

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE  
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 22nd OCTOBER 2019**

**Question**

Will the Minister explain the justification, decision process and costs of the proposed conversion of Piquet House, Royal Square to become a Family Court (as outlined in the Government Plan) and what alternative uses, if any, were considered?

**Answer**

The Connétable will recall the 2014 States' decision under P.16 "*Piquet House: Cancellation of Sale and Future Use*" lodged by Deputy J Young – which included under (b) of the Proposition:

*.....implement suitable alternative uses of the premises for public or community purposes .....*

Following that decision, enquiries/applications were received from a range of parties interested in using the premises, including Public purpose use enquiries. Two of those early enquiries were pursued in some detail, but in both cases it was concluded that considerable funding was required to convert, upgrade and repair the premises to render them suitable for the proposed uses. Given that there was no ready access to such funding, including from JPH's building maintenance budget, it was not possible to make further progress with either of those enquiries. The problem of lack of funding also applied to the other enquires received, albeit that they were not necessarily pursued to detailed feasibility stage. Even commercial applicants, interested in leasing the premises, identified that significant initial 'landlord' funding would be required.

One Public purpose use enquiry received following P.16 was from the Courts Service for new Family Courts, which are currently housed in the States Building, but subject to a number of serviceability problems. However, the application was subject to the same problem associated with lack of funding.

The Connétable will recall that in late 2017, the then Minister for Infrastructure arranged a Workshop with States Members to discuss the problems with the premises and the financial barriers to finding a Public purpose use or a community use. The overall view of the Members who attended the Workshop was that there was still support for retaining the premises and finding a Public purpose or community use. Representatives of the Courts Service attended the Workshop and reiterated the application for the Public purpose use as new Family Courts.

It was therefore decided to further investigate the feasibility of that proposed use, with a view to making a capital funding bid for the work. A feasibility exercise was carried out in 2018 to include 'test to fit' drawings and a cost estimate for the scheme – arriving at a figure of £1.25M (approximately).

Piquet House is considered a highly suited option for Family Courts - to use a Publicly owned building that was in close proximity to the Judicial Greffe administration and the Royal Court, thus keeping the Courts close together. It also offers resilience, as well as practical operational benefits. As an alternative, the existing Registry Office was considered, but fell short on floor space requirements.

This proposed use is consistent with the decision of the States under P.16 insofar as it complies with the main condition of finding a Public purpose use, and hopefully will lead to the premises being brought back to Government operation after the long period since the former Home Affairs department vacated in 2013. It is inconceivable to think that advance funding would be approved by the States without there being a specific scheme to support.