

Submission By

Le Comité de la Commune Rurale de St Jean
(on behalf of the Parish of St John)

To

The Government of Jersey

On

The (Draft) Jersey Island Plan 2022 - 2024

Background

As part of an island-wide public consultation exercise to approve a new Island Plan (2021 to 2030), Le Comité de la Commune Rurale de St Jean, (the Comité Rurale) was elected to ascertain the opinions of the parishioners of St John and produce a report on behalf of the Parish to the Government of Jersey.

At the beginning of the year, 1,237 questionnaires were delivered by the Post Office to all dwellings across the Parish. 218 completed questionnaires were received. In March Covid 19 intervened and disrupted the Island consultation, the Parish's response and the new Island Plan legislation process.

Seven months later the Comité Rurale is now in a position to formally reply to the Government's original Island Plan consultation invitation, and its recently published document "Preferred Strategy Report Island Plan Review – Technical Evidence Base".

The Comité Rurale has been able to compare this year's findings with those from its last survey carried out in 2010 (for the current Island Plan).

While the general recognition and support for sustainable housing, economic and community development remained broadly similar over the past decade, the growing awareness of the need for a global response to sustainability and climate change initiatives - right down to a Parish and an individual - now underpins parishioners' views on most subjects.

8th November 2020

(References in italics refer to the "Island Plan Strategic issues and options" summary consultation document ("IPSIO"), the Preferred Strategy Report Island Plan Review – Technical Evidence Base, Appendix 2 ("PSR"), and other Government of Jersey policy documents.)

2020 Survey Headlines

- Four out of five accept the need for more housing development in St John over the next ten years.
- There is substantial support for creation of new affordable purchase and over 55's dwellings.
- The Parish should play a leading role in these developments.
- The rural nature of the Parish countryside must be retained with the creation and maintenance of open spaces and over 90% of parishioners support the planting of more trees.

In general, the opinions of St John parishioners are contrary to the views of some politicians who like to paint those in the countryside as overly protective and obstructive of an Island-wide approach.

Housing (*IPSIO Spatial strategy Question 2 - options 3-6, PSR Spatial Strategy, Planning for community needs, Placemaking, Responding to climate change, Protecting and promoting island identity*)

A clear majority (81%) accept the need for more housing in the Parish with just over half (53%) supporting the development of up to 100 new dwellings.

A large majority of responses (83%) want to see the Constable and Municipality have influence to agree or reject development in the Parish.

There is wide support for the Parish to undertake projects to address the housing needs of affordable purchase/first-time buyers (78%) and the over 55's (80%) but not nearly so much for social rental dwellings (47%).

The question of where additional higher priced dwellings should be created was also raised. There is most support for development of redundant glasshouse sites and agricultural buildings in, or adjacent to, existing built up areas, followed by dividing up large existing dwellings into multiple units and then building additional dwellings in the gardens of existing dwellings.

Call for development sites

It has been reported that over 700 sites have been put forward across the Island for possible development or protection. The Comité Rurale and the Parish have not been informed of any in St John, with the exception of 3 private individuals who wish to build within the gardens of existing dwellings and a proposal from Constable Chris Taylor for Parish projects to provide sheltered housing, affordable homes for the elderly and first-time buyers, a memorial garden and car park and a Liberation commemorative wood.

A sustainable Parish economy (*PSR – A productive diverse and sustainable economy*)

There is a distinct disconnect between the support expressed by parishioners for local community retail outlets and services and the actual use of them. This is clearly a matter to be addressed by the Government of Jersey and business owners, and not by the Comité Rurale.

Traffic, cycling, pedestrians and parking (*PSR - Responding to climate change, Planning for community needs; Sustainable Transport Policy 2020*)

The views of St John parishioners on traffic are evenly split – depending on where the respondents live - 48% support more traffic calming measures and 47% are against.

However, the respondents want to see the introduction of pedestrian crossings near shops and schools (89%) methods to improve cycle and walking safety (88%), extension of pavements and footpaths (75%) and safer bus stops (67%).

Only one in ten people reported public parking as being “very problematic” with the majority (54%) feeling the issue is either not very problematic or not problematic at all. Comments relating to problems typically referred to school pick up and drop off times and funerals.

Conservation and Open Spaces (*IPSIO – Question 25, PSR - Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the natural environment, Protecting and promoting island identity*)

It is not surprising that in a rural Parish the people of St John show strong support for the creation and maintenance of landscaped areas (86% - very important or important) and the planting of more trees (90%).

Nearly a third of respondents do not know where the area currently designated as a Coastal National Park is in the Parish and a large majority (86%) support the development of offshore wind and tidal renewable energy schemes.

Comments

Respondents provided a large quantity of unstructured input via comments, however it is clear from the comments that there are key recurring themes relating to quality of life and personal safety;

- Traffic volumes and speeding
- Extension of pavement and footpath networks and more bus shelters
- Bus service frequency
- Extension of mains drains and mains water provision
- Extension of cycling and walking networks
- Issues with light pollution and concerns about increasing levels in a rural parish, but also support for more street lighting in some central areas.

(PSR- Placemaking, Planning for Community Needs, Responding to climate change; Sustainable Transport Policy 2020)

Proposals

Spatial Strategy - Housing & Future Development Sites

Affordable Purchase and Over 55's dwellings

The survey confirmed continuing support for the Constable and Municipality to have influence to accept or reject development in the Parish for these categories and to take a lead role in their provision, which should be formally acknowledged in the Island Plan.

Higher priced dwellings

The Island Plan Review and previous reports and census data have identified that the island has a substantial and underoccupied existing housing stock, and also unfulfilled demand for all types of housing. The significant mismatch between current occupancy and potential capacity is a product of many factors including current planning and housing policies, and regulations that deter potential landlords from offering rental accommodation.

The preference of St John parishioners would be to prioritise the use of existing “built on” sites to provide the higher priced dwellings and this would require amendments to the existing planning framework to promote and encourage use of the following development sites even when listed on the register, ahead of green zone fields;

- Redundant glasshouse sites and agricultural buildings in, or adjacent to, existing built up areas,
- Large single dwellings that can be divided up to create multiple units,
- Existing dwellings with gardens that can accommodate additional dwellings.

Creating sustainable Communities

The Constable and Municipality has a key role in improving the quality of life and personal safety of its parishioners, but has limited capability to achieve significant environmental transformation without the support of all Government Departments. In particular, IHE and the Island Plan should formally acknowledge the Government's commitment to;

- 1 Maintenance and creation of open green spaces and tree planting
- 2 Extension of mains drains and water provision
- 3 The creation of joined up networks to encourage cycling and walking across all Parishes and the entire island
- 4 Improving pedestrian safety via measures including safe bus stops, pedestrian crossings and extending networks of pavements and footpaths.

Appendix A

Parish Description

1. Planning Background

1.1 Island Plan Review Context

The Parish has actively participated in previous Island Plan Reviews and the current Comité Rurale was elected with a specific remit to engage with and to ascertain the opinions of the parishioners of St John and produce a submission on behalf of the Parish to the Government of Jersey.

1.2 Village Description and History

The Village of St John is located in the north of the Island. It has grown from its original centre by the Parish Church which is situated near the junction of the main east – west Island route and the north – south route from the north coast to St Helier, and has now spread eastwards. The old centre contains the Parish Church, the Parish Hall and St John’s Parish School. Recent development has consisted of small residential estates mostly to the east of the old centre and infilling the area between the Parish Church and the Recreation Centre.

The Village of Sion is located in the centre of the Island and is situated on the main north – south route to St Helier. It has a number of period buildings including the former Sion Methodist Chapel, the United Reform Chapel and the period buildings around the central area near the junction with Rue des Servais.

Recent development has been generally of small estates with the exception of one large development of affordable homes to the east of the main road.

1.3 Historical Growth and Recent Development

The growth of St John’s Village covers the period from medieval times to the present and this can be seen in the style of buildings closest to the centres. The Parish Church dates from 1205, the Parish Hall from 1912 and school from 1856.

Sion Village shows growth from the older buildings near the crossroads with Rue des Servais from 18th century to the present day. The former Methodist and United Reform Chapels date from 1809 and 1826, the Cemetery from 1851.

The Parish of St John covers an area of 4,846 Vergees which constitutes 7.5% of Jersey’s land area. The census returns for Jersey show population growth in the Parish as follows:-

	Inhabited Houses	Male	Female	Total Population
1821	238	771	886	1657
1861	297	843	972	1815
1871	292	772	927	1699
1901	303	757	863	1620
1931	412	717	740	1457
1961		741	760	1501
1971		849	794	1643
1981		1019	1079	2098
1991	878	1199	1241	2440
2001		1289	1329	2618
2011	1184	1447	1464	2911

This figure for 2011 is 3% of the Island's population of 97,857 at that time and had increased by 11% since 2001.

The latest available figures from the Parish are that in January 2020 there were 1,237 inhabited households.

1.4 Community Facilities

St John's Village

St John's Village has a good range of facilities including the Parish Church, a pre-primary nursery school for children aged from 3 - 5, a primary school for children from the age of 5 – 11, a Parish Hall, allotments and a Recreation Centre. There are three public houses all of which serve food, a medical and dental surgery, a hairdresser, a sub-post office, a pharmacy, a butcher, a convenience shop, two cafes, a kitchen studio, a ladies fashion shop, a petrol filling station and a supermarket, all of which provide a service to the Village and the Parish as a whole.

This range of facilities and services helps identify the Village as an active community rather than just a settlement.

A small group of 22 houses for the over 55s is provided at Maison Le Vesconte, and there are 14 over 55's houses in Pres de L'Eglise.

Sion Village

Sion Village has a range of facilities including the United Reform Church, a village shop and bakery which is due to be replaced by small supermarket and petrol station, a retail shop, a garden nursery and a garage and petrol/filling station.

This range of facilities provides a service to the Village and the Parish as a whole. There is a recognisable sense of identity to the Village through these services creating an active community.

Other Commercial Activities

The Parish also supports a light industrial centre at Mont Mado with a large number of commercial units.

At Les Ruettes there are some large retail outlets.

In addition, the Parish supports two quarries, two harbours (Ronez and Bonne Nuit) and a number of large agricultural businesses.

Other Social Activities

The Recreation Centre is home to a shooting club, football teams, a youth (project) club, the Jersey Gymnastic Club to name but a few organisations that use the facilities.

There are also motor-cross scramble and karting tracks in St John.

Appendix B - Survey Overview