

In May 2007, the Parish of St. Ouen declined to be involved in a proposition relating to the re-zoning of land for Category A and Life Long Dwellings for the over 55s, citing the reason as a lack of need.

On the 9th October 2007, Mrs Beryl Coulter died. 16 days later Probate was granted. According to Mr Vibert, the then Constable of St. Ouen, he was approached after Mrs Coulter's death, and advised of a substantial legacy. Suddenly the Parish of St. Ouen had an urgent need for housing for the elderly. Interestingly, Mrs Coulter's bequest instructed that an incorporated body be set up by the Parish of St. Ouen 'for the purpose of the provision of homes for the elderly of the Parish'. This application, relates to housing for 55s and over, a strange definition of elderly. The United Nations World Health Organisation states 'most developed countries have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of elderly or older person'. Within **ONE** month of Probate, a drawing appears identifying Field 622 as a possible site for development for this project. The applicant appears to have been able to move with superhuman speed in identifying a suitable site. The first meeting with invited Parishioners was not held until February 2009. Mr Vibert was at pains to stress a time restriction imposed by the Will, however Clause 2 (ii) of Mrs Coulter's initial Will, the time limit was subject to a supporting condition 'such a period may be extended at the absolute discretion of the Trustees'. In 1973/74, the boundary of development in St. Ouen was established and the Parish has in the intervening period developed housing for the elderly on alternative sites within the designated urban area. Many people in Jersey strongly object to any more Green Zone area being eroded. It is the democratic right for any person to object to development of the Green Zone. The applicant suggests objections from outside of the Parish as orchestrated, which is inappropriate and presumptuous. The Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society categorically states 'any further rezoning of the Green Zone is unsustainable in agricultural terms'. Mr Brian Vibert states that the loss of the developed part of the field to agriculture is 'a small price to pay for the greater good of the community'. Only yesterday Mr John Le Maistre, a former President of the Jersey Farmers Union stated on Jersey Radio that it was important that Jersey preserves its agricultural land bank, securing agricultural production for the future. This would be for the greater benefit of the wider Island community and not just a Parish community. This elevates the importance of the submission by Peter Houguez, the last dairy farmer within the village. The proposed application will affect his livelihood irreparably. If the definition of Green Zone is as insignificant, as implied by the applicant, this calls into question the whole planning policy of this Island. Let us remember that Planning application P/2008/0540 relating to the Bakehouse, in Rue de la Croute, was initially refused in August 2008 on the grounds that 'it is an area of open and natural land within an environmentally sensitive location' and again quote 'would result in the creeping domestication and permanent loss of an area of this open land, which would be harmful to the natural character of the immediate vicinity'.

The concept of housing for the elderly is not the issue. What is being objected to, is the proposed use for development of a fully viable agricultural field, long designated as Green Zone and bordering an environmentally fragile area, namely Le Marais.

The applicant has employed a consultant, a former employee of the States Planning Department. This same person, Mr Peter Thorne categorically stated at the Examination in Public, held on 5th October 2010, that if the eastern end of Field 622 is re-designated from Green Zone, it is inevitable that the Western end and the adjoining Field 623, would also eventually fall to re-zoning and development. Not a single representative of the Parish attended the Examination in Public. The applicant has over the last 4 years, submitted an initial planning application and 2 propositions have been lodged 'au greffe' with the States of Jersey, concerning the rezoning of Field 622, none of which were pursued and were in fact withdrawn. The Constable Mr Vibert in a letter to the Minister of the Environment, dated 20th September 2011, issued a veiled threat to pursue legal avenues to progress a decision on the application. This followed advice from Mr Peter Thorne and Mr Kevin Pilley not to table any amendments to the Island Plan. According to the Senior Planner of the Department of Environment, the applicant chose to ignore the encouraged due process of Policy H5, which may have led to a different conclusion to this matter. Policy H5 encourages the preparation of Village Plans by Parochial authorities, something the Parish of St. Ouen, although advised to do so by the Planning Department, singularly failed to achieve. Perhaps they should also have been more mindful of Policy H7, which promotes housing to meet special requirements, where it meets an identified need, and where it is within the built up area boundary.

This application is controversial and raises many questions. The applicant has been afforded much assistance by the Planning Department, a luxury not extended to those objecting, except for one meeting with Mr Thorne in January 2010, despite a number of written requests. A level playing field certainly has not been a reality in this case.

The Senior Procureur of St. Ouen must publicly confirm the funding for this project if the application is to have substance. In May, at a meeting at the Parish Hall, we were advised that funding available was unknown. Sir, you are being asked to consider an application within a sensitive green zone for a project the funding of which is unsubstantiated and Parishioners are unaware.

This application fails under numerous planning policies, has not followed due process. Funding is unsubstantiated and yet an environmentally sensitive Green Zone area is being threatened. For these reasons we object in the strongest terms to this application.