

**3. Draft Area Plan for the East –  
Including site (OH011) at Ballachrink, Onchan**

The Hon. Member for Onchan (Mr Callister) to ask the Chief Minister:

*Who authorised site (OH011) at Ballachrink, Onchan to be included in the draft Area Plan for the East?*

**The President:** We move to Question 3, Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

**Mr Callister:** Thank you, Mr President.

Can I ask the Chief Minister, or the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who authorised site (OH011) at Ballachrink, Onchan to be included within the draft Area Plan for the East?

**The President:** The Chief Minister to reply.

**The Chief Minister (Mr Quayle):** Thank you, Mr President.

The draft Area Plan for the East was approved for publication under the normal ministerial decision process in the Cabinet Office. The draft plan and supporting papers were reviewed and signed off by the Chief Secretary and the Minister for Policy and Reform, the Hon. Chris Thomas MHK. A decision was signed on 14th May 2018.

**The President:** Supplementary, Mr Callister.

**Mr Callister:** Thank you, Mr President; I will make sure I ask a question this time.

Can I thank the Chief Minister for his reply and can I ask him why his Department appears to have ignored the recommendations outlined in the Onchan local plan dated April 2000, which recommended that this particular area of Onchan retained the status of open space?

And more importantly, Mr President, can I also ask the Chief Minister why his Department has ignored the words and advice from the Department of Local Government and the Environment back in 2005, when the Minister of the day at the time concluded that no further expansion on the outskirts of Onchan should be continued?

**The President:** The Chief Minister.

**The Chief Minister:** Thank you, Mr President; and I thank the Hon. Member for Onchan for his question.

As part of the preparation for the Area Plan for the East, the Department undertook a Call for Sites. This exercise helped Cabinet Office in identifying potential sites for housing, employment and other types of development. This round of site identification concluded on 16th September 2016 and, as part of that process, the landowners submitted their site known as Ballachrink which was coded (OH011).

Now, Cabinet Office created a site assessment framework. This framework was used in the Area Plan for the South and was updated and used again as the method for initially assessing sites submitted to the area plan process. GVA, a UK planning consultant, was commissioned to carry out the site assessments on those sites identified through the Call for Sites, or identified by Cabinet Office.

Mr President, the independent inspector for the public inquiry for the Plan for the East has heard the evidence from Government Departments, local authorities, politicians – and I know Mr Callister has given a considerable amount of time, Mr President, in this – the public and developers. I think we need to now wait for his report.

**The President:** Mr Callister.

**Mr Callister:** Thank you, Mr President.

I thank the Chief Minister for his response there. I think most of our beautiful Island is classified as areas of high landscape or coastal value and strategic significance.

Therefore, can I ask the Chief Minister if he personally supports further housing development in the Manx countryside, especially when all the evidence shows that the Isle of Man does not have a housing crisis, and any immediate housing development can be curtailed within existing boundaries of our towns and villages?

**The President:** Reply, sir.

**The Chief Minister:** Thank you, Mr President.

I would have to say one area where I can agree with the Hon. Member is that I have not been able to comment on this. As the Chief Minister, legally, I am the plan and cannot comment.

Obviously when I was Chair of Planning for the Southern Area Plan, Mr President, I was able to discuss the plan. The Chief Minister at the time was not impacted, it was not in his constituency and therefore he was able to give comment if he felt it necessary.

I cannot give comment and as much as I have wanted to give comment in my own constituency, I have had to leave the comments to my colleague, Mr Shimmins, and the excellent work that he has done on this. So if we park that ...

I think, Mr President, there is always a need to review your planning and where you are going, and that is why we have an independent planning inquiry. Now, I know, having been Chair of Planning – and I am sure half of this House have been in planning in their time – it is an incredibly emotive topic. Some people will accept the requirement that planning and building have to take place, but not in their area.

Some people are totally opposed to any development and that is why we have an independent expert who comes over, listens to all of the evidence put forward by all sides and then issues us with their balanced report for us to take on board. I think that is where we need to go, Mr President.

I do not think we can prejudge the independent inspector's report. Let's see what he says and then we can debate it.

**The President:** Final supplementary, Mr Callister.

**Mr Callister:** Thank you, Mr President.

The public inquiry for the Area Plan for the East has already sat. It has taken evidence. The inspector is now considering all the evidence that has been presented. This morning I am asking the Chief Minister for his own personal opinion.

Is he for further development in the countryside of the Isle of Man, or is he not? It is a straightforward question I feel, Mr President.

**The President:** He is asking the same question and you answered it, Chief Minister; but I leave it with you.

**The Chief Minister:** Thank you.

I am going to give a roundabout answer in that, as Chief Minister, I fully support the growth of the Island economy and the growth of the skilled workforce that we need to fill the jobs to fund the services that all of us around here want to provide to members of the public, whether that be Health, Social Care, Prison, Fire Brigade, Ambulance – and that requires an increase in our skilled workforce on the Isle of Man and we have to provide areas for them to live in.

And I think that is enough to be said, Mr President.