

Dear Deputy Le Hérisssier

I note from a recent Jersey Evening Post article (6th March, 2009), that the Panel that you chair is seeking the views of the public regarding the future use of Fort Regent. Although I live in the north of England, I am a Jerseyman, and the Fort's future use is as important and relevant to me as it may be to any resident islander. I therefore offer the following:

For me, future use should be determined in terms of its name implies, namely that it was a military fort. In that sense it is no different to Mont Orgueil, Elizabeth Castle, St Aubin's Fort and the many other Forts and Towers that are scattered around Jersey. Kate Clark's report of 18th August, 2008, "Valuing the Heritage of the Channel Islands" probably better expresses many of the aspects of cherishing Fort Regent in its former guise along with the other fortifications than I can, but in terms of the Island's historic timeline, the Fort, along with the old South Hill Battery, effectively covers the last two centuries of the need to defend Jersey, never mind that it was only put to use "in anger" by the German occupying forces. Although Miss Clark's report was aimed towards seeking World Heritage Site status and I understand that any such approach might be stillborn, the Fort's historical significance will be of greater importance in the centuries ahead than might be, say, its use for housing to meet a ridiculous population figure of 100,000 in the next 20 years. After all, no one has sought to develop Mont Orgueil or Elizabeth Castle in the same manner, and the latter is only some 200 years older than the Fort!

I've attached three photographs (with thanks to the King's Own Museum in Lancaster) of the Fort in its use 100 years ago and this aspect should be considered in some way. For example, the Fort could be used to house and allow expansion of the Militia (Military) Museum as I understand it currently housed somewhat inconveniently in Elizabeth Castle. Many of the rooms that are shown in the pictures could be made over to this. I have been in touch with one or two Military Museum Curators, who would not be adverse to loaning military artefacts should this help. *(The Photographs are available from the Scrutiny Office)*

More importantly, the Fort's original design features should be reinstated as far as possible so that the military aspects of defence should be visible. For example, the swimming pool should be bulldozed and the glacis field restored and landscaped as a promenade. Any thought that high rise accommodation should find its way on the glacis should be stifled without delay. Construction that blocks what would have been the defenders' field of fire should be removed or not even considered.

Lecture/conference rooms would be consistent with the original military concept, along with a restaurant. The lecture rooms could be linked with the concept of a military interpretation centre. Clearly the Fort was home to British Army garrisons up at least until the Great War, but there has been inadequate historical recognition of the contributions that Islanders have made in that conflict and since. Perhaps the interpretation centre can help develop this.

I am unclear as to the fate of the dome, but regardless, interior design throughout the fort should endeavour to reflect the military theme. Perhaps, also, your Panel might look at what else is has been done in the South of England in Dover or Portsmouth for example, in reviving the heritage of military sites such as Dover Castle or Fort Nelson.

Setting the Fort's "redevelopment" in the wider context of all that seems to be planned for the Island, I might also question the financial risks in the current climate. The incinerator, the Esplanade Quarter and a National Gallery will strain resources alongside other headline items from the EDAW Master Plan. There is also the likely disruption to much of St Helier and beyond.

In conclusion, my opinion is that the effort on the Fort should focus on its military past, which I grant appears regressive, and not on ideas such as housing, for which there are ample opportunities with existing properties in St Helier that could enjoy refurbishment.

Your sincerely

Barrie H Bertram