

STATES OF JERSEY



LA COLLETTE LOW RISE DEVELOPMENT: DIRECTION TO ANDIUM HOMES LTD. (P.139/2015) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 21st March 2016
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers is committed to delivering more homes for Islanders, which are of a better standard.

This is a commitment made in the approved Strategic Plan and Island Plan, in the Business Plan presented as part of the incorporation of Andium Homes, and supported in the Housing Strategy and considerable investment.

The 1,000 applicants on the Housing Gateway illustrate clearly the need for more social housing; and the 2015 Housing Needs Survey has just been published, showing a clear shortfall in homes. The relevant Scrutiny Panel also recognised this pressing need, reporting as recently as September 2015 –

“The evidence that we have received throughout our review suggests that Jersey is still experiencing a severe shortage of housing in all categories. The number of individuals applying for the Affordable Housing Gateway waiting list is continuously rising and it has been predicted that an annual supply of 150 new affordable homes will be needed to maintain the list.”

It is important that we deliver these much-needed homes for Islanders in line with the policy decisions of the Assembly.

It is also important that developments that have been approved by the planning process within agreed States policies are able to proceed, subject to proper deliberation and appeal. Any planning matter is complex. Additional uncertainty does not help investment decisions and costs money.

Furthermore, the issuing of a direction under Andium Homes’ Articles of Association must be a matter of “material public interest.” The implication of a direction from the shareholder at the instigation of the Assembly on a planning matter is that the decisions of the Planning Applications Committee do not reflect the public interest sufficiently. The Council of Ministers do not agree that this is the case.

The Planning Applications Committee was and is capable of making a decision on this application – it is comprised of elected States Members, and considers detailed evidence and the submissions in line with approved States policies.

Should the Assembly approve this Proposition, the clear view of Andium Homes is that a significant reduction in the number of homes on this site would be necessary. Indeed, approval could make redevelopment financially unviable. This would mean that 88 new much-needed units would not be developed for social housing. This leaves the only alternatives as essential or limited refurbishment, or even the option of selling the site. There are fundamental issues with insulation that refurbishment cannot solve, and lift access will not be provided, leaving homes unsuitable for people with mobility issues. This is not in the interests of tenants or Islanders waiting for homes.

As to the sequence of events, the Proposition states that Andium Homes decided to resubmit its original planning application following the States Assembly debate on P.78/2015 in September 2015. This is not the case. Andium Homes submitted the planning application on 12th May 2015, and the application was active before the debate took place in September. Whilst the Committee refused the original application, this

was done on clear grounds based on the position of 'Block D' in relation to Rope Walk. It is important to emphasize that the Committee had already considered the open space provision and had found it to be acceptable. Furthermore, as the Minister for Planning and Environment explained during the P.78/2015 debate and in his Comments, this application is a matter for the planning process, and P.78/2015 would be considered as part of that process. The Planning Applications Committee subsequently approved the application to redevelop La Collette low rise flats on 10th December 2015. A more detailed chronology is provided in the **Appendix** to these Comments.

Conclusion

It is clear that the redevelopment of La Collette low rise flats has many advantages – the much-needed provision of high-quality homes, increased usability of open space, better parking provision, improved design to avoid anti-social behaviour, and better amenities.

The proposed redevelopment fully meets the requirements of the Island Plan and has the firm support of residents. Overall improvements in the area are also important and necessary, and reflect the priority to regenerate this part of St. Helier.

Andium has its part to play in this, and has been tasked by the Assembly to upgrade and deliver new housing. It should be supported as it continues to make very positive steps.

For these reasons, the Council of Ministers, excluding the Minister for the Environment, urges States Members to reject the Proposition.

Financial and manpower implications

It is estimated that Andium Homes would incur abortive fees of £200,000 if it were to be directed to withdraw its current Planning Application.

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]

These comments were received by the States Greffe after the deadline set out in Standing Order 37A because of the additional time taken to complete the accompanying briefing note. The decision to develop this briefing note was taken relatively late, but it was considered important to help Members better understand the sequence of events and site issues, including the previous decisions of the Assembly on La Collette. The issues associated with the site are complex, and this took some additional time liaising between Departments and Andium Homes.

**Minister for Housing
Strategic Housing Unit**



**Andium Homes – La Collette low rise redevelopment briefing note to
States Members**

**Andium Homes – La Collette low rise redevelopment briefing note to States
members**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Minister for Housing has recently published a Housing Strategy, which focuses on the delivery of new, affordable and good standard homes. The delivery of over 1,000 affordable homes on surplus States land and in existing social housing sites is one of the key focuses of the Strategy.

Given the importance of new housing supply to the Housing Strategy, the Minister is circulating this briefing note to States Members ahead of debate on Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier's proposition P.139/2015 'La Collette Low Rise Development: direction to Andium Homes Ltd.' to inform them about the strategic context of this development and to provide site specific comments.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018 places health, education, economic growth and the regeneration of St. Helier at the centre of what the Council of Ministers will do over the next 3 years. Housing has an important role to play in supporting the Plan and achieving a range of social, environmental and economic goals, including ensuring the proper supply of housing; promoting housing affordability; and improving housing standards.

In the support of the Strategic Plan, and following consultation and briefings, the Minister for Housing is publishing a Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy also builds on the September 2015 Report of the Environment, Housing and Technical Services Scrutiny Panel.

The vision of the Housing Strategy is to ensure that all Islanders live in secure, high-quality homes they can afford. The Strategy focuses on delivering new housing supply and getting the most out of our existing housing, as well as improving standards across all categories of tenure and enhancing the neighbourhoods in which we live.

The Strategy is based on all the available evidence, including the recent Housing Needs Survey, latest housing completion rates, and the Housing Gateway waiting list. It pulls together existing work with new planned work into a single coherent programme, including a much stronger emphasis on delivering more affordable homes for rent *and* purchase – speeding up housing on surplus States-owned sites, intensifying joint working with social housing providers, and new legislation to promote shared equity schemes.

At the same time, the Strategy focuses on the regeneration of St. Helier, ensuring the delivery of sustainable communities with more and better housing, and good public amenities.

3. HOUSING NEED

The La Collette low rise flats are currently in a poor state of repair and are failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard¹.

By failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard, La Collette low rise flats fail to meet the minimum standards of repair for social housing accommodation. This means that:

- Homes contain one or more serious hazards assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System in respect of disrepair, dampness, excess cold/heat, hygiene, sanitation and water supply; lack of amenity space; and lack of space, overcrowding and poor lighting.
- One or more of the building components are old and, because of their condition, need to be replaced or need major repair.
- Homes lack reasonably modern facilities and services, such as a reasonably modern kitchen, a reasonably modern bathroom, and are not adequately insulated against external noise.

The La Collette low rise flats need replacing with modern and well-designed homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard.

The redevelopment of the site is being made possible by the £250 million housing bond, which was agreed by the States in 2012 and is being used by Andium Homes to bring all its housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard and to develop new homes. The La Collette low rise scheme is part of this programme of work.

The Island Plan is clear that the provision of additional affordable housing on sites, such as La Collette low rise flats, is as an important component of the Plan.

1,000 affordable housing units are due to be delivered over the lifetime of the Plan on surplus States owned sites, sites rezoned for the purpose of housing, and more efficient use of existing housing sites such as La Collette.

Underscoring the need for the redevelopment of La Collette low rise flats are the current Housing Gateway waiting list figures. There are over 1,000 households on the Gateway waiting list altogether, of which 447 are in high priority bands 1 and 2 awaiting offers for one-, two- and three-bedroom homes.

	BAND 1	BAND 2
1 BEDROOM	101	117
2 BEDROOM	96	133
3 BEDROOM	33	79

¹ 'Decent Homes Standard' as defined in Decent Home: Definition and Guidance for Implementation published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2006.

By comparison, the La Collette low rise scheme would deliver 147 units of accommodation, including 69 one-bedroom units; 68 two-bedroom units; and 10 three-bedroom units. The redevelopment of La Collette would therefore make a sizeable contribution towards meeting housing needs identified on the Gateway.

The redevelopment of La Collette low rise will deliver an additional 88 units on the existing site, which currently has 59 situated on it. However, it should be noted that the 2011 Island Plan envisaged that a net gain of 100 units could have been delivered on the site.

4. DEVELOPMENT SPECIFIC COMMENTS

It is clear from the La Collette low rise proposal that while the existing open space is being displaced, it is actually being increased in size, which can also be considered more usable than the existing on site.

The total existing amenity/open space is 5,048 m² and the proposed will be increased to 5,773 m², an increase of over 700 m², whilst all new homes will feature private balconies.

A residents' survey undertaken by Andium Homes found that 77% did not use the green space in between La Collette and Green Street at all, principally because of the position and layout of the existing space. It is hoped that the redevelopment would reverse this position and residents would enjoy improved open space provision.

The development will also address the current site inadequacies of the lack of access to private and secure residents' space. The new development proposes to provide all of the flats with private space in accordance with the latest standards, and this will be to the benefit of residents.

The current 1960s design scheme is recognised in a States of Jersey Crime impact statement as enabling anti-social behaviour, with open stairwells and resident areas fully accessible by the Public.

The proposed development is fully supported by the States of Jersey Police, as it promotes safer secure tenant spaces with more appropriate visual surveillance from resident units. This will help create a strong community and neighbourhood, which is a key objective of the forthcoming housing Strategy.

The density levels are a matter for the Environment Department, but from a housing design and liveability perspective, the scheme is of a high standard, providing all residents with significant improvements in public and private open space, dwelling space standards and parking provision.

It should be noted that a number of other benefits would be realised from this development. For example, the Department for Infrastructure are supportive of the proposals, as the development is in a location with excellent opportunities for access via sustainable transport modes. To maximise this potential, the following on-site and off-site measures are proposed:

- Bus shelters
- Cycle Parking
- Green travel initiative to be supported (inclusion of electric vehicle charging points)
- Relocation of pedestrian crossing.

The Department for Infrastructure has also confirmed that there is existing drainage capacity for the proposed increase in occupancy for La Collette.

5. TIMELINE

16th May 2013: The Reform of Social Housing

The States approve [P.33/2013](#), “The Reform of Social Housing”, outlining the programme of work that Andium Homes would undertake, presented to the States on 4th March 2013 as [R.15/2013](#), “States of Jersey Housing Transformation Programme: Full Business Case”. This Business Plan included new build on La Collette.

17th July 2014: Revised 2011 Island Plan

The States Assembly approved a revision to the 2011 Island Plan in recognition of the need for new affordable homes and insufficient supply in the original Plan. The revised Plan proposed the delivery of 1,000 new units on surplus States-owned land, rezoned sites, and intensification of use on existing social housing sites, including La Collette.

29th October 2014: Application for redevelopment of La Collette low rise flats submitted by Andium Homes

PP/2014/1872 – planning application proposing the demolition of the existing 59 units at La Collette low rise with 147 new units of accommodation – 69 one-bedroom units; 68 two-bedroom units; and 10 three-bedroom units.

Outline Planning Permission refused by the Planning Applications Committee on 23rd April 2015. The proposed development was refused by the Committee on account of concerns relating to the height and massing of Block D located on the western boundary of the development alongside Rope Walk. Importantly, the previous application was not refused on the basis of any other issues, including the demolition of the existing buildings or the loss of the Protected Open Space.

30th April 2015: the States’ Draft Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018 ([P.27/2015](#)) approved as amended by the States Assembly

States Assembly approves the Draft Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018, with 41 Members in favour; 4 against; no abstentions; and 4 Members absent for the vote.

Strategic Plan includes goal to ensure a proper supply of housing of all types, promote affordability, improve housing standards, and build strong communities.

12th May 2015: Application for redevelopment of La Collette low rise flats submitted by Andium Homes.

Andium Homes submit new application to demolish and rebuild new units at La Collette low rise flats (PP/2015/0747), making adjustments to the position, scale and massing of Block D to address and overcome the reasons for refusal identified in the previous planning application.

17th July 2015: Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier lodges Proposition [P.78/2015](#): ‘La Collette Low Rise: protection of open space – petition’

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

18th August 2015: Minister for Planning and Environment presents [Comments](#) in respect of P.78/2015

Minister for Planning and Environment’s Comments emphasize that the States Assembly is not the forum for considering planning applications. Comments make it clear that the Assembly elected the Planning Applications Committee to carry out this function, and the application should be considered fully by the Panel. Minister indicates that the petition would be a representation to the Committee on the planning application for it to consider as part of its evidence.

7th September 2015: Council of Ministers presents [Comments](#) in respect of P.78/2015

Council of Ministers’ Comments (excluding the Minister for Planning and Environment) calls on the Planning Applications Committee to be left to make a fully informed decision on the application on the basis of the detailed evidence and submissions that have been made. Comments emphasize that the scheme has many merits – improved homes, increased usability of open space, better parking provision, improved design to avoid anti-social behaviour, and better amenities. Importantly, the proposed development is fully in accord with the Island Plan and has the support of the residents.

A counter-petition organised by the La Collette Low Rise Association collects 48 signatories from residents of the 59 low rise flats, expressing full support for the development.

8th September 2015: States Assembly votes on P.78/2015

States vote in favour of Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier’s Proposition, with 22 Members in favour; 19 against; no abstentions; and 8 Members absent for the vote.

9th November 2015: Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier lodges Proposition [P.139/2015](#) 'La Collette Low Rise Development: direction to Andium Homes Ltd.'

Proposition requests the Minister for Treasury and Resources, as representative of the States as sole guarantor member of Andium Homes Limited, to give directions to Andium Homes Limited under Article 16 of the company's Articles of Association not to proceed with the current plans in relation to the redevelopment of La Collette Flats, whether or not planning permission has been granted. The Proposition further directs that the company should resubmit revised plans which include the retention of the existing green space (currently designated as Protected Open Space) on the site between La Collette Low Rise and the border with Green Street.

10th December 2015: Planning Applications Committee hearing

Planning Applications Committee considers Andium Homes' application to demolish and rebuild new units at La Collette low rise flats.

The Committee unanimously approves the application, subject to certain conditions. The Committee Chairman stresses that, in submitting the application, Andium Homes was adhering to the planning process. It is recognised that some residents were concerned about the proposed development, but that a number of existing residents were extremely unhappy with the living conditions at La Collette flats.

3rd February 2016: Planning appeal lodged in relation to La Collette low rise scheme

Appeal against the decision to grant outline planning permission to Andium Homes lodged.

18th March 2016: Minister for Housing presents Housing Strategy

Housing Strategy published by the Minister for Housing. Strategy focuses on delivering new housing; making efficient use of existing housing stock; improving housing standards and creating strong communities. Strategy places emphasis on delivering more affordable home for rent and purchase, including sites such as La Collette low rise.

6. CONCLUSION

The development is of a very high standard that will bring significant benefits to both residents and the local neighbourhood, and whilst it is acknowledged that there has been some local and political opposition, these concerns, principally around the changes to the open space provision, are fully mitigated by the provision of additional open space provided by the proposals.

The increase in affordable housing units on site does not present any problems in terms of over-development, with density levels at the lower end of the scale for this type of development; whilst improved usability of the open space, parking provision, betterment in anti-social behaviour and improved amenities for the local community, are all clear benefits arising from this development; and accordingly the Strategic Housing Unit endorses and supports this proposed development.

The Minister for Housing strongly supports the La Collette low rise scheme because it will provide much-needed affordable housing supply, and will bring significant benefits to both the residents who will occupy these high-quality homes and those who live nearby.