STATES OF JERSEY

URBAN REGENERATION REVIEW (S.R.15/2008): RESPONSE OF THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Presented to the States on 28th July 2009
by the Minister for Planning and Environment

STATES GREFFE

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Introduction

The Minister for Planning and Environment welcomes this report which outlines interesting ideas and suggestions which may be applicable to both St. Helier and the rest of the Island.

He recognises that the Environment Scrutiny Panel are presenting an alternative approach to regeneration, as opposed to a more limited review of the urban regeneration proposals made in the St. Helier Development and Regeneration Strategy (EDAW 2007).

A central theme of the report is that regeneration planning should be undertaken at the smallest definable community level and that there should be full community participation in producing a plan for each area. Whilst the Minister recognises the potential value of this approach, he believes an overarching strategic framework is still required. In addition, the community participation approach that is outlined in the report raises serious practical difficulties for a Department which has limited staff resources. Given these limitations, it is the Minister's view that there is little option but to focus resources on producing plans for areas where there is a high likelihood of physical change. This change can be created by setting a strategic framework which guides the use, form and design of both new and refurbished buildings, and of open spaces.

The Minister's more detailed response to the findings and recommendations of the report are outlined in the following table.

	Finding/Recommendation	Response
1	Every community area when defined should take into account the needs of the inhabitants in the masterplan for its regeneration.	It is agreed that the needs of individuals and communities need to be taken into account when masterplanning areas. This is usually achieved by meeting the main stakeholders and is followed by consultation on draft proposals.
2	Refurbishment and improvement are often more environmentally sustainable alternative for regeneration rather than demolition and reconstruction.	Agreed that they can be, and they are also relevant in retaining the character of areas. However redevelopment is also appropriate in the right circumstances and may often result in the more efficient use of land.
3	Despite a raft of costly consultation documents and reports no masterplan has been forthcoming for the whole of the urban area.	The EDAW Strategy for the Regeneration and Development of St. Helier (2007) was a strategic masterplan.

		It is proposed in the draft Island Plan that more detailed masterplans will be produced, including the recent North of Town Masterplan. Others are, or will be prepared for the western area of Town, Mont de La Ville, Five Oaks and for the East of Albert area.
		It is not considered necessary, or an effective use of limited resources to produce a detailed masterplan for the whole of the Island's urban areas. The focus is, and will continue to be, on the areas that are most likely to see change through development.
4	Regeneration should be driven by community planning requirements although ad hoc developments if considered within the masterplan can play a useful part as catalysts for regeneration.	This is impractical, and again, is not an effective use of resources
5	The Planning Department should require a higher level of protection on open green spaces and amenities for residents.	The current and draft Island Plans already protect all public, and many private, areas of open 'green' and paved space, through policies that carry a presumption against development.
6	Identification of extended EPIAs should include all of the urban areas to protect the remaining backdrop green field areas.	The Scrutiny report identifies areas which could be designated EPIAs (a designation used in the 1987 Island Plan). Environmental Protection and Improvement Area plans were prepared and introduced for 2 areas within the ring-road, but for all the improvements they brought, primarily through traffic management and street improvement, they consumed a wholly disproportionate amount of the Department's time. They could more easily (and cheaply) have been undertaken by the Parish of St. Helier (as the highway authority).
7	Increased density by building higher can provide increased amenity space.	This is agreed.
8	The Panel recommends that a definitive urban masterplan is drawn up.	This is not wholly agreed. The draft Island plan and the more detailed masterplans will provide 'greater' St. Helier with a sufficient and less prescriptive planning policy base.

9	The Panel recommends empowerment of communities to participate in the regeneration of their own areas.	This is agreed, but only up to a point. There is no reason why communities cannot be involved in producing plans and proposals for their local areas, but ultimately the legal responsibility for planning lies with the Minister for Planning and Environment.
10	The Panel urges the extension of the EPIA model to include all of the urban areas around the town area including First Tower, Five Oaks and Georgetown encompassing outer areas such as Rue De Samarès in St. Clement.	This is fundamentally not agreed (see comment on Finding 6 above). The appropriate approach to land use planning is to define strategic policy and then implement it at local level – not to work from the bottom upwards. This recommendation represents a huge amount of work (there are 40 EPIAs proposed) deriving, it is considered, only limited benefit.
11	The Panel recommends an inclusive planning process involving the residents and businesses of the designated EPIAs.	As comment on recommendation 2 above.
12	The Panel recommends an investigation of schemes which would enable residents to purchase a share of amenity facilities likely to produce revenue.	This is done indirectly through planning obligations on estate development to ensure that roads, open spaces, land and buildings are maintained, but also to engender a sense of ownership. It could be extended.
13	The Panel recommends a preference towards regeneration as opposed to demolition.	This is supported by planning policies.
14	The Panel recommends integrating heritage and contemporary buildings to increase density and to improve the sustainability of existing structures.	This is agreed.
15	The Panel recommends that the Minister decides, through consultation, the appropriate height of taller buildings in the urban area.	This prescriptive policy is not agreed. The policy in the existing and draft Island Plan provides for a criterion-based assessment to be made on each case that might arise.
16	The Panel recommends that when tall buildings are constructed in the urban areas they should include internal green floors to provide amenity space and enhanced standards of residential space.	This is agreed.

17	The Panel supports the inclusive 'Bottom Up' approach of the EPIA system.	The Minister strongly disagrees with this recommendation.
18	The Panel recommends the immediate implementation of previous sustainable transport measures such as the 'cordon zone' contained within successive Island Plans.	This is a matter for the Minister for Transport and Technical Services – not Planning and Environment.
19	The Panel recommends that all recommended traffic management policies should include proposed timescales.	This is agreed.
20	The Panel recommends that responsibility for the planning of transport within the urban areas should form part of the masterplan process and be within the remit of the Planning Minister.	There is merit in this recommendation, which is noted and will be discussed between the respective Ministers for Transport and Technical Services and Planning and Environment.
21	The Panel recommends that all car parks allocate spaces for the establishment of car club facilities.	A car club scheme set up between the developer and a hire car company at a residential development in the central part of town was unsuccessful due to the low take-up by residents living there.