

STATES OF JERSEY



LA COLLETTE LOW RISE: PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE – PETITION

Lodged au Greffe on 17th July 2015
by Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Planning and Environment to ensure that any redevelopment of La Collette Low Rise upholds and maintains the Protected Open Space status of the existing green space on the site between La Collette Low Rise and its border with Green Street.

DEPUTY R. LABEY OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Introduction

The La Collette flats benefit from 2 main layers of protection.

First, the site is Listed Grade 4, the *whole* site, including the green area which is within the boundary of the listing. Policy HE1 is therefore relevant.

Second, the green area is designated within the Island Plan as a Protected Open Space, thereby benefitting from the safeguard afforded by Policy SCO 4 of the Plan.

These safety measures, enshrined in law, are rendered meaningless if the plans submitted by Andium Homes for the redevelopment of the La Collette Low Rise flats are allowed to proceed. The 'Protected Open Space' will be lost under a new apartment building.

It is inconceivable that a private landowner proposing such a scheme, running contrary to the protections and policies of the Island Plan, would have his or her development recommended for approval by the Planning Department, as was the case here, though the Planning Appeals Committee, in its wisdom, disagreed.

Are we saying the rules of the Island Plan don't apply when the States is the developer?

The potential loss of the green space is of grave and particular concern to both residents of La Collette and its neighbours, the impact upon whom of the proposed new block of flats is seemingly being ignored.

This proposition seeks to uphold and shore-up the Protected Open Space status of the approximately 1,050 m.² of green land bordering Green Street and clearly defined by falling within the loop driveway of the La Collette Low Rise development. 27 trees would also be saved.

Historic Environment Protection

Whilst this proposition deals only with the specific area of landscaping, it is pertinent to read the Planning Department's Historic Environment documentation relating to the whole site. The Statement of Significance reads as follows –

“La Collette Flats are the best example of 1960s high-rise development in Jersey. The development, which includes the first tower block built in the Island, is an outstanding example of the 1960s style of architecture using reinforced concrete on a scale not previously attempted. The imaginative site layout, bold sculptural treatment of the blocks and use of detail all contribute to the success of the scheme. The external works and landscaping are very much part of the design.”.

In the External Description is found the following –

“La Collette Flats are situated on the lower eastern slopes of Mount Bingham. The estate is composed of six blocks of one and two bedroom flats set behind a raised green lawn adjacent to Green Street...”

...The landscaping is a critical part of the scheme.”

Here is an extract from the Historic Interest section –

Designed by Taylor Leapingwell, built 1963-64. The scheme was the result of a competition held within the Association of Jersey Architects. The development, which includes the first tower block built in the Island, is an outstanding example of the 1960s style of architecture ...

.... To ensure that the flowing landscape was not ‘interrupted’ by the buildings, the flats were to be raised off the ground on columns called ‘piloti’ – with planting and paths continuing underneath.”

Clearly the principles adopted by Taylor Leapingwell gave the La Collette flats, by appropriate scale and landscaping, a topographical coherence in keeping with the notion of Havre des Pas as a seaside town nestling beneath an outcrop of rock – Le Mont de la Ville – which stretches out towards South Hill Gardens, La Collette Martello, the chimney, and today beyond to the La Collette reclamation site.

All of that is forgotten with the redevelopment as proposed, and to be lost by so many building storeys crassly stacked on the open space bordering Green Street.

Island Plan Open Space Policy

By way of justification for the destruction of this particular Open Space it has been said, for example, that it’s “not suitable for football” and such like. That is to seriously miss the point – residents are very clear and relieved of its unsuitability for ball-games or any kind of anti-social behaviour associated with parks. That’s the beauty of this space!

How the space is used or not used is not for developers to unilaterally determine and, let us be clear, the Island Plan makes provision to counter just such an argument by defining the different kinds of Open Space worthy of protection.

Open space Planning for open space

7.40 Jersey has an array of open spaces ranging from formal sporting facilities, natural green space, beaches and parks which serve the whole Island; to informal spaces, both hard and soft, that form parts of the Island's built environment and which are more important on a neighbourhood level.

Type of open space	Description
Parks	Formal parks with public access
Outdoor sports facility	Seasonal and fixed sports spaces, both privately and publicly owned (including commercial sports facilities and golf courses)

Type of open space	Description
Amenity greenspace	Open space that is available for free and spontaneous use, but not managed as a park, playing field or habitat (e.g. informal grassed areas in housing estates)
Play space	Equipped children's space (pre-teens) and space for teenagers
Natural greenspace	All natural greenspace that have some form of public access
Allotments	Land subdivided into rentable plots for the growing of produce
Cemeteries and churchyards	Open spaces around churches and separate burial grounds
Civic space	Open public spaces with hard surfaces between buildings or, particularly in the rural context, associated with civic buildings or landmarks
Linear open space	Linked paths or routes for recreation and travel (walking, cycling and horse riding)
Beaches	Accessible coastal spaces between High and Low Water Marks
Visually important open space	Open spaces that may not be publicly accessible or functional for recreation or leisure, but which play an important role in contributing to the character of an area

Clearly the La Collette Protected Open Space qualifies in both the category of Amenity Greenspace *and* that of Visually Important Open Space.

7.54 The protection of open space is particularly important in the Built-up Area where competing development pressures are greatest. Indeed, its retention and enhancement is now all the more important in support of the regeneration of the Island's urban environment and the desire to promote urban living. Within the context of the Built-up Area, open space – particularly that identified as visually important open space – may have no public access or recreational utility, but may perform an important visual and environmental function.

Policy SCO 4

Protection of open space

The Minister for Planning and Environment will protect existing open space provision and the loss of open space will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that:

1. its loss will have no serious impact on the adequacy, quality and accessibility of provision of the type of open space affected by the proposal; or
2. alternative replacement provision of the same or better extent, quality and accessibility of open space can be provided; or,
3. the proposal will be of greater community or Island benefit than the existing open space resource; or
4. its loss would not seriously harm the character and appearance of the locality.

Applying the La Collette Open Space to each of the Policy SCO 4 criteria demonstrably makes the case for its retention ...

1. its loss **WOULD** have **A** serious impact on the adequacy, quality and accessibility of provision of the type of open space affected by the proposal;
2. alternative replacement provision of the same or better extent, quality and accessibility of open space **CAN NOT** be provided; in no way can internal courtyards claim to represent an alternative replacement – who’s going to see them?
3. See below.
4. its loss would **UNQUESTIONABLY** seriously harm the character and appearance of the locality **GIVEN THAT WHICH IT IS PROPOSED WOULD REPLACE IT.**

Rationalization for the proposed redevelopment of La Collette with all the negatives that the plans entail; a near tripling of the amount of units; the destruction of the Open Space; the breaking up of a community and inherent stress, seems then to hang on the size of the Housing waiting list and the following criterion.

3. the proposal will be of greater community or Island benefit than the existing open space resource; or

The size of the Housing waiting list, whilst important and vital to reduce, cannot override all other considerations; such as appropriateness of scale, density, location and design. To follow such an argument to its natural conclusion would be to render utterly redundant any Island Plan and the provisions, ideals and protections for the common good within it contained.

There is *no* ‘greater community or Island benefit’ in –

- the destruction of open space in St. Helier
- ghetto-creating over-development and inappropriate density
- further stress to already over-burdened amenities, infrastructure and resources
- design and architecture incongruous to its environment
- subjecting neighbours to negatively impactful development.

And what of the “greater community or Island benefit” from the neighbour’s perspective? What of the already chronic and well-documented traffic carnage of Green Street.

What of the residents of, for example, Clos de Pas, directly opposite? Where once there was green space, there will now be in excess of 100 windows staring directly into their bathrooms, bedrooms and living-rooms and onto their only outside space, their modest balconies? What consideration for them?

Conclusion

Positive outcomes to this proposition being approved don’t end with the preservation of an important open space. If adopted, a necessary re-appraisal of the scheme will follow, and with it the opportunity to engage with the whole community on a way forward to satisfy everyone.

This report has not criticized officers of the Panning Department or Andium Homes. For all the importance the Island Plan places on protecting open spaces, it also identifies as “likely to come forward by 2020: La Collette Low Rise, St. Helier – Phase 1 & 2 (circa. 100 units)”, which represents a clear contradiction in policy if the ‘circa 100 units’ is only achievable with the destruction of the Protected Open Space.

Andium Homes has inherited this illogicality, which may go some way to explaining the lack of communication with residents and neighbours and the ensuing distress and confusion. Issue has to be taken, however, with the notion that consultation should occur only after outline planning permission has been approved. One hopes that lesson has been learned.

Now is the time for compromise, not entrenchment. A 70-strong meeting of the Havre des Pas Improvement Group (at which Andium officers were gracious enough to attend, to their credit) and made up of La Collette residents, Green Street residents and Havre des Pas dwellers, universally and angrily condemned the proposals. They feel excluded, ignored, imposed upon, frightened and abused. Is this the way we want to proceed in Jersey?

No-one wants better accommodation for the residents of La Collette than their neighbours in Green Street and Havre des Pas. The plea is to work with the whole community to achieve this aim, and to make a start by listening to their heartfelt desire to retain the last remaining open green space on Green Street.

After all, it’s an aspiration in harmony with the stated aims of the Strategic Plan.

Desired Outcome		Key Areas of Focus 2015-18
5.5	Attractive, well-used public spaces meet the needs of town residents and visitors.	Develop a Public Realm Strategy to increase the quality and quantity of public space – streets, squares, parks, other green space – and the links between them.

and

5.8	St. Helier provides attractive urban living with quality homes and neighbourhoods.	Bring forward a housing strategy to deliver increased housing supply for rent and purchase, to increase standards and quality, with reviewed and appropriate criteria of density, and to support good quality neighbourhoods and communities for St. Helier, and elsewhere in Jersey.
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Financial and manpower implications

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

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<p>PROJECT INFORMATION</p> <p>Project Name: La Collette Flats Regeneration</p> <p>Client: [Redacted]</p> <p>Address: [Redacted]</p> <p>Date: [Redacted]</p>	<p>Scale: 1:100</p> <p>Sheet: 1 of 1</p>	<p>Project Name: La Collette Flats Regeneration</p>	<p>Section: Section Elevation</p> <p>Sheet: 01</p>	<p>Client: Ardnamhoron</p> <p>Date: 14/06/2015</p>	<p>Project Name: marta architects</p> <p>Project No: 4830/15</p>
<p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roof Window Door Wall Ground Vegetation Water 	<p>COURTYARD ELEVATION</p>	<p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roof Window Door Wall Ground Vegetation Water 			
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APPENDIX 3

