

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT  
BY DEPUTY M.R. SCOTT OF ST. BRELADE  
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 5th JUNE 2023  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 12th JUNE 2023**

**Question**

“Will the Minister –

- (a) state the purpose of a character appraisal commissioned on the Minister’s behalf and the role of such a character appraisal in informing the assessment of planning applications;
- (b) itemise the planning policies in the Bridging Island Plan and any Supplemental Planning Guidance (SPG), including any draft SPG, where a character appraisal would be relevant in informing the assessment of character of an area in Jersey, identifying in each case the applicability of those policies to both defined Built-Up Areas and areas outside the defined Built-Up Areas; and
- (c) explain why planning officers have not referred to the St. Brelade Character Appraisal in reports supporting the assessment of planning applications relating to sites within the scope of the St. Brelade Character Appraisal since that character appraisal was published?”

**Answer**

- (a) The purpose of a character appraisal is generally to appraise the character of a particular place or area. They provide an objective analysis which identifies and explains the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make places distinctive.

The results of these studies were specifically used to inform the development of planning policy as part of the island plan review. They have informed the planning policy regime for the management of development within the island’s built-up areas and the countryside that is now expressed in the [Bridging Island Plan](#).

They can also, however, be used as tools to identify and assess the impact of proposed development as part of the preparation and review of planning applications.

- (b) A number of character appraisals and assessments were commissioned as part of the recent island plan review. Key amongst these were:

- [St Helier Urban Character Appraisal Review \(2021\)](#): this work represented a review of the earlier 2005 study and refreshed the current understanding of the urban character of St Helier and its suburbs.

As well as an assessment of the character of the town, it sets out revised detailed design guidance for each of the Town’s ten character areas setting how the character of St Helier can be maintained and enhanced, in section 7 of the report. Section 6 contains specific advice about height guidance, which has been embodied into section 7.

- [Jersey Integrated Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment \(2020\)](#): this work also represented a review and update of the 1999 Jersey Countryside Character Appraisal, reflecting changes which have occurred in the past 20 years, as well as the forces for change which are affecting Jersey’s landscapes and seascapes now, and are likely to affect them over

the next 10 years. The ILSCA extended the scope of its coverage to include seascapes as well as landscapes within the Bailiwick of Jersey.

As well as an assessment of the character of all of the island's landscapes and seascapes, including the inter-tidal zone and out to the island's territorial limits, it sets out a strategy, specific management and planning guidelines for each of the island's ten character types; together with planning guidance for the 14 defined coastal units; along with generic design guidance for development in the countryside.

Taken together, these two studies provide comprehensive coverage of the key characteristics of the island and its territorial waters, including objective assessment together with planning guidance about how change might be best managed to protect and enhance character.

In addition to this Bailiwick-wide assessment of character, additional work was commissioned to carry out a character appraisal of St Brelade, with a particular emphasis on St Brelade's Bay, resulting in the assessment of that area set out in [St Brelade Character Appraisal baseline report \(2020\)](#). This outlines the historical development of the bay, and landscape and townscape analysis only.

Having regard to the character of the local area is considered best practice and there are a range of policies in the bridging Island Plan which require development proposals to be considered relative to their contexts, be that within the island's built-up areas or the countryside. This policy expectation is set at the outset in the plan by the **Strategic Policy SP3 – Placemaking** where it states that, amongst other things:

*All development must reflect and enhance the unique character and function of the place where it is located. New development must contribute to the creation of aesthetically pleasing, safe and durable places that positively influence community health and wellbeing outcomes, and will be supported where:*

- 1. it is responsive to its context to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of identity, character and the sense of place;*

There are a range of other policies within the plan that require the design of new development to respond appropriately to the distinctive characteristics of a place, specifically **Policy GD6 – Design quality**.

In addition to this, some policies in the bridging Island Plan make explicit reference to the need for planning applications to be considered and assessed relative to the content of specific character appraisals and assessments. This includes **Policy NE3 – Landscape and seascape character**, which states that, amongst other things:

*Applicants will need to demonstrate that a proposal will neither directly nor indirectly, singularly or cumulatively, cause harm to Jersey's landscape and seascape character and will protect or improve the distinctive character, quality, and sensitivity of the landscape and seascape character area or coastal unit as identified in the **Integrated Landscape and Seascape Assessment**.*

And **Policy GD7 – Tall buildings**, which states that, amongst other things:

*Proposals for the development of a tall building will only be supported where:*

- 1. it is well-located and relates well to the form, proportion, composition, scale and character of surrounding buildings and its height is appropriate to the townscape character of the area. In Town this should be considered relative to the **St Helier Urban Character Appraisal (2021) building height guidance**;*

- (c) As stated above, reference to character appraisals or assessments can be a useful tool to help consider and assess the impact of development proposals upon an area. They might be used by both applicants, planning officers and decision-makers in the context of planning applications.

There is, however, no specific requirement to have regard to character assessments or appraisals, unless specifically directed to by policy (e.g. Policy NE3 and GD7) or where they are adopted as supplementary guidance, in which case, they become material considerations as defined under Article 6 (3) and Article 19 (1) of the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law.

The character appraisal undertaken in St Brelade's Bay ([St Brelade Character Appraisal baseline report \(2020\)](#)) provides the baseline analysis of the character of the bay. It does not currently contain specific planning guidance and has not been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

The [St Brelade Character Area Appraisal recommendations](#) report puts forward a proposal for the development of an improvement plan for the bay. It recommends that the improvement plan contains a number of elements, one of which includes the preparation of more detailed design guidance for key areas in the bay. It is proposed that more specific guidance is provided in these areas for building height, scale, massing, materials and colour palette, and also accompanying planting and landscaping.

The Minister for the Environment has set out to develop and deliver an improvement plan for St Brelade's Bay in 2023. Work to begin to do this is underway. Once developed, it is likely that all or parts of the improvement plan, such as the design guidance, will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance, and become material to the planning process.