



The Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society

General Position Paper on agricultural land in Jersey

1. The RJA&HS maintains a position that it is of the utmost importance that agricultural land is preserved in perpetuity for its productive value. It also contends that agricultural land is an economic resource that should be reserved for the use of 'bona fide' agriculturalists and horticulturalists engaged in primary production. Loss of land from the bank available to agriculturalists and horticulturalists seriously undermines the future viability of these industries to the long term detriment of the island as a whole.

The RJA&HS promotes the preservation of all agricultural land.

2. There has been a documented loss of agricultural land in the island in the order of some 25% from 1970 and it is unsustainable to continue developing green fields. This loss has been attributed to permanent development, reversion of marginal land and change of use out of agriculture. In 2004 the Jersey Environment Forum called upon the States of Jersey, in whom responsibility lies for the protection of agricultural land (through the planning, protection of agricultural land and control of sales & leases laws), to undertake a review of the situation. This review has not been completed and therefore any further loss of agricultural land in the absence of researched data is irresponsible.

The RJA&HS contends that there should be no further permanent loss of agricultural land.

3. The Island Plan 2011 recognises "the strong desire to protect the island's countryside" and therefore gives a high degree of protection to agricultural land:
 - a. Policy SP 1 Spatial strategy: whereby planning permission will only be given for development that is "appropriate to the countryside" and in the case of green field land only in "exceptional circumstances" which meets an identified (and therefore proven) need.
 - b. Policy SP 4 Protecting the natural & historic environment: noting that "a high priority will be given to the protection of .. the countryside" which is predominantly agricultural land.
 - c. Policy SP 5 Economic growth & diversification: through the "protection and maintenance of existing employment land" which includes productive agricultural land.

The Island Plan gives a high degree of protection to agricultural land.

4. The loss of agricultural land can also occur through a permitted, or frequently an illegal, change of use. The Society has adopted the following principles when this situation arises:
 - a. Agricultural land should be protected with its use reserved for agriculture and horticulture and any change of use should be resisted.
 - b. Land should be reserved for 'commercial' primary production if it meets one or more of the following tests:
 - i. It is of significant productive value, e.g. it is 'early' for potato production.
 - ii. It is of a size and shape that is suitable for modern agriculture, e.g. it is level, of regular shape and over 5 verges in size.
 - iii. It is of strategic importance to a farm unit, e.g. it is a small field that links access to blocks of grazing, is close to a commercial unit or forms part of a larger block of land.
 - c. Should land be subject to a requested for 'change of use' and it passes the above tests then consideration should only be given against a scale of reversion, i.e. consideration only given to uses that would not preclude a return to commercial agriculture or horticulture. The Society has a 'scale of reversion'.

Permission for a 'change of use' of agricultural land should be resisted.