

# **STATES OF JERSEY**

## **Environment Scrutiny Panel Urban Regeneration**

**MONDAY, 20th OCTOBER 2008**

**Panel:**

Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman)  
Deputy Celia Scott-Warren  
Deputy Paul Le Claire  
Connetable Ken Le Brun  
Connetable Simon Crowcroft

**Witnesses:**

Senator Freddie Cohen (Minister for Planning and Environment)  
Peter Thorn (Director of Planning)  
Kevin Pilley (Assistant Director for Planning)

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

I still have to read it. Right, 'The proceedings of the panel are covered by parliamentary privilege through Article 34 of the States of Jersey Law 2005 in the States of Jersey Powers, Privileges and Immunities Scrutiny Panels PAC and PPC, Jersey Regulations 2006 and the witnesses are protected from being sued or prosecuted for anything said during hearings unless they say something that they know to be untrue. This protection is given to witnesses to ensure that they can speak freely and openly to the panel when giving evidence without fear of legal action, although the immunity should obviously not be abused by making unsubstantiated statements about third parties who have no right of reply. Panel would like you to bear this in mind when answering questions'. Right, for

the stenographer or the person who is going to be listening to the tapes we should all introduce ourselves. So I will go first, I am Deputy Duhamel.

**Deputy Celia Scott-Warren:**

Celia Scott-Warren, Deputy Scott-Warren.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Paul Le Claire.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

Ken Le Brun, councillor for St. Mary.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Simon Crowcroft, councillor for St. Helier.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Freddie Cohen, Minister for Planning and Environment.

**Peter Thorn:**

Peter Thorn, Director of Planning.

**Kevin Pilley:**

Kevin Pilley, Assistant Director for Planning.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Right, so now we can recognise all your voices. Right, so thank you, Minister, for attending this hearing. With a bit of luck we should be through by, well, before 5.30pm, if not before. The panel have actually embarked on a small review to be completed before the end of the electoral period and the review terms of reference are to assess progress made on relevance state strategic aims to date in respect of planning; to review the ten character areas for the built-up areas since the introduction of the EPIAs and their use as a planning framework for urban regeneration; to identify sustainable levels of density and amenity space for apartment living; to consider the implications of continuing urban sprawl and to provide proposals of innovative and alternative schemes to address the need for cost-effective and spacious homes. I would like to kick off with a couple of questions and then we will probably take the remaining questions in order, if that is okay. First question is to the Minister, what influence has the Planning Department had on the town development since the Island Plan 2002? And what I am particularly hoping for you, Minister, to explain is the extent of which the planning policies have actually directed any particular development that has taken place in the town since that date.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, the 2002 Island Plan did not have a specific suite of policies designed to frame the development of St. Helier, but what has happened since is a number of reports have framed the way that the Planning Department deals with applications, including the Willie Miller report which, as you know, was presented to the department just before my

appointment but has not been formally adopted, and I am trying to formally adopt it at the moment subject to an analysis and possible revision of the geographical boundaries. The EDAW report, which is really a long-term theoretical approach of how we can look at the development of St. Helier, but the most important piece of work as far as I am concerned is the draft town development guidelines because these, although they are in draft form, are already actually practically being used by the department to send out a very simple message. That is that we want to encourage developers to produce high-quality, new residential units in the town and to discourage them from producing them in the countryside, to the point that I would go as close as I can to a ban for the foreseeable future on new Greenfield sites out of the town or in the countryside. That obviously has consequences and the draft development guidelines are designed to push up densities where appropriate, push up heights where appropriate, and to look at some of the areas that you have really introduced me to, Mr Chairman, in relation to communal amenity space and the advantages of communal amenity space. So, I think I would say that it is very much work in progress at the moment and we are only just seeing the shift towards encouraging town centre development.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Right, okay.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Can I just quickly come in with a question on the ban on Greenfield developments, because the States recently approved significant development of Greenfield sites, which I

think you supported, so I would be interested to know why that change of heart has come in? Does that extend to seeking to bring back redundant glass-house sites and agricultural sheds into Greenfields, because clearly there are cases where the States will want to consolidate areas of nature by taking sites back into Greenfield which are currently being used by agriculture.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Okay. Well, the answer to the first question is that the rezoning of the recent Greenfield sites for retirement housing was specifically for that purpose, which was for retirement housing, and it was an exceptional case that was the result of an issue that was repeatedly raised by the Minister for Housing that we were unable to house our elderly residents. I decided to approach the Connetables and ask the Connetables if they had sites in their parishes that they wish to promote to further the interests of their parish, specifically for elderly or retirees. What came out of that was a mixture of predominantly retirement housing but with some first-time buyer as well. I had actually begun the process on the premise that the sites that would come forward would be entirely for social housing and it turned out that the Connetables were unable to find sites that would deliver only social housing. So we ended up with a mixture of open market retirement housing and social retirement housing. Now, you either believe that some limited retirement housing is beneficial to building communities in the country parishes or you do not and I think that there was an argument for it - I supported it - but it was very much a one-off case. It will provide about 350 new units of accommodation; they are not all absolutely the ideal in that some of them are first-time buyer and some of them are open market housing, but

each one will release other units of accommodation and therefore in total they will provide 350 units of accommodation for retirees, but it is a one-off that I would not propose to repeat. Now, that does not mean that there are not other one-offs; I am not aware of any at the moment that would lead me to promote any further rezoning of the countryside. As far as the disused glass-house sites are concerned they fall into two groups. They fall into Brownfield site potential redevelopment sites and the other is Greenfield sites that have no development potential. What you need to do is to bring forward a mechanism that will allow some development of the Brownfield disused glass-house sites that are appropriate for development and somehow or other will encourage the ones that are not appropriate for development to fall back into genuine agriculture and that is the job of the Island Plan Review and that is what we are doing at the moment. That is why wherever possible - I have got to be a little bit careful with this - I will seek not to deal with the applications for disused glass-house sites, but the caveat is that I have an obligation to deal with any application within a reasonable period, and that does not mean you have to approve the application, but I cannot just put all disused glass-house sites on hold pending the outcome of the Island Plan Review and indeed we have got one or two in at the moment. Did I answer your question?

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Thank you.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Yes.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Any further questions on that? No? Right, so second question; in 1987 we had an early scheme to designate smallish areas within town as environmental protection and improvement areas. The actual organisation of those areas encouraged in the panel's view, I think, and in others' view, an organisation form which encouraged community living within those particular areas and the public to actually play a part in terms of how their particular areas were developed to deliver environmental amenities. It does seem that there has been a move away from this with the Willie Miller and the EDAW reports and we would like, if possible, for you to explain your interpretation of the area divisions, outlined within the original EPIA scheme through to the Willie Miller and the EDAW schemes, and to actually describe if you see there are any difficulties you think there might be in this re-designation. It does appear that the overall way of defining the urban character areas seems to be working at a much, much higher level and the focus appears to have been taken off the idea of community development or sustainable urban neighbourhoods and we were wondering whether or not that is in fact the case.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

That is certainly not the intention. I think the problem with looking at these comparative reports - and they do build one on top of another - is you tend to look at boundaries as finite lines and in fact they are actually fuzzy. The obviously designatable areas in terms of particular urban characters, we all know generally where they are but we do not know precisely where the geographical boundary is. It is an area where we need to do more

work because on the edges of the areas there is certainly room for interpretation and planning advice can go one way or the other. I was rather hoping, as previous private discussions have evolved over some time, that it was one of the areas that scrutiny were actually going to look at and offer their opinion on how these boundaries were going to be more precisely defined and what was going to emerge in terms of recommendations and objectives for each area. How that develops largely depends on how scrutiny wants to work. I was hoping to receive at some stage a recommendation effectively from scrutiny and to look to implement that as a guideline. If you take the 1987 and you overlay Willie Miller and then you overlay EDAW, surprisingly actually the cores are all in the same place, it is only the edges that differ and everyone will have different views on quite where the edges should be and I think fuzzy lines are probably more appropriate.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Yes. It is still the intention, you will be pleased to note, on behalf of the scrutiny panel to actually deliver that particular document but we thought we were better placed to actually run the review first of all before we delivered that document.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Sure.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Could you say a little bit more as well about what happens outside the area defined as town edges and slopes, because it does strike us as somewhat odd that within the main

area of the built-up district there are sizeable areas that have been left out and the concentration seems to have been on the area within the ring road.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, as you leave the centre of the town the designatable areas become less and less precisely definable. I think that, again, that is a piece of work that needs to be done. There are not precise guidelines in relation to the areas that are effectively outside the ring road and one of the issues is in relation to our current efforts to promote higher density in the town, and to offer those who are assembling sites greater opportunity than previously, is where do you stop it. My view is that it should be quite flexible in some of the sites that we were looking at, which I am quite happy to share with you privately, not in this forum, are outside the core town centre but it is my view that we should apply principles that are not too dissimilar from those that we are applying in the centre. I mean if you take, for example, the Westmount Quarry site and some of the sites further to the east of the tunnel, I cannot see that there is any reason why you should have fundamentally different densities to those two locations.

**Peter Thorn:**

Might I comment, sir? The last two or three years or so have seen a focus on central St. Helier as part of the States' strategic plan and in part is due to concerns about the shift to The Waterfront and thus in recent times there has been quite a focus on producing strategy for regeneration and development in central St. Helier and obviously the town development guidelines, Supplementary Guidance, has come off the back of looking at

the same area. As the Minister has suggested it is not just saying we are only going to look at that area and quite clearly there are numerous opportunities to regenerate other parts of the island and indeed to encourage development where it is suitable. Coming back to the different areas that you raised earlier; of course the three things were done for different purposes and indeed the initial 1987 plan, the EPIAs, was literally looking at quarters of town which were defined by their boundaries and taking one at a time and we did two I think, wasn't it, where we produced proposals and really that engendered the first ever renewal monies to actually implement those proposals in the northwest and north-eastern parts of the town within the ring road. The Willie Miller report was clearly principally a design exercise; it was identifying character areas from a design point of view of the different areas and generating design policies. The EDAW work and the areas that they have identified, they call them key areas of change and it is a question of looking at the current urban fabric in those particular areas and looking where the opportunities are for some development and if you like, it is trying to predict where development is likely to occur in the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years even and having in place a set of policies to guide them. So they were done for different purposes but the principle sort of, given what we have done in the last two or three years, as I say I am sure we will be taken further into the suburbs, into the other urban areas around the island as part of the island's planning process.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Right, and do you have a timeframe for the inclusion of these larger satellite areas outside of the ring road area in terms of bringing forward development plans for their regeneration?

**Peter Thorn:**

Not specifically because we are still producing the plan. I do not those plans will be in the Island Plan but there will be a commitment to identify areas where a closer look will be necessary. You have mentioned in the past Georgetown, Five Oaks and First Tower and (several inaudible words) and southern villages, you know, they are all fair game, if you like, for some form of detailed local planning. I mean obviously as part of the Island Plan process we will assess our resources and prioritise the areas.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Okay. Right.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

Mr Chairman, just going on from that and in preparation for the future deputies that might arrive onto the scene - going on the main services and that - are you dictated at all by the availability of main services, notably for the (several inaudible words)? Is it a question of you do take that into account initially or do you look at the area and the such like and then bring in the main services later or are you initially dictated by, because I think that it has a lot of pull and I often say "Poor old St. Clement," they complain about but it is only because they have got all the main services there.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well the principle is to allow development primarily in the areas where there is existing main services where the infrastructure is capable of coping with a new development, so effectively extending main services into a new area increases significantly the likelihood of further development I would say.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

So therefore on that basis one can only assume that it will be in the same development because there is no point in putting new developments on the outskirts if there are no services available there.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

I would say that is the case. I mean there are ways of looking at it, different ways, where you can - if the developments are large enough - put in satellite service operations but generally you would want to be connected to main services for a significant development. But I think the areas that we are talking about today are largely covered by main services presently.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

That is what I mean, yes.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Yes, all right.

**Kevin Pilley:**

If I might add to that? I think, you know, clearly when we assess sites particularly for housing, infrastructure requirements not only relate to main services but also issues such as public transport provision, capacity in schools, all of the elements of infrastructure requirements. But you are right in the sense that the basic level of infrastructure generally has to be there if it is going to be a good housing scheme.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

But there is one area I would like to look at more seriously which is that we presently offer in terms of sewage services either connections to mains drains or tight tanks and we completely ignore the whole area of technology that is used all over the world biotanks. Now, I have allowed one experiment in this area but I would be very surprised if we cannot come up with a mechanism of allowing people to use biotanks. As I have said they are used all over the world perfectly successfully. The main key is that you need to have some control over the balance of what you put into them and you need to ensure that there is some mechanism to make sure that they are properly maintained. But, you know, the high quality ones, I am not saying that I would be an advocator of drinking the output but it is pretty close to it. We should be using those technologies. I have said I am committed to setting up a group to looking at extending the opportunity of appropriate sewage access or access to the sewage systems. That is largely centred around people who are stuck with tight tanks and this may be a far better solution of dealing with it

rather than having to go to the expense of extending the sewage network to rural locations which costs huge amount of money.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

But equally would you not agree that the use of these new tanking systems or sewage systems would not be seen in the future has an incentive for extending further development into Greenfield sites where it hasn't been able to take place previously?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, if we start with the principle of no further development in green zones then I do not think you are introducing a problem by allowing people to have access. What I am trying to do is to find a workable, affordable solution to people who are already in the countryside zones with very expensive sewage solutions in tight tanks and I think the likelihood is we will prove that it is unnecessary, but I do not think that we should look at this as a mechanism of opening up the countryside for development. It is to provide a solution for those who are already in a difficult position.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Okay, any further points on that one? Right, I am going to move round now, I think. Celia?

**Deputy Celia Scott-Warren:**

Well, you have spoken about the different documents but can you enlighten us please about how the department will bring clarity to would-be developers, architects and to the public regarding these different requirements in the documents?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, the answer is with difficulty because however much you try and compartmentalise advice, advice generally is site-specific and no matter how much we talk about changing policy and setting more aggressive, more opportunistic policies in relation to particular geographical areas, when it comes down to it the arguments are the same and they are site-specific. We have been over that this morning with one large development that is proposed in St. Helier where the political talk has been around the new draft town centre development guidelines and encouraging extra height; encouraging higher densities; use of public amenity space; rethinking the way we look at developments. But actually when it comes down to assessing the individual application, everyone is afraid of height, density and all the things that go with it. So we have done it in terms of the draft town centre development guidelines which, as far as I am concerned, whilst I am Minister of Planning and Environment, will be the guidelines to encourage significant development in the town of high-quality, new residential accommodation, but it does tend to be site-specific and you are never going to be able to produce a single document that a site owner or developer will be able to have a clearer understanding of exactly what they are going to get consent for on any particular site. One site may be largely open and not feel a constrained site, another site may feel very constrained, it may be between existing buildings, different treatments, different densities, different parking levels are appropriate

for each of the sites. So I think we have got a document there but it does not give you the specific answer of how many units of what size can I deliver on this particular site without putting in an application, and we will never get any better than that.

**Deputy Celia Scott-Warren:**

Thank you.

**Kevin Pilley:**

If I might add to that? I think one of the issues to bear in mind is that, you know, in Jersey we have been quite good at sort of protecting and looking at our countryside and our coast, and everybody is familiar with green zone, zone of outstanding character and all the different zones that we have in the countryside, but we have never really been in a position where we have looked at the town in a level of detail that we have applied to the countryside. As a precursor to the 2002 Island Plan we had the countryside character appraisal which assessed all of the countryside and divided the countryside into different types of land types and that is what the green zones, zone of outstanding character and the countryside zone are based on, but we have never had that for town. One of the actions in the 2002 Island Plan was effectively to assess the physical character of town and that is what the Willie Miller study did and it started to actually give us some differentiation about obviously the character of this part of town, a physical character of another part of town so we can actually start to understand what it is that is characteristic about those areas and how you might deal with development applications in those areas. So I think arising from this we would look to produce some guidelines to actually help

developers, land owners, architects about framing development proposals so that we can actually provide them with a greater level of detail about the character of different parts of town, whereas up to now we just had in effect only one line that has gone all the way round the edge of town and it has effectively been a blank canvas in the middle. We can now actually provide a more detailed level of guidance about the characteristics within that broader definition of the town. So I think the, you know, work that has been going on is really to provide a greater level of detail to people about what may be acceptable and what is less likely to be acceptable within what we understand as town. So I think that is the purpose of some of these pieces of work.

**Deputy Celia Scott-Warren:**

Thank you.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Right, Paul?

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

I have got a couple of questions. Maybe I could just take these ones? You are not doing this one here?

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

No.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

No. What is the most effective method of preventing urban sprawl overtaking the countryside in your opinion?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Do not allow development in the countryside. But that is a very simplistic answer because we have inbuilt housing demand in our community and a lot of the arguments that we hear, a lot of the heat, is around population and we are allowing thousands of people to come into the island. Even if you say, "We're not going to allow a single person to come into the island from today," there is a huge pent up housing demand in our community and we live in a society where many people have been brought up to want to live in the countryside and, as I have said before, we have an aspirational mismatch. We cannot deliver that for everybody unless we rape our countryside. So what we need to do is to provide accommodation in the town that people want to live in, not that it is second choice. There are a lot of developments now in the town that are first-choice developments. They are good room sizes; they are well designed, whether they be contemporary designs or whether they are refurbishments of historic buildings, and we are offering choice but the real key to it is the funds that will come out of The Waterfront because that is the one opportunity to fundamentally change the town.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Is this where the monies are coming from to regenerate and is that how it is going to be spent?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

That is the one chance old St. Helier will have to become a better town that we must somehow or other deliver a mechanism that ensures that the money that comes out of The Waterfront is not absorbed into the Treasury and is used only for regeneration of the town and that means street beautification project, it may mean some grant money, it will be the core of huge regeneration. And, as I have said before, that if you look at what was achieved in Broad Street and Charing Cross with a few hundred thousand pounds of beautification expenditure, the whole area suddenly took on a new light and it really was not very difficult. If you improve the public spaces, if you green them, if you use our traditional materials in paving, if you put in good street furniture suddenly the area comes to life and the owners of buildings invest in their buildings. If the environment is poor, if the streets are rundown people do not invest in their buildings. A very good example of that was at the time the Broad Street and Charing Cross regeneration project was underway it coincided with a downturn in retailing. I spoke to most of the retailers in York Street and they all had noticed an upturn in business because their area had improved and it really is not that difficult. You can put in place all the physical controls you want by saying that your policy is going to be that you do not want to have further developments in the countryside other than exceptional cases but if you put in place the right regeneration in the town it will happen all on its own. I am firmly of that view. But, the key is we have got to keep control of the money that is coming out of The Waterfront because pressure will be to take it for other things and particularly when we are in possibly a downturn that that is an awful lot of money that can be used to fill

shortfalls from other areas. So I think we need to make sure that we put in place now the right mechanisms to keep control of that money and it should be effectively outside of the usual pot. I know there are all sorts of issues of hypothecation but in this case we should make an exception and make sure we stick to it.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Right. I think the point is well made because living in town with a young family people sometimes forget that the town is not just a place for visitors and people to do business, it is also a place for families to grow up and children to run free in. At the moment the big complaint that I am getting, and I understand this one quite succinctly, is putting my child into a car and driving to a playground on the other side of the island because there is nowhere safe for him to run in town.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Yes.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

That is a big stumbling point for any regeneration and desire of people wanting to live in town, so I think your point about keeping that money safe is very important because the first chance we would get if we had any other chance would be to move to an area where there is somewhere for the children to run. Can I ask as well, if we are going to do this then, what density would you consider is suitable for the town area?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

I am very reluctant to give specific densities because I think once you give an indication of specific densities that becomes the benchmark against which developers will always push. I think that density is site-specific. In the last week I have looked at two town sites where fundamentally different densities would be appropriate and I think that rather than rush to a number I would rather say site-specific, dependent on the provision of public amenity space, private amenity space and high-quality living and that means better room sizes. I have set a new bar and that is that, until we integrate design for homes properly into the planning process, that I do not want to approve any applications where the room size is anything less than minimum standard plus 10%. So, effectively I have increased minimum standards by 10% in the interim. Furthermore I want to make sure that we apply the same standards across the board, so wherever possible, I will not allow lodging houses to be smaller than the minimum standard for normal residential accommodation, because we have got this strange structure where you can have a lodging house that is much smaller in terms of minimum requirement than normal residential accommodation and then you end up with an application, as we have got one at the moment, to convert lodging house accommodation into normal A to H accommodation and saying, "Oh well, you know, it's already existing so can we please have an acceptance for our particular space because it's below standard?" So I do not think number and any specific density is the answer. I think a proactive approach directed around high-quality living, high-quality amenity space and a site-specific assessment is the way to deal with it.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

And do you think - before I stop asking my questions today, Minister, thank you for your answers - this - here goes one of those kids I was talking about - increase of 10% for minimum room sizes is -- I mean it is good news to hear that but do you believe that with modern living, and the UK and the EU looking for larger sizes, that Jersey is keeping pace with that - first part of the question. The second part of the question would be; if you cannot or would prefer not to indicate the density and if these developers come in, or homeless property come in, and want to start to jiggle around the sites, what is going to prohibit them or what is going to deter them in the future from getting planning in principle and then coming back with the development (inaudible) that we have seen time and time and time again? What can we do? Can we raise the level of reapplication financially to deter them? What can be done?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, firstly we have got a problem with what you and I consider is an application in principle as we have recently found out because effectively, in layman's terms, there is not such a thing. There is a planning consent with reserved matters and, of course, the issue with reserved matters is that they are conditions which can be appealed against and presumably appealed against in a court. So, I think that there is little you can do other than offer developers a good deal and a good deal is about prompt service, consistent advice and a practical approach.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Is your service prompt at the moment?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

No, it is not.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Why isn't it?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Because we are under-resourced but we recently have been given the opportunity of having the ability to increase our fees to deliver additional resources and within 12 months' time you are going to see fundamentally a better service. But we need to be practical about our approach to developers and my approach is largely around really good architecture, as you know. You ask about densities. Well, you can increase density by going a bit higher. It is quite easy to do and you can have very good size apartments with a slightly taller building. We then are left with the conundrum of what is the appropriate height of buildings in St. Helier? Now, people have wildly different views. If you ask Sir Michael Hopkins he will tell you that his assessment of St. Helier is that four or five storeys is the predominant level and that you can have the odd building popping out, but nothing more. By popping out I think his view is one or two storeys higher. If you ask Sir Richard McCormack for his assessment he will tell you that St. Helier can accommodate buildings of 12, 13, 14, 15 storeys and as you saw Eric Kuhne was proposing buildings, I think, of 22 storeys high. What is appropriate for the town? I do not know the answer and that is a debate we need to have, but clearly the higher you go

the greater you will deliver out of each site and it is not an accident that in other places there is a premium the higher you go. You may more rent, as we saw in Malmo, and a higher price per square foot in high-rise developments the higher you go. That shows what premium residents place on going tall. Now, what is the appropriate height as a limit for St. Helier? I do not know the answer. I think we are soon to find out.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

And it would probably be specific to these urban character areas that we have been in St. Helier anyway.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

And a microcosm of a microcosm within that because if you take the Westmount site as an example - and we will be careful because we are determining the application at the moment - there is a very unusual site because it is protected by being in a quarry and it is effectively in a bowl. So you can treat height in that site fundamentally differently from height on The Waterfront where it is apparent to everyone. So, again it just supports my view that density is site-specific.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Thank you, Minister, because I lived in Canada Wick. I lived on the floor of, I think, what was a 19-storey building and the ground two floors were parking, third floor was amenity space and a swimming pool. We lived on the very top but we had huge rooms,

fantastic space and great views - and the rent was reasonable. So I think is it specific. I think your answers are very welcomed.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

And if you take, for example, buildings in very tight settings, very often that model of car parking on the first few floors where it is dark and constrained is the answer and the residential useable space emerges above it.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Thank you very much.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Are you in a position to turn an application down because you do not think it is tall enough?

I mean a good example would be the Hue Street area which I believe can take a tall building, opposite the Post Horn pub on that car park site. In the past there have been applications for pastiche three-bedroom townhouses, clearly a waste of the site in a town centre location where you could put more development in there and provide more units. But as Planning Minister are you able to say to a developer, "That site is being wasted and probably not"?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

No, I think you are, but I think that moving a community from predominantly very small buildings - two, three, four storeys - to much larger buildings is a process that needs to be inclusive and the only debate we have actually had about it was a debate on the beach when I first got my job over the then proposed towers on The Waterfront. That is really the extent of the debate and we need to know what the community wants. Now, we have got the tall tower brigade over here and the keep it low brigade over there. Quite what is a tall tower we do not know, but we do know what the other end of the scale is, and the acceptable solution for the majority of the community is somewhere in between the two, but I do not know where it is and it is a debate we need to have. There are a few schemes at the moment that, I think, are going to focus on that debate. You are going to have the traditionalists at one end saying, "No, keep it small; keep it traditional; keep everything dependent; keep everything modelled on the traditional framework," and you are going to have the contemporary thinkers at the other end saying that we have got new materials, a new ability to build tall, "Let's go taller and let's go taller than that." We need to have the debate and it is a debate, actually, that should happen to some extent outside the planning department.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

But surely, going on from that, you are then leaving it open because with 100 people there will be 99 who will all have different ideas anyway. Surely you, as a Planning Department, should be coming forward with these whole new initiatives and giving general ideas in that so the consensus is for all these varying ones as well as you just said within St. Helier. You mentioned as well about St. Helier is within a bowl. It is the

opportunity. In the past you have said you have a habit of these things going against, but the only ones that have been there have not been virtually many buildings of that. You have got the hospital and you have got sort of Cyril Le Marquand House which are not buildings for living accommodation, are they, so that was exactly because of that that you had then otherwise you have got tall buildings like St. Thomas' church and that, which go up at quite a way as well - I do not know if there was objection at that time on whether that was too big a building. So why can't you come forward - you meaning the whole planning process - and give a whole aspect of that to show what can fit in because otherwise it is going to be very piecemeal again because, as you said, we have got on one hand the tall and on the other hand the small so therefore you come to anonymity in the middle. Well, that does not please anybody then.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well it is interesting. A very interesting point you make because in medieval city making medieval cities prided themselves and competed on the height of their tallest building, usually their church and it was seen as something of status to have delivered something exceptionally tall with most of the surrounding buildings being very small. I think that we are precluded from being able to assess the impact of really tall buildings in Jersey because so far nothing of architectural merit has ever really been suggested. We have never had the opportunity of a debate around a magnificent tall building with an acclaimed architect who has delivered successful tall buildings in other communities. We have always had really low-grade tall buildings proposed for us and people have felt that they were being imposed upon them rather than something that they could aspire to

and feel that redefined that spirit of the community, but I do not see that it is for planning to say we want buildings of 20 storeys because if we do that, I know what sort of buildings we will get. I think it is up to planning to say that we are prepared to consider taller buildings and it is up to an applicant to propose something that, through the public consultation process involved in the planning system, will tease out the debate in relation to height.

**Peter Thorn:**

Could I say I think really is the answer to Connetable Crowcroft's question. It is quite possible to turn down a building because it is not tall enough if it is supported with policies which say, not necessarily you have got to maximise opportunities but perhaps optimise, depending on the site conditions, but you would need the planning policy framework, I think, to bring a successful defence of a refusal of permission for that reason. But, if it is clear that - and I think it probably will be - how we finally put together the policies remains to be seen. It is clear that we are going to be looking for more housing accommodation to be provided in built-up areas and we need policies in place which both encourage it, which is what the draft guidelines are trying to do, but also to regulate it in terms of its design and space and all those sort of factors. The whole thing needs to be rethought and not just for central St. Helier but for all the built-up areas.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

Could I just comment with an instant thought on that? I have put the emphasis possibly wrongly on Planning to come forward on that but on the other hand I suppose because we

have had all this debate over the last year or two about The Waterfront and bringing in people with innovative ideas and such like and resetting trend when you have the very tall one and that. Would not this be an opportunity to ask for initiatives from outside unnecessary planning? I mean to do it it is a more or less encourage others to come forward with a plan and that as well because you seem a bit reluctant to open the floodgates in a sense, but then unless you open up at all you are not going to have any ideas, so if you do not have ideas you have got to make them yourself.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, there is room with all planning to have a variety of different philosophies and the philosophy I have applied to The Waterfront, the Esplanade quarter, is exactly the opposite of what we are talking about. It is about non-iconic architecture; it is about quiet polite architecture designed to reflect the proportions in massing of the traditional town but in a very modern context. You could equally have justified an entirely different approach and gone for something tall and iconic and structurally magnificent that was not designed to be polite and quiet and sink within - or not sink - but designed to sit - sorry, not sink, sit --

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

My (inaudible) sinks.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

-- with the existing architecture and the other buildings in the town. There are opportunities elsewhere in town to take completely the opposite approach and go for taller buildings because if you are cleverer about taller buildings you get better amenity space around them. But for a given amount of density out of a particular site the taller you go the bigger public space you can have around your tall building. So I think we should do it but I think it is something that needs to have the community on board and not be imposed upon the community. I think that if it is something that the community is consulted upon and responds well to, it can be positive for the community. But, I think if you just go out and throw it at the community without consultation and particularly if it is not of the very highest quality you will end up with disaster.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

All right. David, just going on a bit from that, it does sound as if within the policies and the strategies that have been outlined that there is an intention - whether it is realised or not we do not know as yet - to reduce the density of some areas and to perhaps establish a move towards a gentrification, if that is a proper word, of the better class housing of the Victorian era in some areas. So I am just wondering to what extent that a reduction in the density would be replaced by an increase in density in other areas. And if you as Minister do not come forward with a policy to actually outline where these areas under which these policies could be applied, are we going to get a move in either direction either to achieve your upping the class of the better properties and perhaps replacement with a more modern kind of idiomatic form somewhere else?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, every time we think we are making progress in an area like this we end up thinking we have concluded and ended up going backwards. The best example is the Ladies College whereby reconstructing the proposals and delivering high-quality large apartments within the historic structure and new high-quality townhouses we were hoping that we would see a regeneration of the whole of the area that would be focused upon the reassembly of the once quite grand villas around that area into high-quality houses and new higher density development coming out of a reinvigorated, regenerated area. But, unless you have got the initial regeneration seed, the catalyst, which was supposed to be the redevelopment of the Ladies College as a residential development none of the rest will happen and it does not matter how many policies you put in place and how many wonderful reports you produce, it is actually on the ground that regeneration takes place. That is why we end up back to The Waterfront £75 million, or expected £75 million, because that actually provides the opportunity for us to do some of that stuff ourselves instead of having to find ways of the areas regenerating themselves, we can actually put some money in to make it happen. So, I think that actually practically on the ground we need some money to make it happen and we need to actually look at the wider issues of something like the Ladies College. It is a great shame that we have lost - seem to have lost - that opportunity certainly for the moment because I would have expected that by now that project would have been halfway through; property developers are bright, they would have bought up houses around the area, those would be in the process of being reassembled into houses and the lesser quality property would

have been bought up for higher density, new contemporary buildings, but without the start you do not get it.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Do you think then you should be outlining development areas which are perhaps slightly larger than the development opportunities of isolated sites in order to --

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Yes. Yes, I do.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Right, okay.

**Peter Thorn:**

That really comes back to what EDAW were putting forward where there are groups, if you like, of sites in particular areas where there are likely to be quite a number of individual sites coming forward within a relatively short period of time and the advantage of that, not least in terms of what we think will probably happen with employment patterns in town, it will actually put a footfall back into service some of the shopping areas in the north and the east of the town, but you start to build communities where they do not probably exist at the moment in places like (inaudible) or somewhere off David Place, that sort of area. You start to actually build communities. One of the points about getting rid of multiple occupation in some of the finer, larger properties in the town is

also the range of accommodation that is in central St. Helier certainly, and it seems that over the last 20 or 30 years that there has probably been disproportionate amount of social rented accommodation going into those areas of very similar type, either one or two flats. There has been very little family accommodation built either larger flats or indeed houses in the town and part of the attraction of trying to encourage people to restore those buildings actually depends on the economics to a large extent, is that you start producing some fine townhouses which will attract families into the town area.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

It is interesting. Can I ask just touching on it? We have seen in the UK the Government is now going to target expenditure to help with the UK recession in terms of spend for the Olympic Village and some other big projects. Are we going to be considering, as you mentioned, a number of these projects coming online if the opportunities are presenting themselves at the right time? There is also the opportunity to regenerate these areas but are we going to have cogniscience of our economic state as and when we decide to put this money into the community or are we just going to all do it as quick as we can?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

This may be premature and I may regret saying this, but at the moment we have not seen a significant downturn. We have seen a downturn here but not a significant downturn. I met with one of the largest developers last week. He told me that they are still selling houses and still selling apartments and they are still selling them well and they are not having to reduce their prices. I think a lot of the things that we are talking about are

actually very easy to stimulate. If you look at the work that developers are doing - if you give them the right signals - in relation to things like percentage for art, that they are willingly saying that we will deliver fantastic works of art because we have put in place the mechanism that makes them want to do it. That is partly about giving them greater opportunity in terms of flexibility of consent; it is partly about making them feel better about themselves and it is partly about encouraging them to commission really good architects who will naturally lead them to creating great set pieces incorporating really good works of art and really good landscaping. So, whilst the market is there you do not actually have to do very much. In terms of the regeneration of St. Helier, if you spent a lot of the £75 million on street improvement and safety improvement and transport improvement, the rest will all happen. You do not actually have to do it, it will all happen. Developers will find the opportunities and deliver what we need as a community at the quality that the department sets. Effectively what we have done as a department is said, "Look, forget what's happened in the past. We all know that we are not desperately proud of a lot of the buildings that have been constructed in past decades, but we're now going to set the bar much higher. You deliver really good architecture; you deliver really good art and really good landscaping and we will deliver the consensus for you," and that is happening. They are taking the message. Some are grumpy but a lot are getting the message and they are doing it and it is happening on the ground.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

Mr Chairman, could I quickly come in there because Paul just mentioned beforehand that it seems to me the one thing you have forgot there though which is the chicken and the

egg situation, is you did not actually mention anything to do about the families and young children, things for them to do, you only mentioned about for art and for architecture and so on. What would you have in mind to attract and to make sure that the families felt within that reason to put it onto that as well to contribute towards -- I mean look at the long debate we had just down on The Waterfront just for the kid's skate park in that. I am not just thinking another one like that but I am actually thinking from that point of view. I mean ask Paul whether his young child and the such like, you know. There are ten years since the town park was mentioned, so in that sense. That is when -- what is going to come first? I mean you say about changing the ideas but you will not change the ideas of people to come and live in the town if you do not have something for them while they are there.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

That is all about the public opportunity that is presented by The Waterfront cash, that is what we should be using it for. But I can tell you that as far as the skateboard parks are concerned you can put as many skateboard parks as you want in the town, but unless you get them absolutely right the kids will not use them.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

That is right.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

I was not just -- yes, I used that as an example. But I am Paul is an ideal person to ask what he would want because he has a young family in town.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

And before we stray if I could put this across, and I really mean this, I have grown up in town with four brothers - lived in town all my life - and the part about town is whether you want to live here or whether you do not want to live here. It is irrelevant if you have to live here. People complain about not being able to buy a house straightaway until they have been here 12 years. Some of us cannot afford houses our entire lives here because of our economic circumstances and we cannot afford to take children on holidays, and we cannot afford to transport them backwards and forwards to the countryside where we are not going to build houses either. What we would like and what we can do is build quality parks. My mother moved us from Aquila Road to opposite the wooden gate of the Howard Davis Park and it changed our lives because we were able to walk out of our front into a park, my mother could relax knowing that we were on the big piece of grass in safety, not wondering every time she heard a car screech if one of us was under it, you know. I think we need to deliver the town park.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

But that is all about other conversations we have had about public amenity space and the stuff you are talking about is about high-quality public amenity space. Yes, we should be doing it and I do not understand why it takes so long, but there is nothing like having some cash to deliver projects with and that is what The Waterfront money will deliver

instead of having to scratch around every time we want to do anything for 20 years, we will actually have cash in the kitty to make a decision on.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Will you push, as Minister for parks, recreation spaces for children?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Yes, I will. Yes, I will but it is going to be up to the States to take very firm control over The Waterfront money and make sure it stays in the town because there will be enormous pressures to spend it elsewhere. However much people talk at the moment and say, "Yes, yes, yes, it'll be all right," particularly in an economic downturn there will be pressures for it to go elsewhere.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Backtracking a little bit; would it be beneficial for the traffic planning function to be within the planning department rather than with transport and technical services?

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Or indeed within the parishes - collectively within the parishes.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

I think there are alternative ways of looking at holistic transport solutions, but perhaps a lot of the ways that we have looked at transport solutions over the last few years, and I think they will come naturally.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

I am thinking of things like suppose it was put forward, as part of the gentrification programme in a particular area, that one of the key ways to achieve it would be the extinguishing of the road round in front of the particular development. Should the request for that come from as part of planning in order to generate better living circumstances and when the denial comes from transport and technical services that it cannot be done or should not be done, to what extent are we kind of placing our eggs in the wrong basket?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

I was trying to answer that as politely as I could. Leaving transport with engineers is fine but you end up with an engineering approach. We have seen that over so many years internationally where it has always been assumed that you have to keep cars and pedestrians in a town separate. We have actually learnt that that is the worst way and the best way of ensuring that pedestrians and cars work in a town is to actually merge them.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Wouldn't you say that is a better way? The best way is actually to restrict unnecessary traffic from entering the town in the first place.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, okay, you limit the amount of traffic by having a sensibly thought out and sensibly funded public transport policy and although the current minister has had a great deal of criticism, to be fair to him he has never been given the necessary funds to enable him to deliver a transport system for the town that gets people from where they want to go to where they want to go at the right time of day at an affordable price. That is actually what we have got to deliver if we want to fundamentally change the use of the motorcar in town, because I have friends who live in town and do not have motorcars, but most of my friends who live in town do have motorcars because there is not really a way of getting out of town and getting around unless you borrow a car from a friend or borrow a car from your parents or a relative. If we are going to be serious about these issues we have got to tackle public transport and we have also got to get away from the philosophy that everyone has to have a car whether they live in the town or whether they live in the country because you do not. When I am in London I do not bother with a car - I have got a car in the garage and never bother using it - because the transport facilities are good and I use the bus and go backwards and forwards, all over London on the buses. It is much better; the car is a hassle. But here you need the car because you do not have the necessary public transport facility. So, I am afraid that again it is this situation of not having previously applied the necessary quantum of money to deliver a transport solution that makes us not have to use cars. The consequence of that is whenever I suggest a development without car parking in town everyone throws their hand up in the air and says, "How can you possibly subject mothers and children to not having a place to park

their car?" Well, I am afraid you cannot deliver car parking spaces for absolutely everyone in the town because the numbers do not work.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

I mean this is what I cannot get around. Isn't it more about increasing car parking charges in town to offset public transport so that we have people who will come in to conduct and share the facilities in town that they need to without looking at town as a second car parking place because at the moment, you know, it is a bit of a hard one to get across when parking used to be free and still is in some places, we are choking in town. Many people are just -- curtains, dust, noise. I have to sit there constantly increasing the volume on my TV in the morning to listen to the news whilst the noise of the traffic comes into town, and it is all driven by the fact that parking in Jersey - some would argue against this but realistically - in the finance centre in town is ridiculously cheap for cars and you will not get people out of their cars from town who have got nice fresh air to come into town on buses until they are suddenly faced with the fact that bringing their vehicle in to conduct their work or conduct their business is going to cost them a lot of money and they should take an alternative route. But the argument in my view and this is where I differ with you, Minister, is people in town require those spaces for their cars to enable them to get to the playgrounds that exist outside of town because this is where the density is; this is where all the people are; this is where all the buildings are; this is where all the activity is. So we need our parking spaces and we need our cars - or we need to park them - to go out.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, the only way you are going to deliver that is if you invest in public transport, whether you get the money from increased parking charges or wherever, you have got to invest in public transport. There are diminishing returns. If you start driving up car parking too much you end up with the return dropping off because people do not use their cars and they do not deliver the expected revenue. But the experiments are all there; we have got experiments and they have been delivered. Look at Freiberg, we have discussed it before, 25% reduction in car journeys into the city of Freiberg in a five-year period, but what did it require? Huge investment in public transport infrastructure and that is what we need to do.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

I was reading yesterday on the internet that the Malmo tunnel, sub-terrain tunnel, along with the bridge which you were endorsing which I think was a very sensible suggestion to endorse looking at this. They are now going on - it is a hidden subtext - to spend €9 billion in developing a tunnel to go completely underneath Malmo to join up to that link and that investment in transportation at that level is something Jersey is just never going to put in. We just want to keep throwing out it at the buses and there are never going to be enough buses.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Trouble is I think there are other routes because is it the vehicles themselves or the things that vehicles bring. I mean if we change the fuel and they are all running on electricity,

and they are quiet, and they are clean and non-polluting then actually that would change people's perspectives.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

That would help to some extent.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Can I throw in a few extra thoughts? You talk mostly about EDAW and other studies and I was in an urban task force meeting on Monday, which you were not able to attend, where the traffic engineers reported back on the EDAW proposals to reduce unnecessary traffic flow through the town centre, particularly at Halkett Place but also a couple of other proposals such as reducing traffic down Broad Street and York Street. The engineers' verdict basically, with lots of erudite and scientific diagrams, was that to do any of these things would have unacceptable impacts on the traffic flows on surrounding streets and therefore their conclusion appeared to be that we should not do any of these things because apparently it would flow traffic onto other roads and this is at the same time as the States have had many of their roads closed for nigh on six months to do engineering works, sewage works. It does seem to me that you are basing a lot of your hope for regeneration on this money coming from The Waterfront, but I think regeneration of St. Helier could start tomorrow if we had the ability to make some fairly controversial - but they could be on a trial basis - traffic-based decisions about the way we use town. Certainly we must be one of the few historic town centres which allows commuters in the evening to funnel through our own town centre. It does seem to me

that this does not require £75 million or even a slice of it, it requires a barrier at where the first Island Plan said the traffic would go round a cordoned zone and that was 20 years ago. We can have any number of studies saying we should reduce traffic through a town centre, but what I heard on Monday last week from the engineers was, “No, we can’t do that because there’s too much traffic on the ring road.” So, what is the answer to that?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well I think the answer is exactly as you suggested that you try some experiments. But I do think that to have this huge change centred around improving our town you do need to invest money in it. I am sure you are right that if you run experiments you will find that you can significantly improve the experience in different parts of the town but we have a big opportunity there as well and we should make sure that we concentrate on the big opportunity.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

I am not saying that we do not need the money, I am just saying that some of these things can be delivered before the money even starts to be produced.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Yes. I mean there is a jolly good case for taking a section of town and effectively leaving those who are in charge of running the town to get on with running it. One of the things we have seen is this extraordinary episode of your suggestion with the fountain. Well we have all been all over Europe and seen fountains at roundabouts and I have got a few

bashes on my car but I have never had one as a result of a fountain. But yet the engineers' answer, quite properly, is that you must not put a fountain in the middle of a roundabout because it will impair visibility across the roundabout. Well, you have just got to have a compromise and be practical about these things. We should be experimenting much more with many of the ideas that you have suggested today and previously, so I am all for it.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

I think fundamentally it comes back to what we were asking and I think the transportation planning is more properly aligned as a planning function than an engineering function as building roads.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, I think it is a combination of both actually. We do not have the skills within the Planning Department to deal with the engineering aspect of traffic modelling, for example.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

No, but you could say where to put the roads.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

But what is the point of traffic modelling? I mean traffic modelling what was gave us the report a week ago which more or less said you cannot make any changes to rat-running

through the town centre. We all know and they have done studies to show that when you close a road not all that traffic transfers to other routes because there is behavioural change which is the scientific part that the traffic engineer cannot compute. Behavioural change, as it does with us every day, when roads are closed, we make diversions, we share cars, we do different things with our spouses and our kids to work around traffic delays and it frustrates me that TTS have been waiting for almost a year to process the EDAW information because they are waiting for their traffic model. The traffic model is quite honestly nonsense because human behaviour is such a large part of how we manage our transport needs. So I think it really does need the council and ministers actually to say look, if the roads committee, for example, of St. Saviour and St. Helier - because we are the urban section - if those two roads committees agree that such and such needs to be done then the traffic minister shall at least allow them to trial it. At the moment I cannot do anything in St. Helier without the express approval of the Transport Minister.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, I think that everyone would be clearly best to work together. I am sure that everyone has the same aim and you have come up with the ideal way of dealing with it which is that you try a few of these ideas as trials. If they do not work you change them back again. They are not hugely expensive; they usually are a barrier in a road or a couple of bollards.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

All right. I am looking at the time and I have got one further question, if I may. Within your design book of preferences do you have any specific objections to the juxtaposition of the modern schemes with the older properties in town if it is done properly?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Absolutely not. The concept of delivering pastiche next to traditional buildings is usually a disaster. You are far better off to have contemporary design next to traditional architecture and that is what I promote all the time.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman)**

Okay. Any further questions from the panel?

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

I think that is into the (inaudible) remark that none of us are worthy enough to be ministers.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

I did not understand it.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

Can I ask one? Minister, you said that you were insisting on 10% increase on spaces in apartments. This of course is square metres, it is not cubic metres.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Correct.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

And one of the things that attracts people to the older parts of St. Helier is the heights of the ceilings which makes the liveability of a place so much greater. Would you consider adding to your requirements that the actual height of rooms is also increased as well as the square footage?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

The height of rooms depends on certain perspectives. It is not something that bothers me internally but considering you are --

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

But do you live in a house with high ceilings?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

I think that height of ceilings is very important. In fact the whole concept of the perfectly proportioned room is more actually about height than width. However most modern developments seem to be concentrated on lower ceiling heights than were prevalent, particularly up to really the end of the 1930s. We should seek to increase ceiling height but it is practically difficult. Every time you increase ceiling height you reduce the number of units you can get out of a development.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

But not if you are willing to go higher.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, yes, but there is a balance. I mean effectively the way these processes work is the developer push the height as much as they can, end up with an absolute height and then fit as many floors as they possibly can in it. We should be trying to go like that with the ceiling heights.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

It is just something I think perhaps you could look to do to try and get the 10% increase at least in ground floor accommodation because we are seeing a room here which has got at least 50% more ceiling height than most committee rooms and it makes a difference to our enjoyment of the meeting.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

But we know when this building was built. That is the reason

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

The other thing I wanted to ask you about was sound-proofing. The house to which you alluded earlier in Brighton Road where you, I think, quite courageously gave planning permission despite a lot of local opposition that they did not have parking spaces based

really on the character of the area and the fact that there are some people who live in St. Helier who do not require cars and would rather pay less for a house because it did not have parking. I am wondering whether that is addressed to the fact that I have had a concern given to me by a constituent who is alarmed at having seen the buildings go up - these are timber frame buildings - the thickness of the party walls, they say, cannot possibly provide the kind of sound-proofing that a family requires if they have got an anti-social neighbour. What tests are carried out on new build in houses and would you be prepared to increase the requirements for sound-proofing? Because, as I said, it does seem to me this is a key factor in town living. If we are going to increase densities we have got to give people the right to silence and the right to their privacy and you do not get that.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, I better ask Peter to answer the question because I had always assumed that the modern standards for sound-proofing were more than adequate.

**Peter Thorn:**

Yes, and controlled through the building bylaws. Sound tests are done on completion and we require them to demonstrate at the outset when they make an application they would all meet the requisite standard.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

But they are still minimum standards because there was one which was the one in Great Union Road where they had to go back in - the one that was a hotel, de Montford Crescent - and redo it because the sound-proofing was not adequate, but presumably they pushed it up to the minimum standards. We have all been in houses where you can hear the neighbours go to the toilet and it is not pleasant and you can hear the bass of the neighbours' sound system. It does seem to me, particularly in timber-framed houses, we have really got to tackle this and if necessary we should be pushing for higher standards of sound-proofing in houses because that is going to make them that much more liveable.

**Peter Thorn:**

They are always minimum standards.

**Connetable Simon Crowcroft:**

But maybe we should be pushing them up.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

I was just going to say that Mr Chairman. The point of the very last question where you are saying that everything is minimum standards plus 10%; why can't we erase the minimum standard and have minimum standards then which includes plus 10% and putting another 5% on the top of our graph?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, this is the first time that this issue has been raised and I will have to go back and investigate. I am completely unaware of this being a problem.

**Connetable Ken Le Brun:**

But irrespective of that why do we say minimum standards plus 10%? Why not just raise the minimum standards?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, we will do but I have got an interim measure that I am not prepared to approve anything that is anything less than the current minimum standard plus 10%

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

The building centre in London has a permanent exhibition showing a model of London which is particular fine and was not particularly expensive. Do you think there is any merit for actually having something similar on permanent display in Jersey?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Yes, and we probably would not be too far off assembling it with all the models we have got at the Planning Department at the moment.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

That is right, and they are all at different scales, aren't they?

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Then you would have nothing to do all day!

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

A town centre model in a publicly accessible space like the town hall would be a really good idea and a requirement for all applicants to interpose their proposal on that model. So somebody can come in and they can just have a look.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

Yes, that is a good idea.

**Peter Thorn:**

We used to have a town model as Deputy Duhamel and Crowcroft probably remember which was 1:500 scale and it covered an area probably about the size of this table if all the boards were put together. I remember this building is only about that long and that high and it is very difficult at that scale to be able to - other than in general mass - insert a building and compare it with its context. To be truly effective as a model, like the ones in the office, they are a much larger scale and you would probably fill the whole square with them.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

No, I think you need a physical model. My experience as a layman of assessing proposals is there is nothing better than a physical model. In fact I am getting to the point where I will not determine anything without a physical model.

**Deputy Paul Le Claire:**

What if we got one of the developers to pay for that as a percentage of their art contribution and have it maintained?

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

It is an art form in itself really.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Could do.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Celia?

**Deputy Celia Scott-Warren:**

Can I ask how much control you would have as Minister when you have got a rundown area and you want to redevelop it, and you have got multiple owners and some of the properties are not in use and they are not ready, they are unavailable to develop and obviously it does not say that here but you might need the listed issue as well offer within it. How much control would you have in --?

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Well, there are always exceptions because you do occasionally get stubborn property owners but if you improve an area, if you set up structural improvements, beautification of an area, the market will do the rest. Developers will buy out other property owners' sites. You will get the occasional person who says, "I'm not prepared to sell my property no matter how much you're prepared to offer," but everyone has an idea of the value of their property, if you improve the area the value goes up and the property tends to move on to those who are interested in improving that particular property. So that is why I think so much of all this is about improving the infrastructure in an area and that is all about street scope, greening up the streets, ensuring that we use granite paving instead of tarmac - all those sort of simple things.

**Deputy Celia Scott-Warren:**

Right, thank you.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Right, I think we have come to the end of our questions so I would like to thank you for attending and you will have the transcript of the proceedings when it has been done.

**Senator Freddie Cohen:**

Thank you.

**Deputy R. Duhamel (Chairman):**

Thank you.