

ST. HELIER WATERFRONT: CONFERENCE HOTEL - RESCINDMENT (P.112/99): REPORT

**Presented to the States on 28th September 1999
by the Planning and Environment Committee**



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REPORT

(a) Rescindment of hotel

The development of the waterfront west of Albert has always been seen as an area of mixed uses, in order to provide a vibrant and attractive area which appeals both to visitors and to local residents. The essential components here are a leisure facility, housing, marina, attractive public open spaces, and a high quality hotel and conference centre. Indeed, the proposed hotel was included in the planning brief for the waterfront in 1989 (extract appended) and land designated in the waterfront plan (3/92) approved by the States in 1992 on the Island Development Committee's proposition P.123/92.

The tourism industry is obviously undergoing a period of significant change and needs to reposition itself in order to capture new markets. The Tourism Committee believes that the best response to these pressures is to ensure that there is an adequate stock of high quality hotels within the Island. It has to be accepted that establishments of lesser quality may be released from tourism use.

The Committee has no reason to doubt the Tourism Committee's view that the construction of a high quality conference hotel would do a great deal to consolidate Jersey's tourism industry in the longer term, as it would provide an important flagship site and set a new standard of quality.

The Committee considers that the siting of such a facility within the new waterfront area makes extremely good sense from two points of view. First, this is one of the most attractive locations for a high quality hotel development anywhere within the Island because of its relationship to the Marina, St. Aubin's Bay, and the town of St. Helier. Second, a hotel in this location would have a very beneficial relationship with other uses already designated within the waterfront area, particularly the leisure complex.

In terms of design, negotiations with the developer are leading to a smaller and more appropriate form of development. This is likely to be a six-storey building with a little over 200 rooms. The Committee has given careful consideration to the height and mass of other proposed development which will be constructed within the waterfront area and is satisfied that a smaller hotel as indicated above should fit well with other building which has been conceived as part of the approved master plan.

In short, the Committee continues to support the development of the high quality hotel and conference centre on the site previously approved by the States provided that this is an appropriate form, scale and design.

(b) Provision of open space on the site of the hotel

The Committee has not received the contextual information it requested earlier this year from the Waterfront Enterprise Board in association with the hotel application. As a result, the Committee has put together a design framework which it is anxious to discuss and agree with the Board to assist the planning process for the whole of the waterfront. The rescindment propositions have diverted the Board's attention at the present time, but the Committee will discuss the design framework at the earliest opportunity. The Committee will shortly be releasing details of its design framework for the waterfront following further discussion with the Waterfront Enterprise Board.

One of the essential features of the design framework is to ensure that the character of the new waterfront and the associated public spaces is attractive and visually exciting in a way that will enhance the character of the town and reflect Jersey's special identity. The Committee believes that the relationship between buildings and spaces is of paramount importance and, if the correct balance is not achieved, then the area will be far less attractive. The Committee believes that in order for the waterfront to achieve a high quality and coherent character, the frontage to the new promenades should be developed. This is also extremely important in providing shelter to the public open spaces within the heart of the waterfront area.

The allocation for land for public open space within the waterfront is already generous, and if the hotel site were to be turned over to additional park land, the potential to create a new waterfront area of distinctive character would be lost. Experience of other successful waterfront developments around the world show that a judicious combination of buildings and spaces is essential.

The Committee believes that the site allocated for the hotel should be developed if the new waterfront is to achieve any visual coherence. The Committee therefore cannot support the notion of replacing the hotel with open space in this location.

**Extract from St. Helier Waterfront Planning Brief
(agreed by the States in January 1990)**

Tourism

- 8.10 The tourism industry is one of the mainstays of the economy, and in order to remain so requires continuing investment in improved accommodation and amenities.
- 8.11 The Tourism Committee and the Hotel and Guest House Association have identified the need to develop tourism accommodation in the waterfront area. To improve the quality of accommodation and to make good the losses in tourist bedspaces in other market areas, the Waterfront Plan should make provision for good quality hotel accommodation with conference facilities.
- 8.12 The Waterfront of St. Helier should also become more of a focus for tourist activity. This can be achieved by -
- (a) creating an ambiance and vitality in the area which is, of itself, attractive to tourists and residents alike;
 - (b) the strengthening of links between the town and its waterfront.