

John Scarrott – 24th May 2021

Scrutiny Matters Feedback - Re-zoning of land for affordable housing

The re-zoning of land for affordable housing is a knee-jerk reaction to the housing crisis by The States of Jersey.

What The States of Jersey needs to do, instead of making a land grab of prime agricultural land, is to sit down and work their way logically through the many issues the housing market faces, and the many options for solving them.

Re-zoning prime agricultural land should be the last option on the list, not the first like is right now.

I personally do not believe that any agricultural land needs to be re-zoned in order to solve the housing crisis.

There are numerous older office buildings sitting unused since the new Finance Centre was built. There are numerous other properties (houses, barns, warehouses, shops, etc) that are unused and could be converted to homes. Numerous brownfield sites and old derelict greenhouses on overgrown land (currently zero agricultural usage). Large plots of land already owned by The States or by Parishes.

The States need to do a survey of every site that could potentially be used, not take the easy route of just cherry picking fields off the map.

A good example of how The States is failing to address the issue at hand is the plan for South Hill, to create yet more expensive luxury apartments, when that site should have been used for affordable housing. Please ask The States to explain why South Hill cannot be used for affordable housing, causing them to steal prime agricultural land from farmers.

Is it because of illusions of grandeur dictate that any site with a sea view must become a prestigious apartment block? An apartment block that will end up as buy to let apartments at a rent of 5% of the property price, giving buy to let investors 4.5% more than they get from a bank? Completely ignoring the fact that there is a housing crisis and no genuinely affordable homes available.

How many States Members and senior staff are already planning to buy these South Hill apartments and rent them out? The conflict of interest is so obvious I'm surprised Scrutiny have not done something about it already.

Scrutiny Matters Feedback - What is the biggest tragedy?

From reading the many submissions to this Survey and many views on news and social media, there are many tragedies being created by high property purchase and rental prices, and potential disasters ahead if the finance industry suffers any shocks over the coming 25 to 30 years, causing a huge amount of debt to become toxic.

But what is the biggest tragedy?

For me it is that couples have to make a conscious choice not to have children, because they simply

cannot afford a mortgage or rent, and children.

Some couples might be lucky enough to afford to have one child, but even they may want two or more children, yet cannot due to the cost.

When couples with children separate, it is not always possible for the separated couple to afford accommodation and keep their children, and they then have to put their children into care.

A Psychologist or Family Planning Counsellor would be better placed than I to describe the devastation these couples have to go through, due to not being able to start a family of their own or keep it. My suggestion is that the Scrutiny Panel engage with a Psychologist or Family Planning Counsellor to bring this information into any decision making process.