

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT BY DEPUTY
G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st JULY 2008

Question

1. Does the Minister accept that the proposals for the provision of high quality housing in St. Helier require good amenity space and good parking provisions, which translates to relatively low density housing rather than high density, and if so, is he satisfied that the new guidelines are adequate in this regard?

Answer

It should be stated at the outset that the draft development guidelines for central St Helier are still the subject of consultation. The deadline for comments was recently extended to 31st July. Deputy Southern, or any other States Member, is invited to submit comments so that they may be taken into account at the end of the consultation period.

As far as future planning strategy in Jersey is concerned, there appears to be little public or political appetite for development on green-field sites. At the same time there appears to be support for regenerating St Helier. As part of the Island Plan Review, capacity studies have been undertaken which identify significant numbers of potential housing development sites within the built-up areas (not just St Helier), which will, if they come into development at efficient densities, for the most part meet the identified requirements for housing in the future.

It must be stressed that the emphasis in the creation of new housing units must be on high quality design and construction with well sized rooms and good usable amenity space. Good examples abound in many European cities.

If we are to minimise or avoid green-field site development, then it essential that we make better use of urban and suburban sites than we have in the past, in accordance with best practice in Britain and Europe. Implicitly, this means developing at higher densities, and that requires the application of more skilled and innovative building design techniques.

Of course, it is accepted that good-quality housing should have the appropriate provision for internal and external space, for internal and external storage, and for the parking of vehicles, whether in St Helier or elsewhere in the Island. However, it is not accepted that this necessarily implies low density development. Excellent developments can be delivered at higher densities in the same way as poor developments can be delivered at lower densities.

As far as private amenity space is concerned, the existing policy of 'one size fits all' has not always delivered appropriate, useful or usable amenity space on housing developments in town. The draft development guidelines for the town, at paragraphs 30-32, while still requiring minimum levels of provision of amenity space, promote a more qualitative approach to external amenity space provision, and recognise that the space provided needs to be appropriate to the needs of the likely occupants. A development of one-bedroom flats, for example, is unlikely to have a significant child-occupancy, and thus the provision of a kick-about area or play equipment is likely to be redundant, whereas decent sized private balconies with a sunny aspect will appeal more to the potential occupants.

For off-street car parking provision then a distinction has to be made between homes in the centre of town and those further away. One of the main benefits of living in central St Helier is the easy pedestrian access afforded

to all the facilities and amenities the town offers. Many households do not need, or chose not to own, a car when they live so close to the town centre. Families may need a car for shopping and travel outside the town area, but not a larger number of cars as they may need if they live well outside St Helier.

In relation to car-parking generally developers will be encouraged to provide underground parking wherever possible.

The existing residential car parking standards have actually encouraged over-provision of residents parking in some developments, which has led to occupants renting out spaces to commuters. The guidelines propose a reduction in the minimum requirements for parking in the town area, but recognise that the market will also play a part in determining the actual level of provision made. It is accepted that in providing family homes, developers are likely to provide approximately one parking space for each.

The proposed guidelines are designed to encourage developers to look more closely at the possibilities for high quality residential developments in central St Helier. Even though they are still in draft form, there are signs that property owners and developers are responding to them, and there are a number of very promising proposals emerging which will provide excellent accommodation – houses and apartments – close to town, with good amenities and sufficient off-street and underground car parking.

In order to promote exemplar residential schemes the Minister for Planning and Environment intends to appoint an architectural advisor to ensure quality of delivery.

Question

2. Will the Minister guarantee that any proposals for development in St Helier will have the provision of adequate amenity space for families with children as a top priority?

Answer

Where a development is likely to have a significant proportion of family-accommodation, there will be a requirement for adequate amenity space and facilities appropriate to the needs of all occupants. This will be a combination of private and common amenity space. It is unreasonable to expect the provision of a balcony to be sufficient amenity space for a family however the combination of a balcony and common amenity space will provide a high quality living environment.

<http://www.gov.je/NR/rdonlyres/AF5C2EA8-A5C8-4C09-B26B-9E3472D2EF71/0/StHelierRegenerationWhitePaperApr08.pdf>

<http://www.gov.je/NR/rdonlyres/F41EC5E3-5B9B-41F2-9B75-CC1F6D0F247D/0/StHelierRegenerationSPG17Apr08.pdf>

http://www.gov.je/NR/rdonlyres/02034EC3-D94E-494A-8391-4BB1724DAF1D/0/RegenerationStHelierMAP_17Apr08.pdf

http://www.gov.je/NR/rdonlyres/6DF32B53-4D48-4CDC-BBD0-AE183C42C5C5/0/RegenerationStHelierMAP2_17Apr08.pdf