

Additionally, the main surface water drain from the Nursery flows into the canal running through Samarès Manor Gardens, a proposed site of special interest. If the Nursery is developed, the drainage will be insufficient and cause flooding to the Gardens, nearby housing and the St. Clement golf course, and perhaps threaten the Manor itself.

The Minister will probably argue that it will be down to the developer to resolve the surface and foul water issues. That cannot be right, particularly as it was responsibility of the developer of Clos Lemprière to resolve those issues when those homes were built. He failed. How is it reasonable for a developer, whose nature will be to do the job at the minimum cost, to maximise profit, to be given the responsibility to resolve an issue that our own experts, so far, have been unable to?

Site of archaeological interest

The area around Samarès Nursery is almost certainly a site of archaeological interest, as is confirmed in the current Island Plan. In living memory, residents are aware of a significant number of standing stones being on this site before the original glasshouses were erected, some of which were destroyed, but it is understood that the largest were buried intact in the centre of the glasshouse development. Ideally, these monuments

should be found and if possible re-erected. It is probable that this area has important archaeology from the Neolithic and Bronze Age period.

It is not necessary

This is a simple matter of mathematics. Between now and 2020, the Plan anticipates an overall demand for homes of 3,300 in number compared to a conservative estimated supply of 3,700. The Plan is therefore proposing an oversupply by some 10 to 12%, and this before taking into account the additional homes that would be provided in a scheme to support Parish vitality in the northern and central Parishes.

This should also be seen against a background of REDUCING demand evidenced by the fall in house prices of some 6% over the past year.

Equally, it must be absurd to be considering building in the Green Zone when we have over 3,000 domestic properties lying empty.

Harness just 10% of this wasted resource, and we have removed immediately the need to take the easy route of destroying our Green Zone.

There are other potential sources of housing supply which have been totally ignored in the Plan. For example, Field 145 in St. Clement, which is in the Built-Up Zone, and earmarked in the 2002 Island Plan for Category A housing. The potential yield from the Jersey College for Girls site has not been included in the figures in the Plan. These are options which should, and must, be utilised BEFORE Green Zone land, in whichever Parish it might be.

Other uses

It is inevitable that despite the size of the sites, it will be claimed that they will never again be used for horticultural or agricultural purposes. And while there is “hope value” for housing development, this might well be the case. But this depends on the economic situation at any given time. With food prices around the world rising, it might be that in the not too distant future we will be looking for areas such as these to sustain our own population, and increased food prices may well make Samarès and Le Quesne Nurseries viable gain. In fact, that time might already have arrived.

In October 2009, the United Nations told us that to feed the world’s increasing population, food production must increase by 50% over the next 20 years. From my own knowledge and experience, it is certain that Jersey growers are ready to play their part in the expansion of this vital industry. It would be verging on the irresponsible to destroy potential sources of food to create homes which according to the Plan’s figures are not required.

Despite the perceived wisdom that there is no demand for glasshouses these days, the facts show exactly the opposite. There is an unfulfilled demand for glass for the growing of flowers, plugs and even potatoes – growers were openly advertising as they were unable to find sufficient land for their 2011/12 crops, and some were even considering planting outside of the Island.

This is crazy when land resources such as these nurseries, on which relatively modern glasshouses exist, built in the late 1990s, are lying idle. And to compound the nonsense, Planning have recently had to deal with applications to create new glasshouses in other places!!

But even if there were no demand for them as glasshouses, it would be cheap and quick to return the sites to agriculture. All of the glass has already been removed. The foundations and hard-standing are very shallow. It would take only weeks for the frames to be removed and the footings to be dug up and removed and the land restored to its proper use.

Alternatively, being situated where these fields are, close to recent developments with postage-stamp sized gardens, the demand for allotments in this area is bound to grow. It is recognised that some investment will be needed to create allotments on this site – as it will be for any site near the urban area – but I suggest that this would be a much more appropriate and acceptable use than creating 300 homes which, I repeat, we do not need. Indeed, Planning's policy of (or lack of it) on garden-grabbing is going to increase the demand for allotments, as more and more gardens have concrete poured over this important private amenity and growing space.

Schools

In addition to Le Rocquier Secondary School, which has a capacity of 900 pupils and a current cohort of 881, St. Clement has 2 States Primary Schools, Samarès and St. Clement.

With so many families decanted from Le Squez Estate during its redevelopment, the numbers attending this school reduced, but is now increasing again as each phase of the redevelopment is completed. From Reception to Year 6, this school has a capacity of 364 (26 pupils x 14 classes). Currently it has 272, therefore there is an availability of 92 places.

Being a one-form entry school, St. Clement's School has a maximum number of 182 pupils and a current cohort of 179. The Head-teacher advises me that in recent years they have not been able to offer places to every child who lives in the catchment area.

If Samarès and Le Quesne Nurseries were to be developed in line with the Plan, and the 56 new homes are provided at Le Squez because of the increased density policy, some 321 new homes will come into existence all at the same time. It is reasonable to assume an average of one child per household, perhaps an underestimate. It is difficult to see where all of these young people will be accommodated.

Traffic

I am getting an increasing number of comments and complaints about the build-up of traffic, both along La Grande Route de la Côte and La Grande Route de St. Clément. This traffic is often stationary for long periods, always noisy, probably unhealthy, and will only be made worse by more building in the Green Zone.

Environmental Health has commented that: “the noise environment for a significant number of existing residents will deteriorate. It is recommended that a noise impact assessment is completed prior to determining this site for reclassification”. I do not know if this has been done.

Surely, it makes more sense to revitalize the town’s unused areas of former commercial activities with social housing, wherefrom the residents can access on foot their places of work, schools and the many other social and recreational facilities that St. Helier has to offer.

Petition

Attached is a copy of the petition which was presented to the States on 20th April 2010 and was accepted by the then Minister for Planning and Environment.

Finally

Members can be in no doubt that many residents of St. Clement are becoming more and more distressed by the development that is occurring in the Parish, and even more so by the totally inappropriate style of development that is being permitted in some cases. La Rue de Jambart is a very sad example of a traditional country lane being ruined by urban standards being imposed on a rural community.

That is not to say that I, nor the Parish, is opposed to development. We are opposed to large-scale, inappropriate development, especially in the Green Zone. I have supported the development at Le Clos de Charrière, Fairways, Georgetown Mews, Hameau de la Mer, the increased density at Le Squez, as well as the potential regeneration of L’Industrie at an appropriate level, and a significant number of smaller projects. This is mentioned simply to ward off any accusations of “nimbyism”.

St. Clement is often spoken about these days as an urban Parish. Despite the excessive development that has taken place within its boundaries over the past years, it remains culturally and, in much of its area, physically rural. I look to the States to help keep it that way.

I ask that Samarès Nursery and Le Quesne Nurseries be removed from the list of potential sites for rezoning on the grounds that it is not necessary, it is inappropriate, and it would overburden a Parish which has already contributed more than its fair share of the housing provision for the Jersey population.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no financial or manpower implications for the States arising from this amendment.

Re-issue Note

This amendment is re-issued because the statement of financial and manpower implications was inadvertently omitted from the original version.

<h1>PETITION</h1> <p>TO THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE STATES OF JERSEY</p>		
Name of person(s) or body responsible for this petition – Electors of the Parish of St. Clément and others		
These are the reasons for this petition – The signatories desire no further large-scale development in the Parish of St. Clément.		
We, the undersigned, petition the States of Jersey as follows – To request the Minister for Planning and Environment to remove Samarès Nursery from the draft Island Plan as a potential development site.		
Full name (please print)	Full postal address	Signature
1,315 signatures		