

STATES OF JERSEY



ISLAND PLAN 2022-25: APPROVAL (P.36/2021) – THIRTY-FIRST AMENDMENT ST. HELIER COUNTRY PARK

Lodged au Greffe on 12th July 2021
by the Connétable of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

ISLAND PLAN 2022-25: APPROVAL (P.36/2021) – THIRTY-FIRST
AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2 –

After the words “the draft Island Plan 2022-25” insert the words “except that, within Proposal 25 – St. Helier Country Park –

(a) at the end of the first sentence, there should be inserted the words “upon the expiry of the present lease in January 2023”;

(b) after the first paragraph, there should be inserted the following new paragraph –

“The Council of Ministers will establish a project board to develop proposals to be included in the next Government Plan in order that the St. Helier Country Park can be delivered during the period covered by the Bridging Island Plan.”

(c) after the second paragraph there should be inserted the following new paragraph –

“The development of the country park will reflect an investigation and report by the Council of Ministers on opportunities to incorporate adjacent areas of countryside into the park in the future, in line with the map attached to, and supporting, Paragraph 7 of Amendment 38 (as adopted by the States Assembly on 21st June 2011) to the previous Island Plan.”

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

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

to approve, in accordance with Article 3(1) of the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law 2002, as amended by the Covid-19 (Island Plan) (Jersey) Regulations 2021, the draft Island Plan 2022-25, except that within Proposal 25 – St. Helier Country Park –

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St. Helier Country Park can be delivered during the period covered by the Bridging Island Plan.”

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REPORT

Introduction

While I am grateful to the Minister for the Environment for including in the draft Bridging Island Plan as a definite proposal the creation of the St. Helier Country Park, I am disappointed that no progress has been made towards this goal in the ten years since my amendment to the previous Island Plan ([P.48/2011 Amd.\(38\)](#)) was adopted.

I have from time to time attempted to get the Council of Ministers to take this matter seriously and implement a decade-old decision, notably when the then Minister for Infrastructure decided to put out to tender and subsequently lease out Warwick Farm when it was no longer required by his department. I tabled a detailed proposition ([P.75/2017](#)) which was rubbished by the Council of Ministers in their comments to such an extent that I withdrew the proposition on 26th September 2017.

Warwick Farm and the countryside, wooded valleys and lanes around it remains the key opportunity site for a country park to serve the capital and provide amenity space for all manner of activities including camping, nature study and forest schooling, horse riding, mountain biking, pétanque – the list goes on and on.

In recent years the site has been proposed as a potential site for the new hospital, which use I believe would have to take precedence over the creation of a country park were the current plan for Overdale to be refused planning permission. Further delay in realising this project is, therefore, inevitable; however, given the decision to grant a lease on Warwick Farm the site will not be available until January 2023 in any case, by which time the question of the site of the new hospital will have been settled once and for all. In the meantime, I believe that the new Island Plan should fire the starting gun for the delivery of this vital addition to the Island's amenity space, especially given the Government's commitment to putting children first and the repeated assurances that St. Helier's future is not to be compromised by the lack of significant access to the large area of open greenspace that is envisaged in this proposal.

A full and detailed record of my attempts to date to persuade the Council of Ministers to implement this project is provided in the Appendices.

Financial and manpower implications

If this amendment is accepted the Minister for the Environment will require extra officer support to develop the proposal for a St. Helier Country Park over and above the support which it is assumed is in place to cover the Minister's unamended proposal.

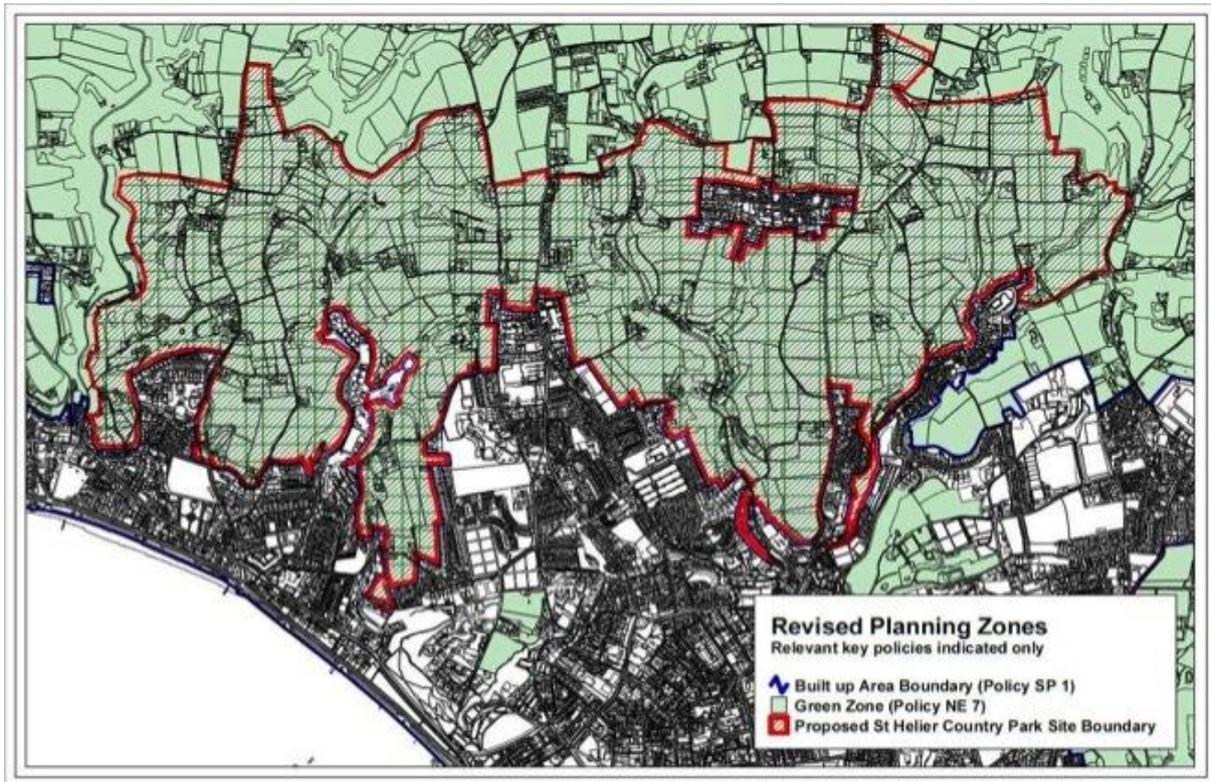
Child Rights Impact Assessment implications

This amendment has been assessed in relation to the [Bridging Island Plan CRIA](#). The St. Helier Country Park, if achieved, will provide improved access to the countryside and enjoyment of nature study and physical exercise for thousands of young people living in the urban areas of St. Helier, St. Saviour and St. Clement, in particular, who currently have less access to such facilities than young people living in the less developed parts of the Island, especially in the west which is well served by Les Creux Country Park.

APPENDICES:

1. Map indicating the possible extent of the St. Helier Country Park accompanying the original amendment to the 2011 Island Plan (P.48/2011 Amd.(38))
2. Hansard extracts of the States' Minutes for 21 June 2011 and the report accompanying the amendment
3. Hansard extract of the debate on the amendment on 21 June 2011
4. Subsequent references in Hansard transcripts to the proposal for a St. Helier Country Park
5. P.75/2017: Report accompanying my proposition to request the Minister for Infrastructure to defer the proposed letting of Warwick Farm for 6 months while a feasibility study is carried out into the potential for incorporating the site into the St. Helier Country Park
6. Comments on P.75/2017 by the Council of Ministers

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

EXTRACT FROM STATES MINUTES OF 21ST JUNE 2011

(DEBATE ON P.48/2011 – ‘ISLAND PLAN 2011: APPROVAL’ – AND AMENDMENTS)

“THE STATES, adopting an amendment of the Connétable of St.Helier (Amendment (38), Paragraphs 7 to 9), agreed that after the words “the revised draft Island Plan 2011” there should be inserted the words –

“except that –

2. (a) “in Objective BE2 – Regeneration of St. Helier objectives (pages 128– 129), after paragraph 5 there should be inserted a new paragraph as follows – ^[11]_[SEP] ‘Promote and enable access to the countryside for the residents of St. Helier through the creation of a St. Helier Country Park’;
3. (b) in Proposal 9: Public Realm Strategy (page 135) after the words ‘of St. Helier’s public realm.’ there should be inserted a fifth bullet point as follows –

Introduction

‘Consult upon and develop the proposal to designate a St. Helier Country Park in the countryside immediately to the north of the Town as shown on the Map attached ...’ ”

REPORT

Introduction

The 2011 draft Island Plan has a lot to say about St. Helier, and I welcome many of its proposals. Not that the majority of them are new: previous versions of the Plan have backed the need to regenerate our town and to focus new development in the urban areas, not only for reasons of environmental sustainability, to safeguard the Island’s countryside and beaches which are so precious to us all, but also to encourage people to choose to live in St. Helier for reasons of quality of life as well as of convenience. The fact that I have lodged more than 20 amendments to the Plan should not be taken to mean I don’t support it; it’s simply that important quality of life issues for St. Helier, such as open space provision, parking and safe cycling and walking, need to have more emphasis than the draft Plan currently gives them.

For the States cannot have it both ways: if St. Helier is to be expected to take the majority of the 4,000 new homes proposed for the Island in the next decade, the capital must be provided with the open space that its residents, workers and visitors need. La Collette 2 reclamation site was promised to provide ‘a significant area of open space’ but no longer, we are told on page 286; the Waterfront is now earmarked for a new financial quarter, leisure uses and residential accommodation, rather than generous open space which was envisaged at first; sites such as Ann Court, currently an essential car park, are due to receive dense residential developments, while the Town Park very nearly lost much of its area to flats – fortunately the combined opposition of the Parish’s Deputies and Constable persuaded the Minister for Planning and Environment to rethink. St. Helier needs more open space, not less; the Millennium Town Park should be the first of several new parks to be created this century, not the last, and it is for this

reason that my amendment 7 seeks to start the process of developing a Country Park for the Town.

The majority of these amendments have been considered by the St. Helier Roads Committee and helpfully modified by its members; a couple were suggested by the Committee. The amendments have also been considered by the Parish Assembly of St. Helier.

Proposal to develop a St. Helier Country Park (amendment 7)

The idea that all users of the Town should be able to access such a park came from a visit I made several years ago to Eastleigh Borough Council and an introduction to the Itchen Valley Country Park, 440 acres of countryside managed and protected for the benefit of the densely populated towns and city in the immediate vicinity (<http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/countryside/itchen-valley-country-park/visiting-ivcp.aspx>). As I was shown this area by some Council members, I found myself wishing that St. Helier could benefit in a similar way from close and convenient access to the countryside. Accordingly, at an early stage of the consultation process, I made the suggestion that the new Island Plan should consider the opportunity of creating a new country park easily accessible from the Town. Given the findings of the audit of open space referred to above, and the stated aim of the Plan to concentrate new development in the Town area, it would seem logical that we start the consultation necessary to provide, if possible, a country park beginning at the town's 'back door.'

Thanks to the work of the National Trust, there are already a number of 'Dons' to the north of the Town, especially along Vallée des Vaux, in itself a natural gateway to the countryside. But in spite of the Green Lane network in this part of the Parish and a few woodland footpaths, there is still very little access to the countryside here; taken in conjunction with my amendments 5 and 17 this amendment, if adopted, would allow the consultation process with landowners to begin that might lead to a greater degree of access to the countryside, albeit properly managed and controlled, and the kind of safe, off-road, circular routes that have been created in the rural and coastal areas of the Island. Grands Vaux Reservoir presents a particular opportunity for increased public access as does the pond, currently cordoned off by high fencing halfway up Grands Vaux below Stafford Lane.

The area of the proposed country park shown on the map in the Appendix is for guidance only. While Vallée des Vaux and Grands Vaux have areas of woodland that seem to me to be ideal for greater public access and enjoyment, there are also potential sites in the western part of the Green Zone north of St. Helier. Consultation would also be required with the Parishes of St. Saviour and Trinity, as the proposed area impinges on these parishes to the north and east.

APPENDIX 3

EXTRACT FROM HANSARD TRANSCRIPT OF THE DEBATE ON 21ST JUNE 2011 ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A ST. HELIER COUNTRY PARK (ISLAND PLAN 2011: APPROVAL (P.48/2011) – THIRTY-EIGHTH AMENDMENT, PARAGRAPH 7)

1.18.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

... the main purpose of this amendment is the proposal to consult upon and develop a proposal to designate a St. Helier country park in the countryside immediately to the north of town. This has been accepted by the Minister, I believe, although the inspector had a problem with it.

The Bailiff:

Forgive me, Connétable, but I forgot to do what I usually do, which is to clarify from the Minister what his stance was. Would it be helpful to do that?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am very supportive of all the Connétable's amendments.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Because it has been accepted I do not propose to say very much about it. If it runs into the same hail of fire that Senator Le Gresley experienced with his proposals then I will robustly defend the proposals when I sum up, but it is essentially, as I explained in the report, accompanying the 38th amendment, all about making sure that if St. Helier is to be the focus of development in this Island Plan, as it has been in previous Island Plans, then the corollary of that proposal is that St. Helier must be given adequate amenity space, and I draw attention in that report to the fact that the idea for this came from a visit to Eastleigh where I discovered that the residents of Eastleigh and slightly further afield, Southampton, have access to a wonderful country park on their doorstep. It is perhaps also worth mentioning that our twin town in Germany, Bad Wurzach, has literally on its High Street the second largest raised bog in Europe, which is subject to a lot of preservation and conservation. So, it is not unknown for towns to have country parks on the doorstep, particularly where there is a quality of flora and fauna that is worth protecting and when there is a need for residents to have that open space on their doorstep. So, I hope this will prove acceptable to Members. It is the beginning of a long road, if it is accepted, and in terms of resources I have suggested that the department should be able to do the work from within existing cash limits, but I would expect the Parish of St. Helier to take a lead in developing these proposals and in consulting with the landowners affected by them. The map given with the report is purely indicative and I was pleased that I was not contacted by anybody who found that their property had been wrapped up in this red line. I am very grateful to the National Trust who yesterday confirmed their support for the proposal and if I could just quote from the letter from the President, she says: "It is absolutely crucial that residents of St. Helier and the Island as a whole are able to enjoy access to our countryside and the Island Plan should be instrumental in securing this key objective. There are some wonderful rural areas on the very doorstep of St. Helier including Fern Valley, Vallée des Vaux and Grands Vaux Reservoir and any discussions which seek to ensure easier access and enjoyment should be welcomed, in particular the future management and development of Bellozanne

Valley could be a wonderful opportunity in this respect.” And they go on to disparage the inspector, but I will not do that. They have produced this helpful, larger map, which I am just showing to Members, and what it indicates is that my proposed designation leaves out Fern Valley, which was not intended. So, clearly there is much more work to be done on the extent of the St. Helier country park if it goes ahead. What I am looking for today is support from Members so that we can start work on what I think could be a very exciting proposal and perhaps in due course bring it back to the States as a proposition. I maintain the amendment.

The Bailiff:^[11:56]Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the amendment?

1.18.2 Deputy A.T. Dupré:

One problem about this park is that Field 1248 is included in this park. There has been no discussion with the owners of the property about this park. At the present moment 1248 is still, in the current plan, part of the built-up area in the old plan, not this new one, in the old plan. Therefore I think it is very important that these people are included in discussions on this because they are obviously expecting or hoping to build on this field.

1.18.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I stand to support the Constable of St. Helier for bringing this amendment today. I am wholly in support of a possible country park being developed at the north of St. Helier. I walk Vallée des Vaux almost on a daily basis, it is a delightful valley. Also the area around Fern Valley, La Grande Route du Mont à l’Abbé, the 15 mile-an-hour green lane system that we have needs to be protected. As far as Field 1248 goes I think that is going to be a separate issue later on when we debate amendment 19 of Deputy Paul Le Claire’s. Obviously the decision will make the House on the status of that greenfield site and then it goes without saying, of course, that I would hope that Field 1248 will remain part of the green lane system that we currently have in the north of St. Helier.

1.18.4 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I am slightly sceptical about this and I feel that it will, as has been alluded to before in various speeches, cast the whole area in aspic and I think that the proximity to the present development of the town area renders this dangerous. The whole area is bordered by services and infrastructure and the risk to my mind is that if no development is allowed in this area at all it will get pushed out into other areas of the Island where there is not the infrastructure presently and I feel that I cannot support it on that basis.

1.18.5 Deputy A.K.F. Green:

I am pleased to follow the Constable of St. Brelade and I stand to support the Constable of St. Helier with this. This is not setting anything in aspic or stone or anything else. This is just saying that we need to develop a plan which would enable access to a country park. Bellozanne comes to mind as an ideal place to be starting that sort of work. We have the incinerator activity that has almost completely moved to that monstrosity down at Havre des Pas but nevertheless it will be a better run incinerator. But nevertheless Bellozanne is a beautiful valley that is neglected, and that is just one example of work that we could do, working together, the Parish of St. Helier, all the Deputies, all the people in this Island, to improve the environment and access to the countryside of

St. Helier. One of the very good things about St. Helier is you are never more than a few minutes away from the countryside. We want to maintain that for the people in town.

1.18.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Looking at the map it is quite astonishing to realise perhaps, which one forgets, the amazing green hinterland that St. Helier and even St. Saviour does have access to. It reminds me very much of the Peak District when I was living in Sheffield. Although one was very much in a fairly big city, fairly built up, you had this lovely countryside on your doorstep. Of course the problem was finding the time to go there and I think this is exactly what the Constable of St. Helier is trying to achieve because we all know that we live in a beautiful Island, whether you are looking at the countryside immediately around the town or whether you are looking at the coastal paths, but not all of us have the time necessarily in our daily routine to go and enjoy the beauty if we do not live in those areas. It is simply I think common sense to make it more an integral part of St. Helier so that there are paths and networks so that one can easily get out there. The main part I wanted to speak to relates to paragraph (a) and it relates to the walkable and cycleable routes. Particularly the cycleable area is something I just want to concentrate on very quickly. First of all I think there is an element that as a society, and perhaps as an Assembly hopefully less, we do need to come to terms with the fact that cyclists are around and that if we are to achieve the aims of the Sustainable Transport Policy and also of the Health Department we do need to be encouraging cycling, particularly in St. Helier, and we do need to be making things as easy as possible for cyclists to get around. Frankly, at the moment, the town is a mess when it comes to cycling. There have been some initiatives that I think have been unfairly criticised. For example we have seen counter-flow cycle lanes, the one on New Street is the one that immediately comes to mind, which are being criticised and I think that we have to get our mind round the fact that we cannot expect cyclists in particular to follow the rest of the traffic. First of all it does not create any incentive for a cyclist. What is the point of being on a bicycle if you just have to follow the rest of the traffic, which is perhaps moving more slowly than you are? It is not fair to the car drivers either. So, I think this really is an area that needs to be looked at in a more joined-up approach. For example, if I want to get from here to, let us say, Queen's Road I do not want to have to go partly down that cycle path, which is against traffic, then turn around rather than going down towards St. Thomas. I prefer just to be able to cycle straight through and it would seem to make more sense. I think we do have to be mindful of how this is going to work. Clearly it has to be in a safe environment. We do not want cyclists getting knocked over, and that is all about informing car drivers as well as cyclists about exactly what is going on. But certainly I think this is something we can support and I welcome the amendment.

1.18.7 Deputy J.B. Fox:

One obviously must be supporting the Constable in the aims he is choosing to do but from the practical point of view this is going to cause future discussion and some problems. The previous speaker has just been talking about cycles. I get more complaints about cycles near-missing people as they go up against one-way streets and tearing around the streets and along the pavements and along the precincts, *et cetera*, and of course it is like everything else in life, it is modification in routes, *et cetera*, to be able to allow these to be done safely. If you go to Europe and the U.K. you will find that most of these cycle routes have nice little green tarmac areas so that they can be distinguishable and suitably signed. Unfortunately in Jersey at the present time someone is going to get very seriously injured or killed and by that time probably the Parish will

be defending a law suit because of what has been allowed to happen in the interests of cycle and pedestrian usage. As far as the national park goes, there will be people that will be upset that they have not been consulted. The Constable was saying that he had a Town Hall meeting, which discussed the Island Plan, but in fact it lasted for about 30 seconds flat at the end of the meeting and on the question of a town park, the principle we have to agree with, that is essential. But there is an awful lot of detail that is going to have to be looked at subsequently in order that these proposals are brought into fruition. It is not going to be an easy job, it is not going to be a short job, but it is something that if we are expecting the majority of the Island's new residents to be moving into St. Helier to save our greenfield sites, as has been proposed, one also has to recognise that we have to maintain a quality of life. It is nice to say we have 15 mile-an-hour green lanes. The reality is of going up to places like Vallée des Vaux the only reason they are green lanes is because the Constable of the day could not get an agreement for a 20 mile-an-hour speed limit so a green lane was in order. No one keeps to green lanes, it is far too slow, and the other arguments about well, people know where they are enforcing speed checks, *et cetera*. I am not going to go into all the details today, it is not appropriate at this time. The only thing I would like to say as a final conclusion is will you also bear in mind that a lot of our residents in St. Helier are of the senior citizens type and they cannot dodge cars, they cannot dodge bicycles and they cannot dodge most things. It takes time, so if we are looking at the whole gambit let us try and do it in a uniform, co-ordinated way that at least we have a set of rules laid down that we adhere to, to have a co-ordinated way forward. At the moment we have not. It is piecemeal, a bit like Clothier, is it not?

1.18.8 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

The Connétable is asking for us to promote and enable access, to consult upon and develop, to support the provision of, in this amendment. He has consulted with parishioners. We had a special Assembly on Wednesday, 8th June and last Thursday we also met with the Chamber of St. Helier as well to discuss the effects of the Island Plan. I too will be supporting my Connétable, as will a few of the other Deputies of St. Helier as well. It follows on from my amendment right at the beginning of today as well. It is about the quality of life of our residents of St. Helier and as I said recently in a speech, on the final Down Your Way walk with the L.G. (Lieutenant Governor) at the top of Fort Regent the Connétable and I stopped and had a look out over St. Helier, because you can see for absolutely miles. We both remarked how very little green fields and trees could be seen from that height in St. Helier and it is always the case that St. Helier has to have the high-density, cram it all in. What about the quality of life for our residents? They too count in the scheme of things as well. So, I will be supporting the Connétable and I hope all other Members will as well.

1.18.9 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Earlier today when I spoke about Mourier Valley I asked a specific question of the proposer then because I wanted his views. Unfortunately he did not answer it and he did not understand, I think, where I was coming from. My point then was that Mourier Valley is not a coastal area and yet the Assembly, by a big majority, agreed that it should be protected with coastal status. I said when I spoke that my area was beautiful, a joy to walk in. I have heard Deputy Hilton today tell me very much the same thing about Vallée des Vaux. My point was, and still is, that if we believe that there is not adequate protection given to these areas by Green Zone area we should be looking to evaluate them differently, and that is what the Constable of St. Helier is doing in this. He is asking for a decision to be made to look at the provision of a countryside area here, and I see

that as being very much akin to what has been agreed on the coastal park, which will be a higher level of protection, and I feel for the reasons that I have stated that this must be supported for the same reasons that the Assembly supported the inclusion of Mourier Valley, which is not a coastal area but is a beautiful area in the coastal park. I will be supporting the Constable in his endeavour.

1.18.10 Senator J.L. Perchard:

I would like the Constable just to comment on the independent inspector's comments and I will read just the last paragraph and quote from the paragraph before it. It says: "We are told that it is not the intention of the proposal to add another layer of regulation to those already existing. The area is Green Zone." They go on to say: "In summary we support the aim to improve access to the countryside. We would anticipate that the States would seek agreements with landowners to do just that but we think the area is quite unsuited to designation as country park and that the designation would be likely to be used in a way which the Connétable does not anticipate as a means of seeking to frustrate development, which might sometimes be in line with the strategic policies of the Island Plan." This is quite a powerful statement. While nobody would argue with Deputy De Sousa's point of view that access to the countryside, improving quality of life, is important, this is Green Zone already and I want the Constable to comment on those points raised by the inspector and also, while he is on his feet and summing up, the Minister in his comments, while accepting the amendment, certainly the first part of this amendment, the Minister, and I have underlined it: "The Minister remains of the opinion that this is a proposal that is worthy of inclusion as it is at this stage just an exploratory proposal which will be reviewed over the Island Plan period." What is it that the proposition on page 10 does not refer to exploring the proposal? It quite directly points to promote and enable access to the countryside for the residents of St. Helier through the creation of a St. Helier country park. I am confused. I will want to support this. Is it exploratory? Is it a mechanism to block development or is it an actual proposal to have a country park as outlined in the Constable's proposition?

Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Senator Perchard has covered my points.

1.18.11 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Just picking up on the last point, I think it is an important one and it is a matter of what is Green Zone and what is allowed in it regarding development. Because it seems that the flavour of the month, or today at least, is variations in improvements on the Green Zone because of a lack of confidence that the planning department is able to manage appropriate development within the Green Zone. I am tempted to believe that looking at the new Island Plan it has improved, they are able to manage development. I am looking for a greater consistency, I might add, but I certainly believe that with the improvements and removal of the Countryside Zone and inclusion of the Countryside Zone in the Green Zone that we have already enhanced the protection available around the Island. I suppose that is the next question. Why here? Why is the Constable proposing that the country park should be created to the north of St. Helier? We have heard various reasons for it and suggestions being made by one Town Deputy that they are concerned about housing density. A country park will not address housing density. The Planning Department need to address housing density on the particular development sites that they are approving. We have heard about cycle routes. I know that all round the Island we have many cycle routes, both on-road and off-road, but they

do not require a country park to deliver it. In fact, there is an opportunity for the Constable to already engage with private landowners who are able to provide public access and create parks through private land as part of agreements to enable people to enjoy the countryside around them. In fact I believe there is even support given by the Minister for Economic Development to enable farmers to create those sorts of parks. I just would like, when the Constable chooses to sum up, that perhaps he deals with some of the issues and explains to me why he believes the Green Zone designation for this area is not sufficient and why he believes that a country park will deal with the matters that he flagged up.

1.18.12 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Obviously in an election year it is important that we get behind our Constable and support access to the countryside, protecting Jersey's fields and sticking up for the environment. This is especially true when we are looking at introducing something like a town country park as the Constable has done in this amendment. Although there have been some issues that have been overlooked it is not his fault, he has a lot to do. It has been said that it is going to be looked at over the course of the Island Plan and the Minister has accepted it, so to vote against it really would seem to be, at least by a Deputy of St. Helier, utter folly. So, I am not going to. I am going to support it, because as daft as I am, I am not mad. I do not want a vote on that one. But in reality I would also like to point out, as was mentioned by Deputy Dupré that we do have coming up the housing element of this plan, and during the course of this debate I intend to prove with statistics supplied to me by various departments that this Island Plan is not going to be a walk in the park. Without a doubt, it might be somewhere to sleep, but it certainly will not be somewhere to walk. St. Helier has a massive problem in relation to this Island Plan in relation to the issues of increased density and what that means for St. Helier. So, there will be a very significant need for amenity space. I have been looking recently at the issues of States-owned sites and today I identified the Le Coin site which has sat empty, a quarter-acre of land there, since 2002. It is up for planning permission, it has initial planning permission, there have been 3 plans drawn up. The latest one is comprised of 400 units of housing per habitable acre and yet within the guidance set within the current planning department in the centre of St. Helier that should not exceed 100 to 120 units. So, we are 280 units above what the architects are being told to draw to today, and yet we are told that supplementary planning guidance in these areas by the officers is not available for a couple of weeks, and the Minister is talking about increased sizes and increased amenities and yet the evidence is there, if you look at the Le Squez site and the Le Coin site and the other sites that are coming on, the Metropole site, it is massive increased density in town. Just in summation, people do not want to hear me going on about this out of context, the intention of the owners of 1248 in La Pouquelaye is to have, as approached, their field developed for affordable housing. The Highfield Lane part of their land, which forms part of the Green Zone, has never been and will never be, if it is approved, a path that will be used for accessing any housing on that field. It will remain in the green lane ...

The Bailiff:

This is a subject, Deputy, for the debate on that point when it comes.

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Sir, this is a piece of land that is involved in this country park and it has been raised and debated ...

The Bailiff:

You are supporting the country park. You have said you are going to support it.

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Yes, but I am highlighting a concern that was expressed by Deputy Hilton, Sir, that she would hope that this would ensure that the lane and the field is then kept within the green lanes, and I am just making it quite clear it was never an intention for this development to take that green lane out. I think there may be some confusion in Members' minds, and people listening, if the inference is given that that would be the case. It certainly is not the case and I wanted to make that clear, Sir.

1.18.13 Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

If I could ask the Constable in summing up to try to clarify a concern I have about the wording of part (b). I think we all agree, and the Minister certainly has said that he is happy to consult upon the development of a St. Helier country park, and indeed the report of the Constable of St. Helier makes it clear, on page 9, that the area of both country parks shown on the map in the appendix is for guidance only. Yet when I read proposition part (b) it says: "Consult upon and develop the proposals for the designated country park as shown on the map attached to appendix 1." It strikes me that if one were to take the wording of the proposition, as one normally does, rather than the report, take the wording of the proposition it does seem to tie the hands of the consultees to the area set out and marked on the map in appendix 1. That gives me concern that it does not give the degree of flexibility in the consultation, which I think some Members are expecting, and I would therefore like the Constable to clarify exactly what he means by "as shown on the map attached to appendix 1".

1.18.14 The Deputy of St. Mary:

When I first saw this amendment, or read ... it was a big amendment, was it not? But paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 I felt that this was one of the bright spots in the whole Island Plan debate, whatever you like to call it, affair. The idea of a country park for St. Helier really made my day. The countryside is there already, but the Constable is not trying to change that and it is certainly not about regulation. It is a designation, as I understand it, which allows the Constable and all other people to get on and open people's eyes as to the potential that is out there and I would say that it is about access. As a cycle tour guide I reckon I know all the best ways out of St. Helier to get from Liberation Square to the countryside as quickly as possible with a group of cyclists, and safely. I can tell you from my experience it is not easy. First of all you have to know the best way to do it and then you have to guide your sheep across the various dangerous crossings that you have to do. The fact is that the routes are not there, they are not clearly signed. They are signed now but sometimes you have to wonder about the signing, like along Burrard Street, which is a bit of a nightmare for a group of cyclists, and so on and so on. So, tied together with the second part of this amendment, the continuous safe cycle and walking routes, this is a wonderful way of opening up people's ambition and creating new possibilities. I think it really should be supported by Members. Just a few words on the continuous cycling and walking routes that the Constable is calling for. These are essential for a vibrant St. Helier. I have feedback from the people who hired my bicycles in the days that I had a lot of bicycles to hire and the consistent theme in that feedback that I got was that St. Helier was more or less a no-go area. "We do not go there, it is horrible. What have they done? Why is it like that? I would not go there on my bike." Well of course you would not because there are zero facilities and a mass of traffic that

seems to push you off the road. In response to what Deputy Fox said, he was sort of positive but in a very slow, positive sort of way, I would say that if we are positive about this and go for it then the near misses will become a thing of the past because there will be proper routes and proper provision if you have proper facilities. For instance, with the shared use up to Corbière there was a lot of hoo-hah emanating from a very, very few people that if that ever became shared use it would become some kind of disaster. It is not some kind of disaster. You can go on there now, walk or cycle, and it is completely safe with people just doing their thing along there. So, let us be positive and let us realise that cyclists and walkers do go shopping. In fact every shopper is a pedestrian and with that I think I will close. Just to say one more thing, which is that I was recently on holiday with my wife in her home town of Gütersloh and the entire centre is open for cyclists and walkers. Near misses? What near misses? Because the whole thing is cycle and pedestrian-friendly and that town is not a retail desert, it is thriving and prosperous.

1.18.15 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I find this one difficult because I have very serious concerns about this and the way we are going. The aspirations are wonderful. We all want to protect the countryside, we all want to see people in town, not just town, any of the built-up areas, with access to countryside. That has to be good because the people living there need to be able to get to these sorts of areas. But I am very concerned that at the moment we have protected, or we are trying to protect, our countryside by the use of Green Zones, and what we are doing now worries me in that I can see us downgrading the protection that these Green Zones have because the highest protection will be country parks. So, if it is not a country park then we do not have to protect it quite so much. That worries me. We have beautiful countryside that needs to be protected. The Island Plan should be protecting it through the use of Green Zones, and I think what we are doing here is, in effect, going to damage and downgrade that. The inspectors came out against this. I quite regret that because it would be nice to have an area designated as country park if it was not downgrading the Green Zones. Perhaps the Connétable of St. Helier could explain how he thinks we are not making things worse for all the rest of the Island. Otherwise all we can do is change the designation of all Green Zone to country park.

1.18.16 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I was not really going to speak until I heard the Deputy of St. Ouen and followed by the speech of Senator Perchard, who I do not think has even read the full amendment or understood it. It does say “consult” and also the exception is “propose to explore” and that is exactly what we are doing in St. Helier. The Deputy of St. Ouen, followed by the Constable of St. Saviour, wants to know why St. Helier does not have faith in designation of Green Zones. Sorry, Sir, I really have to rise to speak. We did accept Deputy De Sousa’s amendment first thing this morning. We have no idea what adequate amenities faces in St. Helier. We now are told that we are setting ourselves up for a fall here because if St. Helier has a country park, but it is not a country park, it is just an exploration, and to consult upon what would be in it, that we are stretching it a bit too far. I would suggest the majority of St. Ouen is a country park and coastal park all in one and I drive my son up there most mornings, because that is where he works, and at 6.30 a.m., 6.45 a.m., you cannot see a soul but it is green fields covered in thistles and brambles, as the Constable of Trinity reminded us earlier. So, what are we trying to achieve? We are trying to cram in half or more of the population into St. Helier. Why? Because it is 11 of us with the Constable and that is if we all do stand together, and in the next day or 2 you will see we do not all stand together on this, what is acceptable in

St. Helier and what is not. Because I am not in favour of high flats, if there is a possibility of houses I will support that. But my objection is to people not understanding why as a St. Helier Deputy, like my Constable and the other representatives, people from St. Helier do not have faith in the ex-Island Plan. I read out the figures this morning. Between 2002 to 2006 51 per cent of all homes were provided in St. Helier and if you added up the other 11 Parishes that did not come to over 40 per cent. Ridiculous. So, you think we do not have faith in the Island Plan? No. Push everything into St. Helier. We need some amenity space and we want to protect our little bit of green space. In fact most of it is very overgrown. We do need cycle paths, walking areas in it and we need it supported by this Assembly, because you are drawing up some very, very bad environments for the future for people to live in. I only said all that because the Deputy of St. Ouen has very upset me.

Senator J.L. Perchard:

May I just put the record straight? The Deputy said she did not think I had read the Constable's amendment. I can assure her I have, and I asked the Constable to explain the contradiction between paragraph (a) and (b) of amendment 38 paragraphs 7 to 9.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I did not say he did not read it, Sir, I said he did not understand it after he read it.

1.18.17 The Deputy of St. John:

I have a fair amount of sympathy for the Connétable and the Parish of St. Helier given some 40 years ago I spent a happy 10 years representing the Parish as one of their Centeniers and member of the Honorary Police and knew the Parish very well at that time. I have probably forgotten most of the road names now but things have moved on. I can understand why the Connétable wants to put something in principle and I can highly recommend him going down that route and putting a working party together given that we have seen over recent times what has been forced upon his Parish. I am thinking the Energy from Waste plant right on the waterfront, although that is not included in this, but it has been taken out of a valley, which that area is obviously going to be used for the sewerage works and the like. I can understand the Connétable wants a lot more input into what is going on within his Parish and although currently the parishioners do get asked for their comments on any planning within the Parish that is all they get. They make an input through just a comment. Picking up what Deputy Wimberley mentioned about walking routes, cycling routes, *et cetera*, through the Parish, I agree, because we have recently built a new bus station on the waterfront only to find that the access to that bus station is somewhat limited. I would have thought that given we own the Post Office and various other things we would have had a covered route from the centre of town, an arcade shall we say, right down directing people to the bus station. That has not happened, for whatever reason, and I would have thought that should have been in people's minds. Likewise with the new upgrading of the abattoirs. There is no easy access directly from within the bus station into that regenerated area and therefore you have a lower footfall because you have to go outside and right round the old tourism building before you can get into there, and these things were obviously long before our current Minister for Planning and Environment was in place. These things were put into train, the foresight had not been there. To me, if the Connétable of the Parish where all this is wanting to happen, we should support the principle and hope that he can put a working party together to come back to the House in the future and have a plan of what he wants within his Parish. I know he is doing it for the north of

town, he has done a lot of work on that, but I think he needs a bigger body and bigger support, and I think the support should come from this Chamber to ask him to go away and come back and bring something forward in the future that can build on what he really wants for his Parish, or his residents of St. Helier would have the input of what they want within their Parish and come back to this Chamber with something. Because I think there is merit in what is being debated here and it is just the way it is defined with the red border around the north of town here which looks, the way it is drawn up in the proposition, a bit too hard and fast and it needs to be a little bit more flexible. But I think the principle itself in fact has a lot of merit, but I think more work needs to be done on the way forward.

1.18.18 Senator P.F. Routier:

Today I believe is 21st June, the longest day of the year. This might turn out to be the longest week of the year I think. My comments revolve around the town centre vitality. I think the Constable should be congratulated on bringing forward this particular matter because I certainly agree with the point of needing to improve the cycling and public transport links into the core retail area. There is a line also, which suggests that we support the provision of adequate off-street parking for shoppers and visitors for the core retail area. My question is, what is adequate? Because my understanding now is that what we currently have is not adequate. There is certainly, I believe, from the Chamber of Commerce retail section a desire to achieve more parking for shoppers to get into town because there are shops currently that are suffering, and I know people do not as a choice make it freely to drive into town to go shopping. They will tend to go to some of the other places where there is free and easy parking. So, I would suggest to Members that it would be good to support this particular part of the amendment because if we really want our town to be vibrant and to maintain the level of shops that we have we need to make it easy for the whole of the Island to get into town, whether it be cycling, whether it be through walking, whether it be through public transport, but also those who do want to use their car. I urge Members to support that particular section.

1.18.19 Senator F.E. Cohen:

I support the Connétable's amendment in this context. I think he is endeavouring to deliver a better town and I think that the concept is an excellent one that will add to the positive life for those who live in the town. I am particularly concerned about some of the comments that have been made in relation to this amendment suggesting that the Island Plan is designed to cram into the town. Nothing could be further from the truth, and this amendment in fact adds to the contrary view. The purpose of this plan and the whole basis of this plan is that the new accommodation that is built in the town should be of the very highest quality. That means high quality design externally, high quality design internally, with good quality amenity space, but that does not mean that you cannot have reasonable density. Density can come with very good design and very high quality. In fact one is far better off to have high density and good quality than what we have had in the past, which is often low density and poor quality. It is the total built environment that counts and that is a combination of good quality living space that is of good size and ensuring that we provide adequate amenity space on-site and adequate amenity space off-site, and a country park is a very good way of adding to the off-site amenity space. As far as the buildings that are being built at the moment, and reference was made to the Metropole, the Metropole is an exceptionally good piece of design. It is not finally approved yet but it is not far off. It is high density, all of the units within that site are minimum plus 10 per cent in terms of size. It comprises excellent design by a very good local architect with exceptional landscaping internally and it will be a great

place to live. Another example is the Don Road scheme that I was privileged to see the other day, a combination of a Jersey firm of architects and Robert Adam Architects from Winchester, which is a delightful scheme and will provide delightful new homes in the town that I would be only too delighted to live in. So, the basis of the plan is not to cram people into the town, it is to regenerate the town to allow people the choice of living in high quality accommodation in the town and to deliver to our town what is being delivered to many towns all over Europe. I support the Connétable's amendment.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Could I ask for a point of clarification on what the Minister just said? Was the minimum plus 10 per cent the old minimum, which was a small standard and plus 10 per cent, or was it the new minimum, which is already plus 10 per cent, plus 10 per cent.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

It is the new minimum plus 10 per cent plus 10 per cent.

1.18.20 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

I am a little confused by this request, because I have heard people referring to this proposed country park as a Coastal National Park, or a national park, but I do not believe it is any of those things. I think it is just some fields on the outskirts of St. Helier which are in the Green Zone, which will have special value to the residents of St. Helier because if the Constable has successful negotiations they will have more access to them. So, we are talking about a Green Zone and I was waiting for the Minister to speak in case he might have clarified what I did not understand. But we are not, as I understand it, here creating yet another tier of Green Zone. It is not like the exams where you have A-star as opposed to A when you pass an exam. We are not going to have a Green Zone star, which is land which is special because this is a country park. Otherwise I do fear for the officers and the planning panel as to how we are going to designate what we are looking at. So, if the Constable, when he sums up, could clarify exactly what is a country park, because it is a new concept for Jersey, and he has not really, as I understand it, explained, and I do not think the planning inspectors either, because they mention the possible consequences of this designation becoming akin to a green belt. So, is it a green belt, is it a park, is it a country park, is it a national park? Could the Constable kindly explain?

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak? Very well, I call upon the Connétable to reply.

1.18.21 The Connétable of St. Helier:

As the debate got under way I thought we were looking at a game of 2 halves, because we were talking about Field 1248 and the country park proposal and then lo and behold it became a game of 3 halves and then 4 as transport got introduced. I will try and deal with the main questions that have been raised, and I thank all Members who have spoken. First of all the map, as I said, is purely indicative. It does sweep up Field 1248 and I realise that gave one Town Deputy some problems, but I would say to Deputy Dupré that I have had discussion with the owners. In fact on 2 occasions I met with the owners of Field 1248 to explain to them why I could not accept their kind offer of this greenfield being turned into housing. Perhaps I could mention to Members that one of

the formative experiences of my time living in St. Helier was being asked by a developer to support his application to develop a field, which is right on the top of the hill that overlooks Trinity Hill and I went up there one morning – it is above a well-known supermarket as well – I went up there one morning at this time of year and I was really quite struck by what a marvellous idyll of countryside this was almost in the heart of town. I obviously refused to support that development and I have refused to support any greenfield development near St. Helier ever since because there are brownfield sites that can be developed, there are States-owned sites that can be developed, and we need access to those kind of fields. The Constable of St. Brelade, I did not realise where he was going until Deputy Green followed up the remark about Bellozanne, and of course as Minister for Transport and Technical Services he is concerned about any claims on Bellozanne which I think probably used to have something to do with beauty in its title. Certainly the first part of the name has something to do with beauty, and there is no doubt now that the incinerator has gone, and I do not support where it has gone but it has gone, the residents of First Tower really deserve somewhere they can walk which is beautiful and peaceful. I do intend, however this goes today, to talk to the Minister about what we can do to improve Bellozanne Valley because it is the gateway to Fern Valley, which is one of our greatest assets in the Island, never mind in St. Helier. So, I am sorry that the Constable of St. Brelade cannot support what is after all, and I will probably say it a couple of times while I am speaking, purely an idea. This is just an idea. In fact I think someone called it a proposal. It is not a proposal, it is to develop a proposal, to consult with the public. I think it is the sort of thing that everybody should be able to support and I would be particularly pleased if we have a unanimous vote for this proposal because when possibly in 10 years' time or even 15, if it has the same slowness of the town park, when this eventually happens I would like to look back and think: "Well, at least it had a good support from the then States that we should look at this idea." I come back to Members who spoke about mad cyclists in a minute because I think the main thing I want to deal with first is the country park. Deputy De Sousa spoke about the problems of town cramming. I do not agree that high density is the same as town cramming. I think that you can have high density. The corollary, as I said in my opening remarks, is you must have sufficient open space, which is why we are having this discussion about the possibility of a country park. Senator Perchard was the first of a number of Members who were confused by what I am trying to do here. To Senator Perchard I would point to the difference between an objective and a proposal. The objective, which I would hope we all share as part of the regeneration of St. Helier, is to promote and enable access to the countryside for the residents of St. Helier through the creation of a St. Helier country park. There is no problem with having that as an objective. It does not do anything. It does not draw any lines on any maps. It is simply an objective in the Island Plan if this is approved. But a proposal is something much more deliberate. The proposal is to consult upon and develop a proposal to designate a St. Helier country park in the countryside. So those are very different things. We can all have an objective, we can have a common objective if you believe, who would not, that a country park like a horseshoe around the urban part of this capital is a good idea, a good objective to pursue. A proposal is to go out there and make it happen, and that second part is very carefully worded. The first word of it is "to consult upon" because if we do not get the backing of the people out there, the landowners, really this cannot go any further. I hope that has cleared up the confusion of Senator Perchard. The Deputy of St. Ouen's confusion is going to be harder to tackle because he said: "Why should St. Helier have a country park?" I am sorry, I thought that was one case where I thought perhaps the Member had not read my report because the point I made very strongly in the report is if you expect St. Helier to bear the brunt of development, and that is quite clearly the thrust of the Island Plan, then you must as a quid pro quo offer the residents

of St. Helier, the workers in St. Helier, the visitors to St. Helier, you must offer them convenient access to the kind of idyllic countryside that I spoke about when I started.

Several Members feared that this proposal will downgrade the Green Zone. I do not see how that can happen. It is only a proposal to carry out a consultation exercise about creating a country park. Some Members, I think Senator Le Gresley, I think quite rightly asked what exactly is it? He said: "This is a new concept for Jersey." Well, it is, but what is wrong with a new concept for Jersey of a country park in close proximity to an extremely congested and densely populated town? I maintain that that is a new concept for Jersey which is worth examining. It does not weaken the Green Zone. The fields we are looking at remain in the Green Zone as this consultation takes place. So, nothing dreadful is going to happen to the Green Zone if we approve the idea of investigating a country park. The Deputy of St. Mary I thought put his finger on it when he said it was one of the bright spots of the Island Plan. I happen to agree with him. I think this is. The Minister for Planning and Environment gave it his support and I am pleased to hear that. He said that once all this is achieved he will be only too delighted to live in St. Helier. I look forward to welcoming him into the Parish if I am still Constable and if he is minded to be a Centenier again he can spare me a fine. Other concerns; the Chief Minister, I thought he was splitting hairs, he said "as shown in the map" means that we can only look at the area shown in the map.

[17:30]

Well, if you read back a bit, the beginning of the sentence, it says: "Consult upon and develop the proposal." So clearly that consultation process is not going to be confined by the map and if it is then someone will say: "Well, why did you not take in Fern Valley because I see you have left it out? And that cannot be deliberate." So, I hope the Chief Minister will lend his influential support to this proposal because I think it is a bright spot in the Island Plan and it may be significant in the longer term so I would encourage Members not to get too hung up on the detail of what is essentially an idea that we are asking to explore. The Constable of St. Mary mentioned that she had not got an answer from Senator Le Gresley about designation. Clearly the Coastal National Park does give a higher tier of protection and that is why the Minister for Planning and Environment has introduced it. The very highest, which is a tautology, but certainly the highest protection possible is coming in the Coastal National Park. I do not know whether a country park will also have that same highest protection. Maybe it will, but it is too early to say because we have not done the work. So again I would say to Members this is Green Zone land we are talking about. We are talking about the possibility that it will have some special identity. It will clearly be the St. Helier country park and if that is worth exploring, I ask Members to support this amendment. The rest of the comments were mainly about rogue cyclists and things like that. All I would say to those Members who have this perception is that in my view a dangerous cyclist is also dangerous on a motorbike and is dangerous behind the wheel of a car. They all go through red lights, they all drive on pavements and so on, and we need to do all we can to curb that kind of behaviour and encourage responsible driving. I have even seen dangerous pedestrians, so it is not just the cyclists. Anybody who is moving in the public realm can pose a threat to other people whatever form of transport they have chosen to use. I thank Senator Routier for his comments about town vitality. He quite rightly asks what does adequate off-street parking consist of? One of the amendments in this set of amendments focuses on that adequacy by saying that the number given by the Planning Department in the Island Plan is inadequate. It imposes a ceiling on the number of car parking spaces, and the amendments taken as a whole I hope will make it easier for example for temporary car parks to be created to help shoppers. The Chamber of Commerce, as a

couple of Members mentioned, is concerned about off-street shopper parking serving the core retail area and I am determined we are going to do more to address that. The Deputy of St. John was supportive and I thank him for that. He did ask for a covered, walkable route to the bus station, which I think is a very good idea which ought to be followed up, and of course Liberty Wharf was supposed to be a covered route towards the harbour but it is closed every evening at 6.00 p.m., which is a travesty of the original plans. Again that needs to be addressed as well. I think I may have covered most of the concerns that were raised. I would just perhaps in respect of one Member, I think Senator Perchard, asked me to comment on the inspector's comments and I thought I would let the National Trust do that. That was the paragraph in that letter that I did not read before and I quote: "The inspectors have stated that the country park is unjustified because of its agricultural nature and lack of special attributes. However, in doing so they are failing to recognise that the special quality and intimate nature of our Island's landscape has indeed been derived from our agricultural heritage. In addition the inspectors failed to acknowledge the recent findings of the National Ecosystem Assessment which suggests that the health benefits alone of living close to green space have a value of £300 a year." I must say I was disappointed with the inspector's comments. I did not think he appreciated what I was trying to do. I mention in my report the Itchen Country Park near Eastleigh. Deputy Tadier usefully mentioned the Peak District which provides such welcome relief for inhabitants of the northern industrial towns. I think I have covered everything, Sir, I maintain the amendment and ask for the appel.

The Bailiff:

The appel is asked for then in relation to the amendment of the Connétable of St. Helier. This is paragraphs 7 to 9 of the 38th amendment. They are all being taken together. I invite Members to return to their seats and the Greffier will open the voting.

POUR: 44

Senator T.A. Le Sueur Senator P.F. Routier^[SEP] Senator T.J. Le Main Senator B.E. Shenton Senator F.E. Cohen^[SEP] Senator J.L. Perchard Senator A. Breckon^[SEP] Senator S.C. Ferguson Senator B.I. Le Marquand Senator F. du H. Le Gresley Connétable of St. Helier Connétable of Grouville Connétable of St. Brelade Connétable of St. Martin Connétable of St. John Connétable of St. Saviour Connétable of St. Clement Connétable of St. Peter Connétable of St. Lawrence Connétable of St. Mary Deputy R. Duhamel (S) Deputy of St. Martin^[SEP] Deputy R. Le Hérissier (S) Deputy J.B. Fox (H)

Deputy of St. Peter^[SEP] Deputy J.A. Hilton (H) Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire (H) Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré (L) Deputy S. Pitman (H) Deputy I.J. Gorst (C)^[SEP] Deputy of St. John^[SEP] Deputy M. Tadier (B) Deputy A.E. Jeune (B) Deputy of St. Mary^[SEP] Deputy T.M. Pitman (H) Deputy E.J. Noel (L)^[SEP] Deputy T.A. Vallois (S) Deputy M.R. Higgins (H) Deputy A.K.F. Green (H) Deputy D.J. De Sousa (H) Deputy J.M. Maçon (S)

Deputy J.A. Martin (H) Deputy G.P. Southern (H) Deputy of Grouville

CONTRE: 3

Deputy of St. Ouen Deputy K.C. Lewis (S) Deputy A.T. Dupré (C)

ABSTAIN: 0

APPENDIX 4

SUBSEQUENT REFERENCES IN HANSARD TRANSCRIPTS TO THE PROPOSAL FOR A ST. HELIER COUNTRY PARK

21ST FEBRUARY 2012: QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I would like to refer to 2 amendments to the Island Plan that was debated last year. Could I first of all ask the Minister to pass on my congratulations to his officers for implementing one of the amendments which relates to the costs of planning fees in relation to minor works done to listed buildings which has now taken force in law from January and hats off to the department. Could I secondly ask the Minister to advise me what progress his department has made with the amendment that was approved to investigate the feasibility of a St. Helier country park?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I thank the Constable for his comments. Work is being undertaken in a general context to see to what extent the provision of a country park could take place on the outskirts of St. Helier. I must inform the House that although it was a proposition from the Constable as part of the Island Plan, countryside parks that are appended to urban areas are not the exclusive area of St. Helier and there might be alternative possibilities or other possibilities for doing similar things next door to the other urban areas, notably in St. Clement and notably at Le Quennevais.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could I thank Minister for his answers and ask him to involve me, if possible, in his departmental work. I agree that country parks could indeed border all of the urban parishes but I would like to remind him that the States approved my amendment in the Island Plan.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Yes, when the time comes for the Constable to be involved, he will certainly be involved.

29TH MAY 2012: QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Nearly a year ago the States agreed my amendment to the Island Plan that a feasibility study into a St. Helier country park should be undertaken. Could the Minister advise what progress has been made?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

This was carried in the media, I believe, last week and answers were given there, but I am happy to repeat. The work that was called for is being undertaken. There was not a specific timetable that was set down in order to deliver other than within the Island Plan

period. The Constable should have my assurances however that I do consider it is an idea that merits worthy attention and perhaps is applicable in more than one place. The work is being undertaken at the moment. We can only go as fast as we can walk at the moment in terms of the number of staff that I have got to deal with master planning and S.P.G.s (Supplementary Planning Guidance) and the like. As I mentioned in this House to a previous question by the Constable of St. Helier, as to whether or not he could personally involve himself in the day-to-day and the nitty-gritty running of any detailed application, I said that I would certainly consider his offer when the time was available. We are not at that point as yet, but the Constable has my assurances that when the time comes I will be banging on his door.”

PLÉMONT HOLIDAY VILLAGE: GRANT TO NATIONAL TRUST FOR JERSEY (P.107/2014) DEBATED 1ST JULY 2014

Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

I do have a couple of new things to say in this debate although I must apologise if I said them last time around because there is a certain amount of recycling of previous speeches going on. I am sure I am not the only one. First of all, the Minister for Planning and Environment conjures up the idea that the money could be used to create a park around the town perimeter. This is on page 5 of his report. This, of course, is not a new idea and when I spoke on this same proposition last time around, I made the point that, in fact, we had had one officer group meeting to take forward the proposal approved in the last Island Plan that Planning should investigate the feasibility of creating a St. Helier country park, a kind of horseshoe around the main urban area of the Island. We had had one officer meeting when I spoke on the last Plémont debate. How many officer meetings have we had since? Precisely none. I do not believe that in the 3 years that the Minister has been in charge that I have seen much interest in that department in creating a St. Helier country park, so to bring up the idea that we can buy-up all the fields around St. Helier, as the Constable of St. Saviour says, which are probably being used by farmers, is a bit farfetched, perhaps as farfetched as centralised toilets and eating Japanese knotweed in our restaurants. I do not find the Minister’s defence very satisfactory at all. The obvious question for those listening, particularly some of those who have been in touch with me is, why should the Constable of the most densely populated Parish with a third of the population, a lot of the business and most of the traffic of the Island, support the purchase of Plémont for the public? Should the States not spend this money on paying rates on their properties or doing more to provide public parking in town or public open space? It is true that, I think, in some respects, St. Helier has been sold down the river by successive Ministers. I support the purchase of this site because it is essentially a sustainable thing to do and if sustainability matters to this Island, then we need to really focus on the fact that we do have to be as good as our principles adopted in successive Island Plans and other key strategic documents. It really does not make sense to build in the countryside when there are brownfield development areas possible. One of the first debates I got involved in as a Deputy was when it was proposed to build a suburb next to the Grouville Marsh. Then Senator Corrie Stein was very much behind that from the housing point of view but I argued and I brought an amendment to try and stop it happening, that it would introduce cats, most obviously, into what was essentially a very sensitive environmental area of Grouville Marsh and it would introduce other kinds of pollution, noise, light, run-offs from driveways and so on, as well as human activity into an area which did not need it. That area would stop being truly wild. The development went ahead and I would suggest that the area around Grouville Marsh there has been affected by the development. Bal Tabarin has been referred to by the Constable of St. John. It may well be that there is concrete that needs

to be cleared up but I supported the purchase of that site, which was regarded by some as wasteful, when all that happened was it was knocked down and left to the weeds. Members that have visited Guernsey – I am sure some of them have had to on business – will have noticed that our sister Island does not have nearly as much open green space as we do here. They have a small section but you can get around it in a couple of hours. Guernsey has suffered from, I would suggest, ribbon development and a lack of the kind of planning policies that we have here in Jersey. I fundamentally believe and I have made the argument several times over the last 15 years or so that one of the advantages of concentrating development in urban areas is not only does it leave the natural part of the Island relatively natural and protected from development, but it makes the urban areas make more sense. It is much better to live in a busy, vibrant, active town where lots of people are living and bringing up their families than for them to live in a suburb where you do not see people very often. The *quid pro quo* of that argument is that we do not then build in the countryside. I agree with the Constable of St. Clement who does not want to see yet more agricultural land in St. Clement turned into housing. It is simply not sustainable and how we ever agreed to turn good agricultural land in Trinity opposite the pub into a housing estate is beyond me. I am sorry to see that some of the Constables are backing plans to do similar things when we come to debate the Island Plan. If St. Helier is to be the focus of development, which we have agreed to do as an Assembly, then we cannot have it both ways. We cannot start developing in the countryside at the same time. That is really because, of course, St. Helier residents have the right, particularly as they are living in town, to get out and to enjoy unspoilt countryside. Plémont will be there, if it is improved in the way we are suggesting, as much for St. Helier residents as for everyone else. This is not a “nice to have”, as the Constable of St. John has just said. The economic benefits of this scheme are substantial and I would suggest that while there will be a one-off set of receipts if this is developed for housing, if this land is kept for the Island and particularly for tourism, and the kind of tourists who come to Jersey to walk around our north coast, then those economic benefits will continue to accrue for years, for decades and for centuries. I have met tourists who come to Jersey precisely because of our unspoilt north coast, who believe that the economic argument is worth making. As a town dweller, I want to be able to enjoy the natural beauty of an unspoilt northwest coast. I want to enjoy it, I want my children to enjoy it and their children to enjoy it and I want that area to be as large as possible. I do not relish the thought of a village green and some of that land being given back to open space because that is not how I enjoy the north coast when I walk along the footpath. I want it to be as wild as possible. I will finish as I concluded my speech nearly 2 years ago with a quotation of poetry, which I know one is not supposed to do in this Assembly but other things have been slipped in, Deputy of St. Ouen. Hopkins said: ‘Let them be left, O let them be left, wildness and wet, long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.’ [Approbation]”

2ND FEBRUARY 2016: QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Deputy of St. Martin:

... I recently had a meeting with my Director of Policy at South Hill and told him that I wanted to prioritise anything green in St. Helier: that is green parks, that is a country park. The Constable and I have spoken about his wishes for a country park on the outskirts of St. Helier. I want to revitalise work on that. I want to look again and make sure we are prioritising green open space in St. Helier. The other phrase which uses the word “green” is green roofs and I notice occasionally when I look down from Fort

Regent or Cyril Le Marquand House that St. Helier is desperately lacking in anything green on the roof. It is an amenity space, an amenity area that every building could be using better, and green roofs and green walls I hope will become a priority in the department as applications come forward for St. Helier.

14TH FEBRUARY 2017: QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Nearly 7 years ago the States debated the 38th amendment to P.48/2011, which I am sure the Minister will remember was the 2011 Island Plan. The amendment to which I refer was the feasibility study into the creation of a country park for St. Helier and I quote: “To promote and enable access to the countryside for the residents of St. Helier through the creation of a St. Helier country park.” I would ask the Minister to update the Assembly on how much progress has been made by his department on this proposal.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I have to tell the Assembly and the Constable specifically that I am afraid that not a great deal of progress has been made in this regard but what I can do is assure the Constable that it is very much in the forefront of my own thoughts and that any applications which would come on the periphery of St. Helier, be that St. Clement, St. Saviour or St. Helier, for an application in a green and open field or an open space would certainly occupy a lot of my thoughts. It is certainly my intention to create a ring around St. Helier that will stay green and open and if further development is to expand from town I would want to see certain areas that are currently green and open preserved in that way for ever.

5.4.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Supplementary if I may. I know that the Minister does have officers working on other matters, such as a new al fresco policy. Is this not now 6 year-old commitment by the States one that should be taken up as a matter of priority by his department and would he agree to perhaps form a working group involving the relevant Parishes as well, perhaps lead by one of his officers, to see if we can get the project moving because clearly it will benefit tens of thousands of people once it is created.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I will discuss that with officers in my next ministerial meeting next Monday and I will report back to the Constable.”

APPENDIX 5:

P.75/2017: Proposition to request the Minister for Infrastructure to defer the proposed letting of Warwick Farm for 6 months while a feasibility study is carried out into the potential for incorporating the site into the St. Helier Country Park

REPORT

Seven years ago, the States agreed to carry out a feasibility study into my proposal for the creation of a country park to provide accessible countryside to the residents of the most built-up part of the Island. Although the matter has been raised in the States on various occasions since then, with assurances that it was being progressed it would appear that no actual work has been done on the project.

On 15th June this year, the Future St. Helier Group received a brief verbal report from the Environment Department that the proposed country park was probably unachievable. By some strange coincidence, this meeting took place on the same day as the deadline for the receipt of expressions of interest for agricultural or horticultural purposes for a 9-year lease on Warwick Farm on La Grande Route de St. Jean, St. Helier, a publicly-owned site in the Green Zone, which had previously been considered as a potential site for the new hospital, and which the Chief Minister and Minister for Housing had also suggested would be ideal for affordable housing. I pointed out to the Future St. Helier Group that Warwick Farm, adjacent to Adelina Wood and midway between Bellozanne Valley and Fern Valley on the one hand, and Vallée des Vaux on the other, would be ideal for the kind of uses set out in [P.48/2011 Amd.\(38\), \(part 7\)](#), as exemplified by the Itchen Valley Country Park in Hampshire.

The arguments for exploring the feasibility of a country park on the doorstep of the Island's capital are the same as set out in the original proposition, though I suggest that they have gathered added weight with the pursuit of States' policies designed to concentrate new development in St. Helier and the resolution to improve the Island's capital in the current Strategic Plan. Moreover, if the idea of a country park on the outskirts of the Island's main built-up area were to be found feasible and adopted by the States, then it would be folly to sign away a parcel of land in States' ownership that could be the catalyst for the project's implementation, providing the perfect opportunity to provide much-needed recreational areas within easy reach of St. Helier residents, with new woodland walks, mountain bike trails and space for children's activities.

The States are asked to allow a 6-month period of grace before Warwick Farm is let, so that the long-delayed feasibility study on an approved Island Plan proposal can be carried out, and a Proposition and report can be lodged *au Greffe* should the study prove positive.

Financial and manpower implications

If the States agree to this Proposition there will be a loss of 6 months' rental income, as yet unquantified, from letting the site for agricultural or horticultural purposes; the Parish of St. Helier will be responsible for any costs arising from the feasibility study.

APPENDIX 6:

Comments on P.75/2017 by the Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers opposes Proposition [P.75/2017](#) as it is unnecessary.

The Revised 2011 Island Plan does not commit to a St. Helier Country Park, but indicates that a public realm strategy for St. Helier will be developed and adopted (Proposal 12). This included consultation upon, and the development of, proposals to designate a St. Helier Country Park in the countryside immediately to the north of the Town.

Attached to P.75/2017 is a plan of the potential St. Helier Country Park as indicated by the Connétable of St. Helier in the Island Plan debate [[P.48/2011 Amd.\(38\), \(part 7\)](#)]. The plan also indicates the location of Warwick Farm, which is outside the proposed designated area.

The Council of Ministers supports the need for an appropriate study to be undertaken to provide information to bring back to the Assembly before any decision is taken on the future of this and other sites that could form part of a Country Park.

1. A study would need to consider a number of aspects, including –
2. planning issues – including the removal of existing business uses
3. identification of land required to create a Country Park
4. process and costs to acquire the land
5. cost of developing the land into a Country Park
6. costs to manage and maintain the completed facility
7. the foregone value of any Public or Parish land forming part of the Country Park
8. Consultation with those impacted.

The Council of Ministers considers that a full ‘business case’ that considers all aspects of the proposal is required. The document should include evidence to assess the benefits of creating a Country Park, weighed appropriately against the costs of its creation, management and maintenance. ^[L]_[SEP]The Connétable has suggested a 6-month delay to undertake the work. This is considered insufficient to undertake the work necessary. Identifying and procuring the right resources to undertake the study through an open and competitive process is likely to take 3 months alone. ^[L]_[SEP]The next 6 months is not the most appropriate time to undertake such a study. Assuming that resources can be identified and the study commence in, say, November 2017, that would deliver the outcome just before the next election. ^[L]_[SEP]Creating a Country Park is going to be a significant cost to the taxpayer, ratepayer or both. ^[L]_[SEP]If the taxpayer is expected to fund the proposal, in whole or part, then funds will need to be allocated. The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) funding is already fully allocated and under pressure. The next MTFP (2020 – 2023) will need to address major infrastructure investments, including Fort Regent, Highlands and the Mental Health Estates. Any States funding will need to be prioritised against these and other funding requests. To date, no funding request has been received by the Treasury in respect of the acquisition of land for, or the development of, a Country Park.

The site was marketed as a ‘going concern’ and a number of credible responses were received. The preferred and recommended applicant is a local consortium who would continue to use the site in connection with growing crops following a successful trial.

The terms of the proposed 9-year lease enable the Public to exercise a ‘development break’ after 5 years. The prospective tenants have also indicated that they would be willing to consider pedestrian access through the site to enable a ‘green’ walking route to be created.

Any study can be undertaken with a tenant in situ. All the land identified by the Connétable as a potential Country Park is currently in some other use, so there is no reason why this site should remain untenanted whilst the study progresses. To delay a decision on the lease serves no purpose.

Work to develop a Public Realm Strategy for St. Helier, as proposed by the Island Plan, is presently underway. This has included an audit of existing open space; an assessment of its quality and its accessibility. A consultation exercise, to establish what residents of and visitors to St. Helier think about its open spaces, is due to close in the middle of October. All of this work will contribute to the development of a draft Public Realm Strategy early in 2018, with a view to subsequent consultation and adoption later next year. The findings of any study into the potential for a Country Park for St. Helier should be incorporated into the Public Realm Strategy for the Town.

A review of the Island Plan and consideration of funding in the next MTFP are both due within the initial 5-year term of the lease. The outcome of any study will help to inform these key strategic documents.

Financial and manpower implications

The proposition states –

“If the States agree to this Proposition there will be a loss of 6 months’ rental income, as yet unquantified, from letting the site for agricultural or horticultural purposes; the Parish of St. Helier will be responsible for any costs arising from the feasibility study.”

The statement is naïve, as there is a real risk that the uncertainty generated by this proposal will deter potential tenants and make the site unlettable for a prolonged period until a decision on the Country Park and its delivery plan is concluded.

The Public would lose a material rental income from the site, would need to meet the costs of managing and maintaining the land and buildings whilst it was vacant, and would also bear the cost of re-advertising the site to future tenants. In total, this could amount to some tens of thousands of pounds.

If the site remained unlet for a 5-year period, the negative financial impact on the Public could be in excess of £500,000.