

STATES OF JERSEY



DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN MASTERPLAN (P.9/2023): COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 17th March 2023
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Over many years, the St Helier Waterfront has been an area of debate and contention. With hindsight, past Governments and developers could have done considerably better, including through engagement with Members, to plan the overall look and feel of the development, and its stop-start nature.

However, the States of Jersey Development Company have now delivered an overall plan for the area, which contains significant flexibility around what will eventually be delivered, and we can guide and refine that plan to deliver what Islanders want.

The choice for this newly elected Assembly therefore is whether to pause the development while a plan for the whole of town is developed, which will take over a year, or to move forward and focus on how to improve the proposals.

The Council of Minister is clear: The new homes, the open spaces, the public infrastructure are all needed, and a lengthy delay is unwelcome. It is not in Jersey's interests, and we are better working together to achieve a more positive outcome.

The Future Places Ministerial Group, which includes the Connétable of St Helier as valued member, will lead this working with the States of Jersey Development Company. This will include close engagement with representatives from St Helier so they can input directly into the Future Places decision making.

The current outline planning application retains flexibility over the final plans – including scale and massing, size and mix of residential developments, public facilities, siting and access, external appearance and materials and landscape. It is more productive to focus on these elements.

For example, the development intends to deliver nearly 1,000 units of much needed homes. These homes need to include larger units, suitable for downsizers and families, as well as those getting their first foot on the housing ladder. They also need to include as many affordable units as possible. The previous Assembly agreed to maximise the number of affordable units on the site and that remains the right objective, while ensuring the overall development remains viable.

The development also proposes £148 million pounds of much needed infrastructure, including arts and culture facilities, public open spaces, and sea defences and will include consideration of a landmark civic building. Ministers believe this level of investment is crucial. The South-West of St Helier cannot be crammed with housing and commercial units at the expense of amenities and infrastructure.

At the same time, the Council of Ministers commits to working with the developer and elected representatives on the public realm and infrastructure delivery to ensure it is the right mix and that amenities are in the right areas, including a cinema, pool, and arts, culture and sports facilities, etc.

We also need to better integrate the Waterfront areas into the rest of our town, as part of wider transport strategies. The proposition is correct that as soon as possible we need to finalise the plans for the walking, cycling, bus and parking strategies, as part of a wider approach to our town. Work on the commitments of the Sustainable Transport Policy as agreed by the States in 2020 is nearing completion.

The Minister for Environment will also commit to developing a strategic “plan for town”. This will focus on the elements that make life in an urban environment enjoyable – walking and cycling routes across town; parks; public parking; public realm; and retail, leisure, and arts facilities, among other things. It will also provide an overview of future development opportunities.

This strategic approach to planning is preferable to a fixed masterplan trying to locate specific things in specific areas – which is too rigid and inflexible and lacks the ability to respond to unexpected events.

This “plan for town” can be developed with Members over the next 12 – 24 months alongside and in support of the continuing work on the South-West St Helier. It will include meaningful consultation, conducted in an objective and clear manner, and will be a vehicle to engage further with other States Members, key stakeholders and town residents, to identify needs and future opportunities for beneficial change.

The Bridging Island Plan identifies that Town (St Helier and the surrounding urban areas) will continue to provide land and development opportunities to meet most of the island’s development needs over the plan period. Because of this, it is right that we work to ensure that we can plan positively and proactively for change in the Town of St Helier. This will provide us with a new strategic planning framework that can help to identify and facilitate the development that new and existing town residents want and need, so that Town can develop in an enduring and sustainable way.

To support this strategic approach, the Future Places Ministerial Group, working with the States of Jersey Development Company, will ensure that £3m of additional funding per year over the next five years is allocated for public realm in the North of Town. This will be for urban regeneration projects and delivering improved walking and cycling routes around town, including connections from the North of Town to South-West St Helier and the Waterfront. This will be funded by reallocating some of the investment gains from the South-West St Helier development, once they are realised, and, as needed, included in the 2024 Government Plan.

Jersey is a place that used to be able to deliver ambitious projects that serve future generations well – working together. Ministers believe this government, and this Assembly, working with the Parishes, can return to this ethos.

Accordingly, Ministers ask Members to reject parts (a) and (c) of this proposition, and the amendments, and ask that Members work with Ministers and the States of Jersey Development Company on delivering the right developments in town, in the context of an emerging strategic plan for town.

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]

“These comments were submitted to the States Greffe after noon and not before, on Friday 17th March, in order for discussions to conclude in relation to the proposal outlined in the Comment to deliver a “plan for town”, and additional investment in the North of Town.
