

STATES OF JERSEY



ISLAND PLAN 2022-25: APPROVAL (P.36/2021) – THIRTY-SECOND AMENDMENT LES QUENNEVAIS DEVELOPMENT

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

STATES GREFFE

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

1 PAGE 2 –

After the words “the draft Island Plan 2022-25” insert the words “except that –

- (a) Strategic Proposal 4 – ‘A west of Island planning framework’ should be deleted and the remaining proposals re-numbered accordingly;
- (b) in Policy SP2 – ‘Spatial strategy’, in the second paragraph, the words “Development will also be focused within the secondary main urban centre of Les Quennevais” should be deleted;
- (c) Policy PL2 – ‘Les Quennevais’ should be deleted;
- (d) in Policy ER1 – ‘Retail and town centre uses’, all references to Les Quennevais should be deleted;
- (e) in paragraph b. of Policy ER2 – ‘Large-scale retail’ the words “the defined centre at Les Quennevais” should be deleted;
- (f) in paragraph b. of Policy EO1 – ‘Existing and new office accommodation’, the words “the defined centre at Les Quennevais” should be deleted; and
- (g) the draft Island Plan 2022-25 should be further amended in such respects as may be necessary consequent upon the adoption of paragraphs (a)-(f); and
- (h) the Draft Bridging Island Plan Proposals Map Part A – Planning Zones should be amended to reflect the adoption of paragraphs (a)-(f).”

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 –**

- (a) Strategic Proposal 4 – ‘A west of Island planning framework’ should be deleted and the remaining proposals re-numbered accordingly;**
- (b) in Policy SP2 – ‘Spatial strategy’, in the second paragraph, the words “Development will also be focused within the secondary main urban centre of Les Quennevais” should be deleted;**

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- (g) the draft Island Plan 2022-25 should be further amended in such respects as may be necessary consequent upon the adoption of paragraphs (a)-(f); and
- (h) the Draft Bridging Island Plan Proposals Map Part A – Planning Zones should be amended to reflect the adoption of paragraphs (a)-(f).”

REPORT

Introduction

The appearance of a ‘secondary main urban centre’ in the draft Bridging Island Plan offers the States Assembly a Pandora’s Box which I strongly recommend should not be opened. It represents a radical departure from the spatial strategies of past Island Plans, notably the 2011 Plan (revised 2014) for which the comparable policy (SP1) states:

‘Development will be concentrated within the Island’s Built-up Area, as defined on the Proposals Map, and, *in particular, within the Town of St. Helier.* (My italics) Outside the Built-up Area, planning permission will only be given for development:

1. appropriate to the coast or countryside
2. of brownfield land, which meets an identified need, and where it is appropriate to do so;
3. of greenfield land, in exceptional circumstances, where it justifiably supports parish communities or the rural economy and which meets an identified need and where it is appropriate to do so.’

Under the 2011/14 Island Plan’s spatial strategy, Les Quennevais has been treated in the same way as the other built-up areas of the Island, with the focus or concentration of new development, especially in respect of housing, office and retail development, taking place ‘in particular, within the Town of St. Helier’. Given that this part of the Island has been able to develop quite satisfactorily, with a new school, the development of the Rugby Club, redevelopments on the airport road, and so on under the existing policy for the Built-up area, is it in the best interests of Les Quennevais to be moved out of the category it has prospered in to become a ‘secondary urban centre’? The purpose of these amendments is to ensure that the status quo established in the last Island Plan continue to apply to Les Quennevais over the next three years.

It is more than a little ironic that the new Island Plan, whose SP1 comprises policies to respond to climate change, proceeds to an SP2 which drives a coach and horses through some of the key principles of environmental sustainability which relate to the Island, as well as seeking to undermine the keystone of Jersey’s economic stability.

Strategic Proposal 4 – A west of Island planning framework

The first section (‘Volume 1’) of the draft Plan suggests that one of five strategic proposals should be the development of a ‘west of island planning framework’ (p.30). The other proposals are more strategic, relating to long-term planning, the marine environment, energy and infrastructure. I am sure that area-specific planning frameworks could be pursued but they should encompass the whole Island, not one section of it, and if an Island Plan is going to single out one area in particular it should provide a rationale for doing that. Doesn’t St. Saviour warrant a ‘planning framework’ given the concentration of schools in that Parish and the immediate challenge of managing school traffic better? Aren’t the challenges faced by that Parish more pressing than the challenges in the west? What of the challenges in the east of the Island? We should note that the proposal the States is being asked to endorse is quite specific in terms of prioritising the work of the Minister (and the Department):

‘The Minister for the Environment will prioritise the development of a planning framework for Les Quennevais and adjacent areas, including Jersey Airport.’

The argument that is provided on p.30 to justify the approval of Strategic Proposal 4 begins by admitting that is a departure from previous Island Plans:

‘Successive Island Plan spatial strategies have sought to direct the majority of new development towards St. Helier. The spatial strategy for the bridging Island Plan continues this overall approach, which meets a range of sustainable development objectives and makes best use of previously developed land in order to protect the island’s undeveloped countryside and urban open space. However ...’

The word should set alarm bells ringing, given that previous Island Plans have served the Island very well. Let us rehearse the reasons why this is the case:

By concentrating development in the Town area

1. we reduce the need to travel – one can walk to work and school, or cycle (and more would do this had the long-overdue walking and cycling strategies been prepared and implemented by the Government) – thus reducing the harmful effects of rush hour traffic, in particular, and encouraging healthier lifestyles;
2. we protect more of the Island’s coast and countryside from development for everyone to enjoy, including people who live in the town;
3. we support the majority of the Island’s retail and hospitality businesses which are based in the town;
4. we create a vibrant, bustling town which is a pleasure to live in , to work in and to visit.

But the authors of the draft Island Plan have other ideas:

‘However, in setting out the Plan for Town, the bridging Island Plan also recognizes that there are limits to the sustainability of this strategy and that it can create challenges for the built environment of the town and the quality of life experienced by its residents.’

Clearly ‘sustainability’ is the wrong word here; focusing development in the Town is the only sustainable strategy for the development of the Island unless we want to cover it in concrete. As for the ‘challenges’ referred to above and the ‘quality of life’ of town residents, the fact that successive Councils of Ministers have failed to do much to support the capital doesn’t mean the strategy isn’t viable or that it won’t be acceptable to the public, especially those who live in town.

It is, frankly, disingenuous, to claim in the fifth paragraph that this proposal ‘supports and complements the role of St. Helier as the island’s primary urban area and core retail location’, when it can only make the future of the town more uncertain, and I urge members to agree to delete Strategic Proposal 4 from the draft Bridging Island Plan.

Policy SP2 – Spatial strategy

Policy PL2 – Les Quennevais

Policy ER1 – Retail and town centre uses

Policy ER2 – Large-scale retail

Policy EO1 – Existing and new office accommodation

These are the further iterations of the proposed departure from sustainability in new policies which would see Les Quennevais moved out of the category of local centres to become a second town and I urge the States Assembly to reject them.

Les Quennevais and its environs, as has already been said, has seen considerable development in recent years, especially around the airport, and such developments have their part to play in the growth of the Island and in providing facilities that are important to residents of the western Parishes and all Islanders. But in what sense can the *acceleration* of what is permitted to happen in the Built-up area be considered a good thing when it comes to reducing the need to travel and supporting (the) Town's retail economy? The plan argues on p.38 that Les Quennevais can be

‘a sustainable alternative place for new development to happen, which might otherwise be located in St. Helier by encouraging the redevelopment of already developed land and buildings at higher densities, and by accommodating a broader range of employment uses, such as the development of office accommodation (up to 200 sqm).’

Once again the word ‘sustainable’ is being confused with ‘viable’ as if repeated muddying of the water about what environmental sustainability is will get these new policies over the line. The proposed new policy is unsustainable in that it proposes the kind of out-of-town development that is anathema to anyone who is committed (as the States Assembly was when it supported previous Island Plans) to supporting the retail and hospitality sectors of St. Helier; of particular concern is the proposal that retail and office development be encouraged in the west of the Island, as if the town's hospitality and retail sectors haven't already suffered enough from a significant loss of footfall as a result of the working from home arrangements necessary to counteract the spread of Covid 19 and the rise of online shopping.

Conclusion

Although the draft Bridging Island Plan states ‘the sustainable development of the island hinges on the sustainable development of Town’ (p.10) it seeks to tear up the fundamental principles of environmental sustainability by advancing proposals and policies that Les Quennevais and the west of the Island should be considered a ‘secondary urban centre’, with ‘higher density’ housing, offices and retail which will do nothing to support St. Helier and which may change the pattern of development and the character of the west of the Island for ever.

Financial and manpower implications

None.

Child Rights Impact Assessment implications

This amendment has been assessed in relation to the [Bridging Island Plan CRIA](#). Improved well-being of children will arise from both the decision not to develop Les Quennevais into a ‘secondary main urban centre’ and the concomitant decision to maintain the decision of previous Island Plans to focus development on (the) Town, for the reasons, including those associated with environmental sustainability, set out in the above report.