

OBJECTIONS AND COMMENTS RECEIVED¹ ON COUNCILLORS' PREFERRED SITE IE. 'GOAT PEN AREA'

Objection: The site is in the NCA.

Answer:

- The site is in the NCA by virtue of Bottom Woods being a wirebird area. But this site has a limited number of Wirebirds on it (20 pairs) and it is not a natural habitat for the Wirebird. We can take measures to protect the Wirebirds that are there when we move forward to design. The proposed site used to be part of the Wirebird mitigation project but since then, half of the area is not suitable for Wirebirds.

Objection: The value of my property is likely to decrease with a prison nearby.

Answer:

- The visibility of the Prison from homes will be very low and we have mitigated this risk even further by proposing to move the site further down the hill so that visibility is reduced even further.

Objection: The Land Development Control Plan has no provision for this classification of development within a NCA.

Answer:

- The site falls into the Coastal Zone as defined by the Land Control Development Plan. However, under the LCDP Ordinance this does not prevent development by SHG there. SHG can deviate from land development policies if they can prove 'merit' or 'key material considerations'. We will put forward the rationale for 'merit' for the prison site on the following lines : various alternatives have been assessed and this site is the most suitable; there is a public benefit to building a prison there as opposed to in a residential area; a prison is needed and is in the national interest; the land is physically accessible and can be serviced in terms of water and electricity; the land is vacant and currently not well used; the site is not available for residential accommodation under land control policies; it is away from residential areas, even if those areas expand; environmental impacts can be mitigated (i.e. the 20 wirebird pairs could be moved to another site which we could rehabilitate); the land nearby would be suitable for the prison farm etc.

Objection: The visual impact of this large scale development will have a severe impact against the backdrop of the Barn and Flagstaff. As confirmed in the Initial EIA.

Answer:

- We can mitigate this in the design process.

Objection: The proposal would be in conflict with a component of the strategy to attract tourism via promotion and protection of our Natural Heritage and potential hinder economic growth.

Answer:

¹ Public consultation meeting 15 Nov 2017; Public meeting 23 April 2018; email from individual dated 4 May 2018; letter from individual dated 27 April 2018; email from SHINE dated 23 April 2018

- We have mitigated visual impact. The current HMP in Jamestown is in a central location and there is no evidence this has had a derogatory impact on economic growth.

Objection: A site known as "Shooting range" has already been rejected because it is in a "sensitive Wirebird area". The preferred site is also in a Wirebird Area, as confirmed by SHG Conservation.

Answer

- The Shooting Range site was rejected because of the significant costs that would be involved in laying services to the area as well as it being deeper into the NCA and more natural habitat for wirebirds. The Goat Pen area has a minimal number of wirebirds on it and we can mitigate for their disrupted habitat (see above)

Objection: There is potential for a detrimental impact on Wirebird breeding due to loss of habitat.

Answer:

- We can mitigate for this.

See below **other comments/questions** from the public with responses:

Comment: I am unable to secure a piece of land to build on. I do not believe SHG should be able to.

Answer: SHG is following the rules and processes that are in place.

Comment: It was agreed at the 15 November 2017 meeting that SHG would look for an alternative site at White Hill.

Answer: The White Hill option had been explored previously. It was not suitable as it needed a number of services that would cost a lot of money. SHG is unlikely to get funding for White Hill from DFID. DFID would not fund the most expensive site; it has to be a reasonable price.

Question: Is the Chief Planning Officer (CPO) content that this is the preferred site?

Answer: The CPO had been consulted and she was in agreement with the proposed site.

Question: Would the revised Land Development Control Plan policy (when it is ready) allow the use of the site?

Answer: Yes as the Chief Planning Officer (CPO) agreed the new site.

Comment: You will still be able to see the Prison from Reggie's take-away.

Response: We have mitigated as much as possible what can be seen.

Comment: The public should be given three options from which they can make a choice.

Response: At the last public consultation, two options were put to the public and the public requested that other site options be looked at. We have therefore considered a further site at Cox's Battery. In the past several other sites have been considered

around the island and ruled out. We have now moved back to the option of the Goat Pen area as the preferred site due to previous outlined reasons.

Comment: A design and costings by a Quantity Surveyor should be available before outline planning permission is given.

Response: Ballpark Costings for the Prison have been done. We also have an operational brief that sets out the needs for the new Prison. From the brief, we were able to work out the required size of the new Prison (2000 square feet).

Question: What is the timeline?

Answer: In terms of the process, ExCo will need to make the decision about the prison being built on the preferred site. It's likely that an application will then be made for Outline Planning Permission. Then the design work will start followed by consultation, before ExCo agrees full planning permission. We will also need to get funding from the UK Government.

Comment: The aerial displays are difficult to see from the audience.

Response: HE welcomed the public to view the 3D imagery stationed on the walls of the Community Centre. They were also available online.

Comment: Some people don't have access to the internet, so the aerial shots should be available elsewhere.

Response: In addition to the SHG Website, the layout and Initial Environmental Assessment was also made available in the Foyer of Essex House, Longwood Supermarket and the Public Library.

Comment: ExCo have already made up their mind. The meeting is not a consultation.

Response: It was confirmed that this was a Public meeting, not a consultation meeting. The purpose of which was to follow up on the issues which came out of the November 2017 meeting. After extensive consideration the Councillors have selected a preferred site and, ahead of a formal ExCo decision, wanted to get back to the public.

Question: What will the prison look like? Is there a layout?

Answer: The Prison will cater up to 40 prisoners. It will be built to a high security standard.

Technical designs, using architect designers will be the next stage.

There is no concept design as yet.

Comment: We should tell DFID where we wanted the prison to be located, even if that meant they needed to find more funding as a result.

Response: DFID will consider funding once the decision on the site has been made. DFID would not fund the most expensive site.

If we had to ask the UK Government for more money, they would ask about the options that we looked at, VFM judgements etc. and if they know that we are recommending something that costs a lot of money and other areas were not explored, they would not provide the funding.

Question: Will the prison be close to the proposed sportsfield?

Answer: it will not be in close proximity (a further map was produced to demonstrate this).

Comment: We aren't bothered about being able to see the prison from the road.

Response: Feedback that was received in the last consultation was that incoming tourists should not see a prison as one of their first experiences of St Helena. However, visibility from the Road is minimal.

Question: Have we thought about the numbers of prisoners in the future?

Answer: The prison has been future proofed in terms of numbers and as a result the new Prison will be able to hold roughly double the capacity of the current Prison. The doubling of volume would be enough.

Comment: No representation from ENRD Conservation was there on 23 April 2018 to justify their findings or field questions from the public.

Answer: ENRD were unable to attend but agree the 'Goat Pen' site is the preferred site.

Question: Why did the Governor make the presentation at the meeting on 24 April 2018?

Answer: The Governor presented in her role as Chair of the Prison Project Board. After the November 2017 public meeting, the prison project board considered an additional site at Cox's Battery. However this site was discounted and the Prison Project Board therefore recommended that the Goat Pen was the preferred site. Elected Members agreed this during a site visit subject to going back to the public for final comments on the Goat Pen site. As ExCo will make the final decision, ExCo were there to hear final comments.

Comment: Bradley's Camp would make a good alternative.

Answer: There has been previous public comment that the prison should be out of sight from the road as much as possible. This was a criteria in selecting a preferred site.

Question: What will happen to the person who is currently using the Goat Pen area?

Answer: He is leasing the land from SHG and we are discussing next steps with him.