

STATES OF JERSEY

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HAUT DU MONT FARM COMMERCIAL COMPLEX: PETITION

**Lodged au Greffe on 22nd March 2005
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Environment and Public Services Committee to refuse to grant permission for the Haut du Mont Farm Commercial Complex to be used as a coach depot with associated amenities for Tantivy Blue Coach.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

This report supports the petition of some 250 residents of Mont au Prêtre, St. Helier, against the proposal to develop a site at Haut du Mont Farm as a coach park for up to 50 coaches along with associated workshops, paint and body shop, diesel store and staff facilities (a copy of the petition is attached at the Appendix).

I believe that the proposed development involving a serious change of use is both inappropriate and unsustainable on the following grounds –

1. That the area directly opposite and surrounding the proposed development is residential, so the request for change of use from agricultural to industrial is inappropriate. The adjacent residential area is soon to be further developed with additional units both directly opposite the entrance to the proposed site and further down the lane at the Raleigh Hotel site.
2. Given the above, it is certain that the proposed development will give rise to a number of serious nuisances for residents, including –
 - (a) Noise – from the parking and reversing of up to 49 coaches at all hours of the day and night. Coaches will be running school services, for example, which may require 6 a.m. starts, and tourist services, which may return at midnight or later.
 - (b) Atmospheric pollution – the pollution pumped out from diesel engines as the exit on to Trinity Hill will constitute a serious health hazard for the residents who live directly opposite the entrance.
 - (c) Further noise and pollution hazards are certain to arise from the proposal to include a workshop on the site, and particularly a body/paint shop. Anyone who has been around a paint shop will understand the risk and hazards posed by the extraction and dispersal of cellulose paints into the environment.
3. The character of the area: despite the area having been developed over the past decade, it has retained in large measure its tranquil countryside feel. The lanes remain narrow, with green-lane status further down (completely unsuited to coaches) and there is already much concern amongst residents over the current levels of traffic, with traffic-calming measures already in place through an area with so many young children.
4. In addition to these hazards, I have concerns over increased heavy traffic use up and down Trinity Hill and on to the Robin Hood junction which is already a congestion black spot at some times of day. I would also question the stability of the banks and walls bordering a road subject to increased use by heavy traffic, which has already been a problem in the past.

If members consult their copy of the Island Plan 2002, and examine the map, they will find a small rectangle of development on the left as you go up Trinity Hill, This is a peaceful, quiet residential development with lots of first-time buyers and many children. There are already some concerns about traffic, and so there are some traffic-calming measures around the estate before the start of the green lanes. A block of orange on the map shows the small area already zoned for further Category A housing. Over the road is pure countryside zone carrying a presumption against development.

And yet, according to a report of a Planning meeting over the application in the JEP, there is some support for the application, as follows –

- Removing a bad neighbour from town – but slapping it down right next to a quiet estate. Welcome to the bad neighbour from hell – a coach depot for up to 50 coaches, complete with workshop, body shop, spray booth, fuel pumps, etc. Are people aware that coaches are usually diesel-driven and need to warm up properly before moving out for the day? What a great dawn chorus as 20 coaches warm up at 6.30 a.m. for the school run, not 20 yards from a small residential estate.

- The proposed site is on a good arterial road with good access to town and an established high level of agricultural traffic – why the comparison with farm traffic? These are coaches. They will not be carrying potatoes, tomatoes or cows. This “good arterial road” is narrow in places and has a history of collapse of its banks and walls. Can it take a serious pounding from dozens of coaches daily? What of pedestrian safety? At the foot of the hill, on the bend by Safeways, the pavements are already tricky. How long before the kerbs are flattened as the coaches take the bend? How long, for that matter, before a wheelchair-user from St. Ewold's Residential Home is flattened at that blind crossing? If good access to town is the requirement, then try La Collette or Rue des Pres; at least they are already industrial.
- Traffic levels would be less than those likely to be generated by the alternative commercial use approved for the farm last year. What could generate more traffic than 50 coaches? This appears to be the choice of the least bad alternative, that is, no choice at all.
- There are no other obvious sites to relocate the depot – if you ignore La Collette or Rue des Pres, that is. My understanding is that La Collette was earmarked for precisely this type of use in the Island Plan.
- Repositioning access and landscaping would reduce the impact on neighbours – reduce, but not eliminate, the noise and fumes early in the morning and late at night (in the tourist season). There can be no escaping the fact that this proposed industrial development will be a bad neighbour and no amount of amelioration will change that. The noise and fumes nuisance has already been raised by Environmental Health, and many residents have voiced their legitimate objections.

I understand that this field was prime agricultural land not 20 years ago, before the farmer had to move his dairy unit there because of pollution problems in this water catchment area.

The site comprises a dairy unit (a single large building) and 3 sheds for potato and machinery storage. In 2002 the farmer took advantage of the Dairy Exit Strategy, which resulted in his dairy unit being redundant. In 2003 he obtained permission to change the use of the dairy unit to retail storage (P/2002/3056). This was followed by a further application (P/2003/1558) to subdivide the dairy unit into 6 light industrial/storage units. Permission was granted in May 2004. Owing to significant conversion costs, the applicant has now submitted another application (P/2004/2371) to use the dairy shed to store potatoes and farm machinery, thereby releasing the other 3 sheds to relocate blue Coaches from Colomberie.

In a period of under 2 decades, this land will have been transformed from prime agriculture into an industrial site if the application is accepted. I call on the members of the Economic Development Committee to use their influence on the Planning Committee to promote Article 7.1.1 of their policy document “Growing the Rural Economy” –

“The underlying principle of the Rural Initiative Scheme is to promote growth in the rural economy by supporting appropriate diversification, enterprise and innovation. Another prime consideration is that these new ventures will meet environmental and social objectives helping to maintain and enhance the character of the Jersey countryside.”

A coach depot and associated works in the countryside, next to family homes, is simply not appropriate diversification and certainly does not maintain or enhance any environmental or social objectives whatsoever. It must, surely, not be allowed to proceed.

There are no financial or manpower implications arising from this proposition.

APPENDIX

To: His Excellency Air Chief Marshal Sir John Cheshire K.B.E., C.B.

To: Sir Philip Bailhache, Bailiff of Jersey

To: Members of the States of Jersey

The humble petition of certain of the residents of Mont au Prêtre shews that the area of land which is to be used as a coach depot with associated amenities for Tantivy Blue Coach is in a rural part of the Island with a housing estate close by and the proposed use is totally inappropriate for this part of the Island, and accordingly your petitioners pray that the Environment and Public Services Committee refuse to grant permission for Haut du Mont Farm Commercial Complex to be used for this purpose, and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

FULL NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE

239 signatures