

STATES OF JERSEY



ANDIUM HOMES: AUTHORISATION OF LOAN TO DEVELOP THE ANN COURT SITE

Lodged au Greffe on 21st December 2018
by the Deputy of St. Martin

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to sign a Ministerial Decision to release the entire loan funding requested by Andium Homes to develop the Ann Court site in accordance with Planning Permit P/2017/0730.

DEPUTY OF ST. MARTIN

REPORT

Background and History

Built in the 1960s Ann Court served as a social housing site until its demolition in 2009 due to irreparable subsidence issues. The site has been employed since as a temporary surface car park to support both residential and town economy parking, following the loss of the Gas Place car park which made way for the new town park.

The St. Helier Development and Regeneration Strategy (EDAW 2007) proposed –

“A new MSCP [multi-storey car park] at Ann Court to the north-east of the town centre, which will also include rented parking (as replacement for some of that lost at Gas Place), and short stay parking”

In 2008 and 2009, Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier lodged [P.184/2008](#) and [P.43/2009](#) both seeking the withdrawal of plans for the Ann Court multi-storey car park in favour of a development of over-55s housing on the site.

Although both propositions were withdrawn prior to debate, a further proposition [P.202/2009](#) supported by a petition was lodged by Deputy Martin seeking –

- “(a) to agree that the current plans to use the site of Ann Court, St. Helier, for a multi-storey car park should be abandoned; and*
- (b) to request the Council of Ministers to bring forward proposals within the North of Town Masterplan to the Assembly on an appropriate alternative use of the site.”*

Debated on 10th March 2010 the proposition was unanimously carried (46 pour; 7 absent).

The Ann Court site was included in the North St. Helier Masterplan debated by the States in June 2011 ([P.73/2011](#)). The North St. Helier Masterplan in part set out key principles for a development of the Ann Court site –

“This site is suitable for residential development of 5½ storeys, a new public square of approximately 1/3 vergée (1,700 sq.m.) together with 300 underground parking spaces including 185 short stay shoppers car parking spaces.”

“The site is an ideal location for an urban public square, both visible and accessible from the town centre shopping area, but also firmly located within the residential area. The Jersey Arts Centre would benefit from the adjacency to the new public square. People working in, and visiting the town centre, will be able to use the square at lunchtimes while it becomes more of a local, residential square outside the working day and at weekends.”

“The public spaces in the Ann Court car park, will be available for overnight and weekend parking for local residents. The proposals assume the purchase and replacement elsewhere in the scheme of the existing public house and demolition of all existing housing upon the site.”

An amendment to P.73/2011 ([P.73/2011Amd.](#)) in 2 parts was lodged by the then Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence. Firstly, that the Masterplan should be amended to permit the redevelopment of sites for mixed-use such as housing and office developments. Secondly, that the proportion of affordable housing delivered shall be aligned with any proportion agreed in the Island Plan.

Part 1 [the inclusion of offices] was withdrawn by Deputy Le Fondré and part 2 was subsequently adopted as an amendment to the Masterplan on the 29th June 2011.

In 2013 proposals to develop the site as a mixed use social housing and car park development were progressed by Jersey Property Holdings with the Jersey Homes Trust. These proposals reached an advanced stage but the parties were not able to reach an agreement.

[P.33/2013](#) ‘The Reform of Social Housing’ included the principle of site transfers (including Ann Court) to the body now known as Andium Homes.

Part of the current proposed development site known as ‘33, 35, 37, 39 and 41 Ann Street, 65–70 Ann Court and 1 and 2 Clifton Place’ was transferred to Andium Homes as Part 165 under the [Social Housing \(Transfer\) \(Jersey\) Regulations 2014](#).

The Revised 2011 Island Plan ([P.37/2014](#)) increased the anticipated number of housing units on the Ann Court site from c140 in the original plan to c190 units.

The Revision also added the following to the Housing chapter –

6.91 Given the reliance of the housing strategy in the Plan upon the delivery of affordable homes on States-owned land, it is important that this source of supply 'performs' in accord with targets for completion. In the event that the supply of affordable homes from this source is not satisfactory, and, in particular, if substantial progress has not been made in the Summerland/Ambulance station site by the start of 2016, the Minister may seek to bring forward other, readily implementable alternatives requiring a further review of the plan.

Given that agreement could not be reached on development proposals with the Jersey Homes Trust, the remaining Ann Court site was transferred to Andium Homes under delegated approval of the (then) Minister for Treasury and Resources (ref: [MD-PH-2015-0053](#)) and subject to an initial development agreement. The details are set out in a report to the States [R.102/2015](#). Subsequently, Andium Homes acquired Toddy’s Bar to complete the current site assembly and worked with the Department for Infrastructure to re-route the Town Brook which ran through the site and to facilitate the final phase of the St. Helier Flood Attenuation Scheme by running connecting pipes from the Phillips Street Shaft on the edge of the site.

Planning application P/2017/0730 was submitted for the site to demolish the existing residential units and pub to make way for 5 blocks of accommodation to provide 165 residential units (No.130 x 1 bed and No.35 x 2 bed) and 4 retail units together with 137 shopper parking spaces and 90 residents’ parking spaces.

Approval for the development was granted on 30th January 2018, subject to a Planning Obligation Agreement (POA) requiring the contribution of £83,000 towards improvements to the local highway network and the public realm.

A series of site preparatory works, including demolition of remaining site structures and homes has since been completed together with installation and commissioning of a new JEC sub-station ahead of main construction.

A development agreement between Andium Homes and the Public provides for an allocation of costs in relation to the car park (wholly Public), the residential development (wholly Andium Homes) and common parts (shared costs). It also provides a methodology for assessing any residual land value to the Public for the land transferred under MD-PH-2015-0053.

Andium Homes has procured a preferred developer for the site and is in a position to complete contracts to commence works on the approved scheme as soon as finance is released by the Minister for Treasury and Resources. It had been anticipated that works would have commenced on site by January 2019 and the project completed in 2021.

The Issues

This Assembly, is of course different to the Assembly which debated our Island Plan in 2011, and again when it was reviewed in 2014. Indeed a very significant number of members will never have been through the extremely long and rigorous process of consultation, independent review and debate inherent with the approval of an Island Plan. However, we are all residents in this beautiful Island and none of us will be ignorant of the fact that for a large proportion of our population access to housing, and affordable housing in particular, remains one of the most difficult and important issues they face. Even those of us fortunate enough to own our homes will have, indeed do have, concerns about the future housing prospects of our children, grandchildren, friends and constituents. Housing is an issue central to Island life as we balance the many tensions inherent in ensuring that we have enough homes for our growing population without damaging our infrastructure, environment and historic uniqueness.

Ensuring that we achieve this balance is vital, and the Island Plan we produce every 10 years is one of the key tools which takes the objectives of the States Strategic Plan and interprets them as a basis for making well considered land-use planning decisions. The forward to the current Island Plan from the then Minister for the Environment sets out that the Island Plan itself is predicated on 3 very simple, but linked, concepts of countryside protection, the wise use of resources and urban regeneration.

The Minister for the Environment is guardian of the Island Plan. The Minister is also responsible for ensuring that the Plan, and the developments which came forward for housing, are delivered in line with the decisions of the States and contribute overall to its Strategic Objectives. For those who may argue that the Island Plan is out of date or less relevant, all the indicators are that the demand for housing is actually now significantly higher than the Island Plan predicted.

The Housing Section of the revised Island Plan focussed on determining what our Housing needs were going to be up to 2020 and in identifying sites to meet those needs. Ann Court is identified in the Plan as a site delivering an estimated 140 new social rented homes and was important in achieving the housing needs estimated at the time.

It is an undeniable fact since 2014, Jersey's population has been increasing. This increasing population translates very directly into an increased demand for housing and, unless we continue developing sufficient number of homes year on year, prices will continue to rise in both the rented and purchase sectors. In 2012, the States established the Affordable Housing Gateway as a means of continuously monitoring the requirements of that part of our population which needs affordable housing. It should be of concern to us all that despite the sites approved in the Island Plan, and in some cases developed since, the number of applicants on the Gateway has continued to rise from less than 900 in 2014 to a current level of 2,057 individuals and families. The Strategic Housing Unit, in an attempt to more accurately assess Housing Needs, commissioned an Objective Assessment of Housing Needs Survey. No doubt the report will show that we are significantly behind the curve in terms of the new homes that we need to be producing, and that the under-supply of homes is becoming more acute and prices are increasing.

It would seem nonsensical for us to be delaying a scheme for 165 new homes on an Island Plan approved site. For those families urgently seeking an affordable and decent home, can it be right for this Assembly to agree that new office accommodation for States workers is more important.

For those members who do not track the monthly Housing Gateway figures it is worth them noting that as at the end of November 2018, of the 2,057 active applications on the Gateway, almost 900 of these were from individuals and families waiting for an affordable rental home, with the balance looking for a home to purchase. These are not statistics, not projections, they are real people, individuals and families that we are in danger of failing. We need to do more to address these growing housing needs and follow through on previous decisions made.

Ann Court is a residential development site approved by the States in the Island Plan. Of course the question of its use had arisen prior to that decision, notably during the preparation of the North of Town Master Plan. The States has previously made it absolutely clear, that it does not want offices on the site but wants the site to deliver high quality affordable homes and public car parking which will together contribute to the ongoing regeneration of St. Helier. During the debate on 29th June 2011 on Deputy Le Fondré's attempt to amend the North of Town Master Plan, to have at least part of the Ann Court site developed as offices, a former States Member, Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier said –

“Deputy Le Fondré asked me earlier if I was going to support his original intentions to maybe relocate offices on this site, and I would like him in the next amendment to withdraw it. The States has now sent a clear signal that we are building affordable housing on States-owned sites. This is a Housing-owned site and we need to build affordable housing there, and if we do not build affordable housing on this site in the next 2 years we are back in the fields.”

Deputy Le Fondré withdrew that part of his amendment.

Andium Homes has developed its proposals for the Ann Court site in close collaboration with the Parish of St. Helier and with the States, particularly the Department for Infrastructure, Strategic Housing Unit and Property Holdings. There has been wide and continuous public consultation and the scheme was unanimously approved by the Planning Applications Panel.

The Minister for Children and Housing supports the scheme, and the Treasury have reviewed Andium Homes' project viability and recommended to the Minister for Treasury and Resources that the loan agreement with Andium Homes should be approved by Ministerial Decision. It is regrettable that the Minister for Treasury and Resources has apparently been prevented from making that decision because of this 11th hour attempt to open up an old debate. This is an attempt to derail the scheme in favour of the untested and unsubstantiated office accommodation needs of States workers, an option not even considered in the currently approved Office Modernisation Programme Business Case.

Our States workers deserve top quality office accommodation in a single building, and nothing less. However, Members should not be tempted to support offices for States workers on this site by promises of massive savings. Such extravagant claims are another example of spin until supported by a well-researched and robust Business Case and so should not be taken seriously in this Assembly. This is a residential area and there are good and valid reasons why the Parish and the Connétable of St. Helier have been so supportive of Ann Court being redeveloped with new homes, together with the valuable shopper car parking that is so important to support town traders.

Members should not be tempted by promises of '*other States owned replacement housing sites*'; where are they? If they do exist within the built-up area and avoid further green zone encroachment then why isn't the Council of Ministers making them available anyway? The timescale for the release of those sites is another critical question, bearing in mind that the approved homes on the Ann Court site could be available for occupation by 2021. The answer to all these questions is that the Council of Ministers just does not know. There are no firm plans to release any further sites in the near future. What we do know is that 165 families will have to wait years longer for a home should this site not be developed for housing.

Members should not believe that reconsidering the future development of Ann Court need not impact on the public car park or on the timeline for development. No competent developer would construct a load bearing, structural element such as the proposed semi-basement carpark without having a complete and comprehensive design and engineering detail for what will go above. As a construction expert explained recently –

“Ann Court is currently designed as a residential scheme which will therefore be built using an in-situ concrete frame solution for the basement, podium and superstructure works. This is the appropriate solution for such a residential scheme to meet structural requirements in respect of acoustic, fire suppression and other building bye-law issues. An office development would use a structural steel frame with metal decking and concrete floor and most likely a unitised façade (similar to the IFC Buildings 1 and 5). This gives a very different structural solution that will affect the piles, foundation and basement designs. Typically, the column loads will transfer through the basement, thus introducing columns differently in the parking areas meaning the car park layout and design will need to change. Offices have a greater occupancy per m2 so the transfer loads will be greater. Offices are designed on grid patterns to maximise floor space and layout efficiency, which are different in scale from the 'grid' for a residential development. Office occupancy levels dictate other factors, such as toilet provision, requirement for air changing and escape routes. This will affect drainage design, service and plant requirements for air conditioning, access for deliveries, lift sizes, escape stairs, circulation space,

central cores and other critical design factors. The Mechanical Electrical and Power (MEP) strategies for an office development are very different from those required for a residential development and would need to be completely redesigned.”

All the above would need to be considered in a redesign and obviously be typically based on a known superstructure and floor plan layout. Progressing design development in the absence of a known superstructure is a high-risk approach that is likely to lead to a more expensive and less efficient solution. A worst case scenario would be a car park structurally incapable of supporting an office development above.

Members should not be tempted by arguments about this just being a decision about one site. Members should consider the progress that Andium Homes is making across the Island, particularly in St. Helier. It has addressed the States long standing failure to maintain its social housing stock. It has produced quality refurbishments and new build schemes. It recently gained planning approval for a new purpose-built facility for Age Concern at Val Plaisant, and this scheme can only work for Age Concern if the charity can relocate its existing charity shop from its current unsuitable premises. In that regard, Andium Homes has provided one of 4 small commercial areas within its Ann Court scheme. If Ann Court fails to go ahead as planned then, as a former member of this House, Ben Shenton wrote in the JEP on 11th December, the entire relocation scheme for Age Concern is in jeopardy!

The problems do not end there, Andium Homes is developing the former Ann Street Brewery site, another key North of Town Masterplan project. As part of that scheme they are working closely with Autism Jersey to deliver its new Headquarters alongside some specialist accommodation, as well as new facilities for the Education Department. Andium Homes has also acquired the Gas Works site and has proposed a reduction in unit numbers from 253 homes down to 117 to provide an extension to the Town Park. That proposal has been approved by the States, but I wonder whether we would have been so comfortable doing so had we known of the proposal to abandon the residential development at Ann Court.

Members should send a clear message to the people of Jersey that their housing needs are a priority. Let us stop the dithering, indecision and delay and support the immediate development of this site, as already approved.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no financial or manpower implications arising from this proposition that are not already considered by the Minister for Treasury and Resources and approved in the Andium Homes Strategic Business Plan, other than ongoing interest and lost rentals of £6,500 per week as a result of this delay.