

STATES OF JERSEY



NORTH OF TOWN MASTERPLAN (REVISED) (P.190/2010): FOURTH AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 15th February 2011
by the Deputy of St. Mary**

STATES GREFFE

NORTH OF TOWN MASTERPLAN (REVISED) (P.190/2010):
FOURTH AMENDMENT

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After the words “as an agreed development framework” insert the words –

“subject to the condition that any plans for creating a car park underground at Ann Court or elsewhere are only drawn up after a thorough independent study has evaluated any such underground car park for value for money against alternative solutions in providing for the transport needs of –

- (a) the residents of any possible future Ann Court or other development;
- (b) residents of the area north of the Town Park;
- (c) shoppers in St. Helier;
- (d) commuters;

with the study to include but not be limited to –

- (i) an assessment of alternative sites for car parking for different groups and methods of car park construction;
- (ii) an assessment of the degree to which alternatives would reduce the need for car parking, including ‘Hoppa’ type bus services, car pooling arrangements, improvements in public transport, and other initiatives put forward as part of the Sustainable Transport Policy;

with this assessment to include at the least feasibility and risk; all associated costs financial and non-financial, the relative merits of solutions in meeting the needs of the groups mentioned; and adaptability to changing circumstances and with the study to be carried out as part of the Island Plan process or the Masterplan process, as appropriate.”

DEPUTY OF ST. MARY

REPORT

Underground car parking is clearly very costly to construct. The Minister has claimed that he is aware of new cheaper technologies for digging out and removing rock and constructing parking underground, but I would suggest that it will still be a costly exercise. And yet, as Ministers constantly remind us, we live in times of extreme financial stringency and therefore there is a greater need than ever to spend public money as wisely as possible.

However, the Minister has thus far refused to conduct any formal evaluation of underground car parking for value for money against alternative solutions in providing for the transport needs of the groups mentioned in the proposition.

I have made it absolutely clear in my amendment what the evaluation should include so that the study covers all the matters it should.

It is obvious to me, and I hope to members, that before spending very large sums of money on underground car parking we should look at the potential for maximising the use of existing surface sites and that we should evaluate car pooling – which elsewhere has reduced the absolute number of cars required by a pool of people by a ratio of 4 to 1, whilst still ensuring access for the members of the pool to a vehicle when they require it.

We should evaluate the effect of all the measures in the Sustainable Transport Policy which will reduce the amount of parking needed in town by commuters. Indeed, this is one of the main benefits of that policy in that it frees up space for uses such as amenity and residential. Surely the Minister for Planning and Environment should believe in and support fully the policy of his fellow Minister to reduce commuter traffic and all its ill effects?

We should of course look at the costs and benefits of the different options in the light of stated policies about the need to improve the urban environment, reduce energy demand, and so on. We should see how good the different solutions are for the groups concerned – shoppers, town residents and commuters. We should check the different options to see how adaptable they are to changing circumstances.

On this last point, underground car parking is the most inflexible form of parking provision. It cannot be changed to meet changing patterns of behaviour and changing circumstances. You are betting on the future being an unchanging future. This seems to be self-evidently an unwise thing to do. I need only point to the high probability of considerable rises in fossil fuel prices in coming years, which will have a big impact on our travel patterns, whether we like it or not, or the likelihood of ever-higher targets on CO₂ emissions.

I know that the Minister has often stated the view that cars should be parked underground for aesthetic reasons, almost regardless of the cost. My view is that the vehicles do not fly into these underground car parks, they travel along the streets of St. Helier causing all the problems of traffic as they go, and that providing simply more car parks without looking at alternatives is to avoid one of the central issues affecting the quality of life in our capital.

Financial and manpower implications

The thrust of this amendment is to request the Minister to see if underground car parking on the scale envisaged is actually the most cost-effective solution. I think it is self-evident that it is not, and I would therefore confidently expect that this amendment would be the opportunity for substantial cost savings into the future.

The study would be part of the normal work-stream of either the preparation and delivery of the Masterplan or the Island Plan and would be funded as such.