

Grosnez Farm,
St. Ouen, Jersey

10th May, 2013.

To whom it may concern,

Firstly, may I apologise for the lateness in this submission.

I was first elected Connétable of the Parish of St. Ouen in April, 1994, a position which I held until November, 2009.

In 1995/6 I was approached by the then Environment Department to allow part of the Parish cemetery to grow naturally. Although I was not totally convinced of doing such a thing, I did give instructions that a small area should be left un-mowed. A couple of months later, I was approached by a lady, Mrs. Beryl Coulter, who was extremely upset at finding her late husband's grave plot unattended. She was horrified to find that the plot, which was usually so well tended, was now inaccessible in grass and weeds. Having explained the situation to the lady, I assured her that I would have her plot and the surrounding area mowed immediately. On her next visit to the office, she thanked me for having acted so promptly and told me that she would leave something to the old people of the Parish.

In 2007, following the death of Mrs. Beryl Coulter, the Parish was approached by Mr. Peter Routier, the Senior Trustee of this lady's Will to inform me that the Parish was the main benefactor of her Estate, which extended to over £1 million. At future meetings with Mr. Routier, we were informed that in fact the value of the Estate would finally be in the region of £3 million. There were a number of conditions attached which included the Parish being responsible for obtaining planning permission for any proposed scheme within a three year time limit. The Trustees of the Estate quickly realised that this condition was not achievable and applied to the Royal Court for a variation of the Will. This was obtained in 2009 and allowed the Parish the time required for this permission to be obtained.

In the mean time, the Parish's senior officials, myself and the two Procureurs du Bien Public (Public Trustees) commenced work on identifying a suitable site for the possible 20 houses which could be built with these funds. It was quickly realised that no other site other than a green field would be found. There being nothing available within the built up area of the Parish Village Development. We then looked to identify the fields closest to, and with the best access to, the shops and Parish Hall.

We first looked at the fields alongside the Farmer's Inn Public House, but found the owner to be an unwilling seller. There was also the problem of access to the Parish Hall across a very busy road junction. The next field which was considered was Field 622 which was partly in the ownership of the St. Ouen's Rectorat. Permission was obtained from the Dean and further enquiries were undertaken. A number of other fields were offered and considered before being rejected predominantly on the grounds of distance from the Parish Hall, as well as poor access, there being no pavements to the roads in the vicinity.

As happens in a small community, neighbours of Field 622 soon became aware of the Parish interest, and with this in mind, a meeting was held with all interested parties, all the neighbours having received a written invitation. The purpose of this meeting was to ensure that all parties were aware of exactly what was going on. A further field, 695 was suggested but later rejected because again, the owners were unwilling sellers.

In November, 2009 at a well attended Parish Assembly, the decision to proceed with the seeking of rezoning Field 622 was taken by a narrow vote. The Parish then proceeded to get plans drawn up for 20 houses on this site.

The Parish officials went forward with this site and these plans in the certain knowledge that there was a need for such housing. The first development of sheltered housing in St. Ouen had been undertaken in 1976. The success of this development led to two further developments in 1984 and 1996 making a total of 39 units. The concept in the Parish is well understood and appreciated by Parishioners and following the Parish Assembly a large number of approaches in favour of developing Field 622 were made. It also resulted in a number of new applications for housing being received.

It is vital to realise that any homes built on this land would be the property of the Parish of St. Ouen and not for resale. They would be let on exactly the same basis as the existing homes and available to persons with links to St. Ouen.

Whilst I was always aware that there was strong opposition to the use of Field 622, I was also aware that this opposition was led by a small group of property owners overlooking this particular field. Many of the letters received by the Planning Department in December, 2010 were from persons from outside the Parish who had been canvassed to submit a particular opinion. I do realise that building on this particular field will change the nature of the area, but am of the opinion that the single storey development which is proposed is of far lesser impact on neighbouring properties than what might be built in the future.

The need for the type of housing proposed has been clearly identified by the Parish, the funds are available and were gifted for this particular use, the site is the most practical in terms of easy access to the facilities most important to the elderly: doctor, chemist, shops and hairdresser as well as easy access to the bus service and the hub of the Parish, the Parish Hall. Unfortunately, green field sites are the only practical sites available for this purpose in the Parish Village envelope. I would therefore ask that you look favourably on the rezoning of this particular field.

Thank you.

Ken P. Vibert.