

STATES OF JERSEY



ST. HELIER WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT: HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS

Lodged au Greffe on 2nd August 2005
by Deputy A. Breckon of St. Saviour

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

that any new buildings on the St. Helier Waterfront should not exceed 6 storeys in height and to request the Environment and Public Services Committee to take account of this opinion when considering any applications for development in that area.

DEPUTY A. BRECKON OF ST. SAVIOUR

REPORT

I have reviewed much of the background information regarding the States deliberations over the Waterfront and one phrase has stuck in my mind. It is contained at the very end of:

P.151 of 1989 “Waterfront Area of St. Helier: Development”

Paragraph 3.3 (page 8)

“There is but a single chance with the planning of the future development of St. Helier’s waterfront. Only history will show whether our generation got it right.”

I should say on a personal level I am not overjoyed at what we have done at the Waterfront thus far.

I have a very real concern that the States will not get an opportunity to discuss and debate and express its support, or otherwise, for high-rise development on the waterfront.

I have lodged this proposition so that members will be able to do so, and consider issues in Island terms, rather than rely on any bias, or surveys, they will be able to consider the issues as a whole. I believe that it is the elected representatives, after contact and consultation with their constituents, who should decide and not the weight of other people’s money.

Sweet memories!

I remember years ago artists’ impressions of the Waterfront – couples walking arm-in-arm along the ‘prom’ – bistros with open terraces were depicted as were knick-knack and curiosity shops – generally low-level development was portrayed with granite featured throughout – this was the “soft-sell” approach for the Waterfront development.

Early deliberations and debates were about the “housing gain” on reclaimed land with sites for a new Postal Headquarters and Magistrates Court, Primary School, multi-storey car park (with some underground) and leisure pool.

This followed in the trail of the States paying high prices to build much-needed housing on commercial sites: the Continental, Quatre Bras & Ritz Hotel sites former Channel Television site, etc., etc., etc. ...

“West of Albert Pier Reclamation Site: Development” (P.53/1989) at paragraph 2.03 (page 7) refers to P.37/1988 which was a proposal to build a car park underground. This paragraph, in my opinion is against high buildings. It says –

“The site is well positioned for parking but it is in a prominent location and a car park of the size proposed built entirely above ground would result in an intrusion to the planned environment”.

In my opinion an office or apartment block, of great height, would be a similar “intrusion to the planned environment”.

P.53/1989 also contains some interesting information about the scale/density of any development –

“5. Residential development

5.01 A site is available over the south side of the underground car park and to the western side which would provide scope for about 150 habitable rooms. The site provides an attractive location which benefits from magnificent views over St. Aubin’s Bay and which is conveniently located to the town and beach.

6. Commercial development

6.01 Areas are available for commercial development over the car park on the south side and to the

north of the car park fronting the Esplanade. The south block can provide a gross floor area of 2,064m² which can be developed by the States or sold off as a development site.”

I am not convinced the proposals for high-rise development are anywhere near the original intent and are an excessive overdevelopment of a sensitive area. Furthermore they could have a devastating effect on existing town premises and trade. This divide between St. Helier old town and new town could be ruinous for some.

Economic Impact Survey

I believe an E.I.S. is necessary to gauge the effect development proposals would have upon the rest of the commercial and built environment. Already there is a lot of empty secondary office and retail property – will this ever be occupied again, where are tenants to come from if everyone is moving to the Waterfront/Esplanade?

Workers in town use shops and the Central and Fish Markets – workers on the Waterfront will not use these businesses – will they become unviable?

No positive or negative effects have been identified on what will happen to existing premises and the effect on trade and commerce.

Anyone who doubts whether there is already empty property in or around the town should take a half-hour’s walk!

There are 2 very significant (dormant) sites within a stone’s throw of the Waterfront: Former Swanson’s Hotel Site and Former Funland Site both standing vacant for many years – why no takers here?

Financial and manpower implications

In general terms it is not an exact science to estimate the financial impact to the States of Jersey and the economy, however in general terms it must be positive if properly managed.

There are no manpower implications.

Why the States should decide

In the documents I have looked at, 2 things are repeated regularly –

- (1) “the significant provision for public open spaces and safe pedestrian movement in the waterfront area”.
- (2) Quite a few “Master plans” have been in existence, however, one theme is common and that is that the States should give their approval. An example of this can be found in **P.156/1995 “St. Helier Waterfront Development”** (Policy and Resources Committee 2nd November 1995) paragraph 3.2 (page 12) –

“The report recognised that the master plan would need to be examined for feasibility in the market place. What was perhaps not made as clear as it might have been was that any significant departure from the master plan would require the approval of the Planning and Environment Committee and the States, and that therefore early discussion should be undertaken with the Planning and Environment Committee if any such changes from the master plan were to be contemplated by the Board”.

I believe those proposals currently being publicised by private developers are a very **significant departure** from any known earlier plans and should therefore exercise the minds of the Members of the States of Jersey.

Conclusion

I believe the States, through elected representatives, should express support, (or otherwise), for what happens on the Waterfront in general terms.

Ideally I would have liked to propose a lower level than 6 storeys, however, this is now influenced by what has already happened.

I believe allowing development up to 6 storeys will allow a community gain, in that development profit can generate public facilities.

So that 6 storeys would address a need any higher would pander to greed!

For assistance I have listed some documents which may give some guidance to anyone wishing to look back in detail and I would hope that the Environment and Public Services Committee would produce a chronology highlighting salient points and events of significance.

List for reference

P.53/1989 “West of Albert Pier Reclamation Site: Development”
2nd May 1989 Public Works Committee

P.151/1989 “Waterfront Area of St. Helier: Development”
28th November 1989 Island Development Committee (IDC)

P.86/1991 “St. Helier Waterfront Plan”
28th May 1991 I.D.C.

P.123/1992 “St. Helier Waterfront Plan”
18th August 1992 I.D.C.

P.16/1993 (Revised) “Waterfront Enterprise Board”
2nd February 1993 I.D.C.
Amendment 9th February 1993 Senator R.J. Shenton

P.76/1993 “W.E.B. Appointment of members”
8th June 1993 Policy and Resources Committee

P.160/1993 “Waterfront Enterprise Board: Report on Recommendations”
19th October 1993 Policy and Resources Committee

P.156/1995 “St. Helier Waterfront Development”
7th November 1995 Policy and Resources Committee
P175 / 1995 Amendment 28th November 1995 Connétable of St. Helier

P.40/1997 “W.E.B. Share Capital”
4th March 1997 Policy and Resources Committee

P.57/1996 “St. Helier Waterfront Plan: Leisure Pool”
16th April 1996 Planning & Environment Committee

P.52/1997 “W.E.B. Ltd. Development of a Leisure Pool Complex”
18th March 1997 Policy and Resources Committee

P.88/1997 “St. Helier Waterfront Plan – West of Albert Pier: Housing”
17th June 1997 Planning & Environment Committee

P.130/1997 “St. Helier Waterfront Plan – West of Albert Pier: Residential Area 3”
9th September 1997 Senator R.J. Shenton

P.2/1998 “St. Helier Waterfront Area: Acquisition of Contested Interest”
20th January 1998 Policy and Resources Committee

P.172/1998 “St. Helier Waterfront Area: Acquisition of Possible Interest”
28th July 1998 Policy and Resources Committee

P.92/1999 “St. Helier Waterfront Leisure Complex: Terms of Lease”.
6th July 1999 Policy and Resources Committee

P.156/1999 “St. Helier Waterfront Leisure Complex: Lease to CTP Ltd. Rescindment”
Deputy A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier

P.106/2000 “St. Helier Waterfront Hotel: Terms of Lease”
27th June 2000 Policy and Resources Committee

P.132/2000 “St. Helier Waterfront Leisure Complex Lease:
Amendments to Legal Documentation (Revisions)”
18th July 2000 Senator S. Syvret
lodged au Greffe by Deputy T.J. Le Main of St. Helier

P.133/2000 “Second Amendments”
18th July Senator P.V.F. Le Claire
lodged au Greffe by Deputy T.J. Le Main of St. Helier

P.134/2000 “Length of Lease”
18th July 2000 Senator S. Syvret
lodged au Greffe by Deputy T.J. Le Main of St. Helier

P.58/2001 “St. Helier Waterfront Leisure Complex Lease: Structure of Sub-Leases”
3rd April 2001 Finance and Economics Committee

P.45/2002 “St. Helier Waterfront: Lease and Sale of Land to W.E.B. Ltd.
26th March 2002 Policy and Resources Committee

Please Note

There are also a range of other documentation, plans, drawings etc., etc., for reference, including contributions from the 1980s and 1990s as well as more recent efforts –

Waterfront Advisory Group and Planning Brief,
Andrews Downie and Partners Waterfront Plan (and “Reviews”),
“Waterfront 2000” exercise,
plus others.