

Memorandum for Executive Council

SUBJECT

Development Application - Comprehensive Development Residential Service Plots, Bottom Woods

Memorandum by the Chief Secretary

ADVICE SOUGHT

1. **Executive Council is asked to consider and advise whether HYBRID Development Permission should be granted, with Conditions, for Comprehensive Development Residential Service Plots, Government Landlord Housing, Green Space, Retail Park, Road and Car Parking at the Bottom Woods Comprehensive Development Area as recommended by the Land Development Control Authority (LDCA).**

BACKGROUND & CONSIDERATIONS

2. At the Land Development Control Authority meeting held on 6 November 2019, it was recommended that HYBRID Development Permission (Part Full Permission and Part Outline Permission) be granted for a Comprehensive Development that includes Residential Service Plots, Government Landlord Housing, Green Space, Retail Park, Road and Car Parking at Bottom Woods, subject to conditions as set out in Section E of the report in Annex A and the Decision Letter in Annex B.
3. In accordance with the directions issued by the Governor in Council to the Chief Planning Officer on 14 April 2014 under Section 23(1) of the Land Planning and Development Control (LPDC) Ordinance, 2013, the Chief Planning Officer is required to refer to the Governor-in-Council all applications for Development Permission which proposes the development of a site (or a group of two or more sites in the same vicinity) which exceed (or exceed in aggregate) five acres in area.
4. The Governor-in-Council further directs by way of clarification, that paragraphs 6 and 7 are intended to include (without prejudice to their generality) the following current or proposed Capital Programme projects:-
CDA (Housing Development) – To develop new GLH units, service plots and homes for sale.
5. A copy of the directions is attached at Annex C for easy reference.
6. **Section 17 (a)** of the LPDC Ordinance reads:

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A grant of development permission may be of either of the following types –

- (a) reads: Outline Development Permission, the effect of which is to give **Approval in Principle** to the proposed development which is the subject of an application, but not to permit (except to the extent, if any, allowed by conditions attached to the permission) commencement of development to take place, or
- (b) full development permission, the effect of which is to permit the development, subject of the terms and conditions of the grant of full development permission.

7. The following are the relevant Primary Policy clauses from the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP) against which the proposed development application is assessed and these include the following: all natural Habitats and conserving

Principle 1 (3): Whilst protecting absolutely the critical natural habitats and conserving the built heritage: the built heritage; to provide for and enable appropriate and well-located housing development, including for domestic demand.

- **Intermediate Zone:** Primary Policy IZ1 and Implementation Policies IZ3, IZ4 and IZ6
- **Water Supply:** Implementation Policies W2, W3 and W4
- **Sewage and Storm Drainage:** Primary Policy SD1 and Implementation Policies SD2 and SD7
- **Solid Waste:** Implementation Policies SW3 and SW4
- **Road and Transport:** Primary Policy RT1 and Implementation Policies RT2, RT3 and RT4
- **Social Infrastructure:** Primary Policy SI1(b) and Implementation Policy SI1 1
- **Housing:** Primary Policy H1 and Implementation Policies H2, H4 and H5
- **Employment Premises:** Primary Policy: EP1

8. RATIONALE BEHIND THE PROPOSAL

8.1 With the projected increase in population and economic activity driven by tourism development and the need to ensure that these fit within the infrastructure framework, specific areas for development have been identified, in respect of housing, tourism-related development and employment development. Development of these specific areas will be targeted and, in the case of housing, the release of land and parameters of development are driven by the St Helena Housing Strategy.

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- 8.2 The targeted areas include Comprehensive Development Areas (CDAs), being areas within the Intermediate Zone where there is the opportunity for significant development, mainly residential, which will achieve optimum use of the land if planned and developed comprehensively and will be able to go ahead without time restriction if the developer is able to put in all services.
- 8.3 Most of these areas have been carried forward into the current Land Development Control Plan from the previous development plans. This includes Bunker's Hill that has been identified for a number of years as effectively and is carried forward as a CDA in the existing Plan but without specific designation and it has now been included.
- 8.4 The Housing Strategy 2012-2020 Vision states; 'Our vision is to ensure that the resident population has access to affordable, sufficient and suitable housing which provides for sustainable communities' and wants to make sure that as far as possible residents can find affordable housing, that there is enough of it and that it is suitable for the long term needs of the Island as a whole.
- 8.5 The Key Policies set out in the Housing Strategy 2012 - 2020 are:

A Affordable Homes

- (a) SHG will stimulate the provision of intermediate low income housing by:
- Stimulating and supporting the construction of up to 350 high quality intermediate low income housing units – to rent, buy and self-build - by 2022 in order to meet projected need and demand.
 - Setting aside between 10-25% of plots within suitable Comprehensive Development Areas and Coastal Village Areas, as appropriate, for affordable housing- this to be determined on a case by case basis
 - Considering using Planning Gain in appropriate cases to secure development of affordable housing
 - Considering how SHG can best support development of affordable housing through future mechanisms such as import tariff reviews, centralised procurement of energy efficient products and promoting environmentally sustainable approaches to development
- (b) SHG will enable access to intermediate low income housing to rent and buy by:
- Encouraging modern construction techniques and use of appropriate materials which are good for the local environment and reduce the cost for first time buyers on

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low incomes, including support for exemplar projects.

- Supporting the introduction of new ways of financing homes, including work to determine their feasibility
- Setting up, subject to detailed feasibility work, a non profit-making company to develop, own and manage social rented housing potentially using Government Landlord Housing to provide an initial management portfolio

B Private Renting

(a) SHG will help to stimulate a modern, vibrant, dynamic and regulated, private rented sector by:

- Stimulating the private rented sector to provide up to 25% stock by 2022
- Helping owners to bring up to 100 Empty Homes back in to housing use by 2022
- Helping owners to bring up to 50 uninhabitable homes back in to use by 2022
- Supporting the development of a new private rental management company, subject to suitable feasibility work, potentially using Chief Secretary Housing to provide an initial management portfolio
- Enabling and regulating a network of local professional landlords – for residential and visitor markets

C Government Landlord Housing

(a) SHG will improve the management and maintenance of the Government Landlord Housing (GLH) stock by:

- Completing a scheduled maintenance programme
- Appointing a Housing Manager to provide a dedicated housing management resource
- Ensuring all social rented housing meets a tolerable standard by 2017, where this is cost effective.
- Introducing a new management system to address weaknesses identified to date, during 2012-13.
- Establishing an island wide Housing Forum

D Independent Living

(a) SHG will assist older and vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes by:

- Assisting older and other vulnerable households to live in properties free from serious disrepair and which meet a tolerable standard by 2017, where this is cost effective.
- Increasing the number of older people, disabled people and other vulnerable adults who are being supported to live independently in a homely environment.

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E Cross Cutting Objectives

(a) SHG will:

- Bring the responsibilities for facilitating development, management and maintenance of housing together under one SHG Directorate alongside other complementary functions focused on the built environment- Crown Estates, Planning, Historic Built Environment and support for Enterprise Saint Helena
- Provide the necessary St Helena Housing legislative framework
- Promote more environmentally sustainable housing to include better energy efficiency, use of environmentally sustainable materials for construction and environmentally efficient waste and water management
- Ensure and be able to demonstrate that households can access housing information, support and advice of a consistently high standard
- Improve our knowledge of the needs and views of customers and ensure this evidence is used to shape the way we release land and organise and deliver services

9. BACKGROUND OF THE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION AND REPORTS

9.1 Prior to the submission of the development application, Screening Opinion for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was requested by the applicant. The Screening Opinion concluded that whilst the future development of the area for housing led comprehensive development will have some impact on the local environment arising from the development, both during construction and later as mixed-used housing and commercial neighbourhood, it is considered that any such impact is not considered to be sufficient to require a full EIA. This view has been further supported by the conclusion drawn from the EIA that was submitted in support of the New Prison development application on a site within the designated conservation area important for wirebirds that lies just a short distance from these application site.

9.2 The applicant had also previously submitted a development application early in 2019 in respect of a similar development, however that application was withdrawn in order to review development options. Before submitting this application, there was considerable discussion by the applicant with the Planning Officer on the details and the lay-out of the development. In view of the design and details in respect of the development proposals and optionals. The applicant also undertook pre-submission consultation with the local communities on the proposed development, also inviting the local residents in the

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vicinity of the development site.

9.3 The applicant was advised to make a Hybrid Development Application, this seeking in part Outline Permission and in part Full Permission. The application has therefore provided full design and layout details for the access road into the site from the Haul Road and the road layout around the estate with all utilities and services, the residential building plots, the various land-uses and development of the four housing plots in the south-west corner of the site for Government Landlord Housing (GLH). The Outline Permission relates to the area allocated for retail/commercial use, amenity space, play area and various housing plots of the proposed development.

10. DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

10.1 There is a single access to the development site from the Haul Road, positioned probably on the most visible part of this road. It will be approximately 200m east of the new planned access road to the new prison site on the north of Haul Road. It will also provide a good visibility in both directions for the traffic joining the Haul Road from the new development. The lay-out of the road is also considered to be of appropriate width including pedestrian footpaths to serve the development. There is also access into the development area from the south-east, south-west and north-west corners, utilising and establishing the existing formal and informal access point around the site.

Diagram 1: Road Access into the Development



10.2 The residential development of the proposal is to deliver 40 residential units This includes a mixture of market housing, starter homes, social housing and specialist housing and has been designed that so that it can be phased in. The distribution of the housing tenure includes six parcels available for GLH development, 10 parcels available for affordable housing and the

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remaining 24 parcels will be for market value housing. This will also include a two-storey building to provide single bedroom accommodation with ground floor units being wheelchair accessible. The housing plots will vary in size from approximately 411m² up to 1,285m². The majority of the plots range from 500-700m² and due to the relatively gentle slope of the site, a housing unit can be built within these plots with minimal excavation work and scarring of the land. There are four GLH buildings proposed in this application in the first phase of the development. These will be sited on land parcels 6, 7, 8 and 22 that are located on the south-west corner of the development application site. The total area of this land is 3,505sqm and the area of the proposed buildings will total 789sqm.

Diagram 2: Development Layout



10.3 The plans submitted with the application also include Phasing Plans for the development. It is intended that an internal road with all utility services will be provided as the first phase of the development followed by the construction of four residential plots for Government Landlord Housing in the south-west corner. The development of the retail park will be the subject of a detailed Development Application by the retail operator seeking full permission for the layout, design and associated parking and servicing.

10.4 The phasing of the development has also been set out following consultation with various stakeholders with regards to the services on site, in particular Connect Saint Helena Ltd. It was advised that the current sewage treatment facility that will serve the CDA will only be able to accommodate 26 plots until a new sewage facility is put in place. Phase 1 will provide 13 plots, Phase 2 will provide 13 plots, Phase 3 will provide 6 plots and Phase 4 will provide 8 plots. This would then ensure that the

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future development of this site accords with the services that will be delivered in the area.

Diagram 3: Development Layout



11. REPRESENTATION

11.1 Representation in respect of this application has been received from a member of the public. The issues raised in regards to position of the access road that requires right turn across new road, new development will increase vehicular movement along this road and within the vicinity of this development, the two storey development of plots 6 and 7 is considered to be out of place in the context of this rural setting and the development of the retail store is not appropriate use for the CDA.

11.2 The Haul Road is designed to provide improved transport access for the Island from the Airport and there will be new development along this strategic road that will require access. The new road and design of this junction would not be considered to raise any major traffic issues. In the main, most of the development across this site will be single storey, however, the applicant has introduced two storey development for two plots of GLH more to provide a point of interest in the landscape. There are no design and visual amenity issues across the site and the proposed two storey appears to be acceptable in this location. The development of a retail use within this site to ensure a more sustainable development and a local retail store is considered to be an acceptable use in a residential development and for the CDA. There is already existing residential use in the adjoining area to this site and a retail use would complement the residential neighbourhood and create local jobs.

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12. CONCLUSION

12.1 The development proposal as set out in this application accords with the principles of the policy objectives in the LDCA. The Comprehensive Development Areas were allocated to provide a comprehensive approach for the development and delivery of future housing, ensuring that the services and infrastructure is delivered to meet the needs of the area. The application is in compliance with the various LDCA policies against which the development has been assessed. Fundamentally, Principle 1(3) is important in that the allocation and delivery of the housing development as set in the Housing Strategy accords with this and the site assessment and development layout makes the best use of the land and its gradient. There is already considerable residential development along east and south of the sites that has been built over a number of years and some of it is very recent. The main access to the site from the Haul Road is well positioned in relation to other existing and proposed junctions.

12.2 The development application report was considered by the LDCA at their meeting in November 2019 and it was agreed to recommend to the Governor in Council to grant development permission, both in Outline and Full, subject to number of conditions. The report to LDCA is attached as Annex B to this Memorandum.

12.3 In view of the process that has been followed to ensure the development proposal is considered in light of all the available information, the LDCA recommends to the Governor-in-Council to Grant Outline and Full Development Permission with a number of conditions, as set out Section E of the LDCA report for 4 November 2019, attached as Annex C to this Memorandum. It should be noted that this development falls within the Intermediate Zone and can be supported in terms of siting, scale, layout, proportion, details and external materials and supports and deliver the Housing Strategy Policy Objectives set out in Section 6.5 and therefore can be allowed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. Executive Council acts as the Planning Authority in this considering this Memorandum.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

14. The delivery and implementation of the development will promote growth in the construction sector and will contribute toward economic growth and prosperity. The construction sector faced some downturn after the Airport project came to a close, and therefore this will be a boost to the sector, improving employment and reducing those claiming Income Related

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Benefits and Unemployment Allowance. The development will also stimulate collection Government Revenues to some extent through the sale of plots, stamp duty and import duties related to house building.

15. The construction of the first phase of the development will create jobs locally and an opportunity for development of skills in the construction sector. Furthermore the new housing development will help to meet the much needed Government Landlord Housing and social housing demand.

CONSISTENCY WITH INVESTMENT POLICY PRINCIPLES

16. The development and delivery of the Comprehensive Development Area is in compliance with the Investment Policy Principles as the implementation of the Phase 1 of the development will deliver the access road and all services and utilities that will enable the future private housing development and other facilities. The following principles apply

1. Make St Helena a desirable and competitive destination to do business by removing barriers to investment
2. Support an economy which is accessible to all potential investors and promote investments across the economy
3. Support the locally based private sector to compete in an open economy but, where possible, avoid being overly protective
4. Promote fair, consistent and transparent decision making.

PUBLIC / SOCIAL IMPACT

17. The increase in housing supply, particularly for Government Landlord Housing and social housing will meet the needs of the local community who are unable to build their own home or access private housing. The investment in the facilities and utilities to the Comprehensive Development Area will also enable acceleration in the private sector housing. The comprehensive approach to development will also improve the quality of development and contribute to wider visual enhancement in the landscape.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

18. The land has been identified for number of years in the Land Development Control Plan for comprehensive development to deliver much needed housing on the Island. The development of this site along the Haul Road will create a positive impact on the landscape. Whilst all development has some impact on the environment, the proposed development has been designed to make the best use of the area available for development and minimise any adverse impact.

PREVIOUS CONSULTATION / COMMITTEE INPUT

19. The preparation of the Land Development Control Plan was subject to community and stakeholder consultation and the site was identified for future housing development. In the preparation of the development application, the applicant has undertaken community and stakeholder consultation and no major issues of

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concern have been raised. The development application was also advertised for a period of 28 days and the representation received has been considered and responded to in the report.

20. Key Stakeholders have responded and their views have been considered by LDCA.

PUBLIC REACTION

21. There was one objection received from the general public to the consultation and issues raised have been responded to by the CPO in this report and more fully in the report to LDCA.

22. No objections from Stakeholders were received to the revised EIA.

23. This could possibly generate public and media interest but it is unlikely to raise any issues of concern.

PUBLICITY

24. The decision will be covered in the media briefing following the ExCo Meeting.

SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

25. This paper supports the Effective Infrastructure goal and Strategic Objective 1.1 – ‘Ensure effective investment in physical infrastructure including improved access to and around the Island’. The delivery of the road and services to the site will enable the delivery of new housing to meet the needs to the residents who unable to access private housing.

26. It also supports the Altogether Safer goal and Strategic Objective 4.2 ‘Care for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society such as people with disabilities, children, elderly people and low income earners’.

LINK TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS

27. The development will help to achieve goals 4, 7 and 8 of the SEDP. Goal 5 of the SEDP is to Improve Land Productivity, Goal 7 is to improve infrastructure and Goal 8 of the SEDP is to develop, maintain and attract a skilled workforce. Bringing forward land for development will stimulate the construction industry and make more productive use of grazing land.

SOB

OPEN /CLOSED AGENDA ITEM

28. Recommended for the Open Agenda.

Corporate Support
Corporate Services

19th November 2019

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