

Name...Maurice F Dubras.....

Environment Scrutiny Panel

Design of Homes

Section 1: Public spaces, amenities and external perspectives	
<p>What is the value of public squares and spaces in the town area?</p>	<p>In my opinion open spaces are important in both urban and rural settlements. Hence the designation 'important open space' which the Island Plan set out as a policy which must be upheld. Very precious.</p> <p>Squares in town such as Broad Street [in which I lived and played for my first 18 years] as well as the Parade and now Wests – though sadly at the loss of the former Cinema – are critical and again can be created as well as maintained. The new walkway crossing the road to Elizabeth Terminal is one such. The pedestrianized streets have supplemented the long-standing squares and must not be forgotten in this context.</p> <p>The plans for future waterfront developments particularly the now Esplanade car park are crucial opportunities to continue this theme.</p> <p>The new development in Gloucester Street opposite the hospital has endeavoured to create the sort of atmosphere that French Lane once had – it has a way to go; I have only experienced it when people were not in view. Care must be taken not to create wind tunnels or dark un-inviting spaces.</p>
<p>Comments on current amenity spaces including the use of water amenities.</p> <p>Is there sufficient use of landscaping?</p> <p>What would you like to see?</p> <p>What is being missed?</p> <p>Thoughts on what is needed in the future.</p>	<p>Water amenities: Delhi and Vienna and other European cities have benefited from fountains and small lakes – Canadian Malls too have some creative dynamic 'sculpture'. Jersey has not reflected our marine environment sufficiently on land in my view and the proposals some years ago for sea-generated fountains or jets seems to have been lost or forgotten.</p> <p>These need to be reviewed. Meanwhile, compliments to St Helier and former Public Services for re-instituting the Le Sueur monument pools and fountains. I urge conscious planning for such opportunities whenever a re-development or Waterfront area is contemplated/planned.</p> <p>Landscaping/streetscaping has to emerge. For example, I regret that Gloucester street is bare of trees – a centre strip for part of its length might be contemplated where three lanes are not necessarily required. Emergency services perhaps rely on this exit from town too much and that must be a consideration. I offer the thought by way of example, without having taken necessary measurements!</p> <p>While some of the recent trees/'pots' as in New Street are a bit on the large size, the notion is good – I'm concerned at their bulk. Again the waterfront roads have captured the essence of European boulevards when space is at a premium here. Whatever, ensure it is NOT tacky or out of scale.</p>
Section 1 continued	
	<p>General note: I have always wondered about the apparent preference for rendered surfaces which have to be painted. The cost of upkeep in</p>

<p>External Appearance. How should colour be used to contrast individual units?</p> <p>Where should glass, stone, brick or other materials be used?</p> <p>How should suitability and context of buildings be considered in relation to the streetscape and surrounding community?</p> <p>Suitability and context of new developments considering surrounding properties.</p>	<p>this marine environment as well as normal roadway pollution from dust and traffic always made me think the painters and decorators have it made! A bit like funeral directors – never out of a job.</p> <p>Colours and materials: One of my planning committee experiences was in Kanata, Ontario, Canada. There was a covenant built into the architect planned community where all external décor was more or less permanently defined. For example front door colours were set out in order to maintain the street appearance. Siding was toned within a given range of ‘colors’. It had the desired effect and while it does not have to be imported wholesale nevertheless bears thinking about for some of the new developments – as in Les Quennevais – still being considered. All materials must be open to the architects and designers to chose from – and determine as to what is appropriate to the environment in which the building or row or group is being proposed.</p> <p>Government must be cautious about how much to prescribe or how much to restrict individual creativity, if at all. However, care must be taken to avoid unacceptable clashes in scale/mass and style. Differences can be complementary and appropriate – every case o its own merits, <u>as always</u>.</p>
<p>Other comments or observations within this section.</p>	<p>One of the external images I have never liked is perhaps a small thing – but it grates. That is the small front door shelters supposedly against rain, that usually have tiles as roofing material. Does the designer believe that rain always falls vertically? I personally find them not only unappealing but usually poorly designed and constructed – the tiles are out of proportion to the size and they look like last minute additions. I value the traditional glazed porches which can protect against horizontal rain and wind!</p> <p>More importantly in my view are exterior designs that do not take advantage of solar gain to heat and protect against the cold/wet winds of winter. Similarly, the use of inappropriate materials in our fairly inhospitable environment with its salt-laden winds and rain.</p> <p>Gardens: linked to scarce water resources and prediction of increased intensity of rain storms, it seems to me that more emphasis should be placed on water butts to collect water form downspouts and potentially in-ground storage tanks as in New Zealand, where individual or collective land area permits, to service potable water needs.</p> <p>Design advisory: I urge you to ask people like Ian Rolls and others, who are not likely to have a conflict of interests as might a local developer/architect, because they have a wonderful sense of place, design, colour and shape.</p> <p>‘Focus groups’ or equivalent inclusive of people who live in a variety of dwellings of all socio-economic levels and ages and capabilities would bring a perspective to your review that some of us could never bring.</p> <p>And please don’t forget the future generation now with us as young adults and youngsters.</p>
<p>Section 2: In the Home</p>	
	<p>Garages are never big enough! Rather like family income – one spends up to it as a limit. Opportunities to use ‘roof’ space are frequently lost. I shudder whenever I experience a design that is a bare minimum [this applies equally to other parts of a dwelling]. I have not been inside one, but the addition of garages to Grassett Park as an external feature has worked.</p>

<p>How fit for purpose are modern garages?</p> <p>What are the responses to hidden parking within developments?</p> <p>How acceptable are current levels of storage?</p>	<p>One needs to survey a representative sample of owners/renters for all States sub-divisions/estates as well as private apartment/house so-called 'windfall' developments to find out how good the design of each of the older and most recent developments really is like. I hope this Scrutiny Panel is doing this.</p> <p>Again this approach applies across this whole study.</p> <p>Again from my Canadian experience, separate garages can be linked to main dwelling with 'breezeways' or 'mud-rooms'. Any house we had or visited in any season but particularly in windswept, autumn and cold winter weather that had these features were seemingly blessed.</p> <p>Where land profile permits, garages designed into a dwelling have certain advantages which I have experienced. For large scale developments, I have always endorsed underground designs – though there is a serious issue about earth disposal as a consequence. It is a dilemma for us. I am not in favour of another reclamation site and am glad St Aubin's residents recently turned down the proposal for in-fill in front of the sea wall. More thought needs to be given to getting the balance or exchange right. I do not have a magic answer!</p>
<p>What are the current issues regarding noise intrusion?</p> <p>How do current insulation standards within recent island developments meet with requirements of the Jersey climate?</p>	<p>We have to think ahead. With global climate change, we must contemplate a future with increased levels of air-conditioning and/or insulation for both winter and summer to be built in. I favour use of heat pumps which are quiet anyway. They also can be dual-cycle for both heating and cooling. However, they tend to be used for circulating air systems rather than water system unless tapping in to ground water or other heat source. I am confident these could be designed in without increasing noise levels.</p> <p>I cannot answer the second question. With energy costs likely to increase over time, not just be a current 'blip', this is a critical consideration of design and again once built in, using acceptable materials, can save future owners over 50 years plus a huge amount operationally.</p> <p>We have a responsibility to do that.</p>
<p>Section 2: In the Home Continued.</p>	
<p>Internal design and layout / Room sizes / Density (habitable rooms)</p>	<p>Similar to an earlier comment, I get very frustrated when I visit new dwellings that appear to have been built to minimum specification rather than with real people and families in mind! I got very frustrated when looking at designs on the Planning Committee.</p> <p>In my experience, which of course was tainted by 25 years in Canada, I feel we have too many too small rooms and too many doors. My own bungalow has lots of doors but is has a wonderfully wide</p>

<p>per acre).</p> <p>Experiences of room sizes, density of recent and future developments. Are they fit for purpose and contentment?</p> <p>Comments on Bedrooms, Kitchens, Bathrooms, Stairwells, Living rooms and circulation areas.</p> <p>How do the minimum sizes within the Planning Advice Notes effect living standards?</p>	<p>hallway/passage way. Maybe thought had been give to possibility of upwards expansion. But I urge designers of the future to continue the thrust of using north-american and European construction techniques to also look at layout and space design – again, with global warming in mind, more, larger, open spaces can be easier to cool with ceiling fans as well as central moving air systems. Ceiling heights need to be a feature – some of which does not add too much to the capital cost and can save on running costs over time. [heating may become less of a need]</p> <p>This may be a point at which to put in a plea for serious consideration of re-introducing basements, on sites where appropriate – especially sloping, and where sloping walk-out basements. Drawing from north-american experience again, in an environment which is getting hotter, the combination of appropriate solar overhang to roofs and cool basements can make living much more bearable than some of today's designs which are gutter-less, let alone lacking in protection against the sun. People seem to forget that with global warming the forecasters have warned against heavier bursts of rain—which is why gutters and downspouts need to be of larger cross-section and bore respectively*.</p> <p><i>*see above garden comments</i></p>
<p>Community shared facilities, laundry, gardening, cleaning.</p>	<p><i>See above comments about water collection for gardening and potable water purposes</i></p>
<p>Other comments or observations within this section.</p>	<p>Please ensure that ease of 'access' and utilisation [maintenance] internally and externally is designed/built in for those less able or mobile as a general rule – see definition below of sustainability or longevity.</p>

Section 3: The Island Perspective

What place is there in Jersey for modular construction, pre-fabricated units and timber frame properties.

I do not have a particular view or expert information. I have lived in several timber-framed properties in Canada and found them to be robust. This is an issue that needs to be explored by the industry working with the Planning authority. We should always be open to appropriate construction methodologies measured against relative material costs and labour costs and then balanced against future maintenance and upkeep costs.

This has to be linked into the whole issue of consequences of climate change.

I am not sure where to place the next comment within this pro-forma – following the earlier comment, I remain as concerned now as I was when in government that we must stop putting dwellings intended for long-term occupancy in low-lying areas of the island. My own home has been in existence since the 60s and I see no reason why structurally it cannot continue for a long time beyond my lifetime. However, it is quite plausible that sea levels at high tide will have risen to a level similar to my garden.

It seems to me that the Planning authority working with the Environment department MUST show that this issue is being taken seriously.

Comment on renovation and rehabilitation of older buildings making them suitable for purpose.

How does sympathetic regeneration sit with the use of solar panels and other environmentally friendly options?

This has to be an obvious way forward when and where appropriate, allowing for soundness of structure and suitability for the location and design of existing buildings.

Today's architects and engineers have the competence and every opportunity to design and build in the modern and future-oriented systems for conserving power/energy in all its forms and taking advantage of sustainable forms. Learning from others is one key element so we don't repeat too many of their mistakes.

I see no particular difficulty.

<p>What should the Island be doing with unused office buildings in St Helier to facilitate urban regeneration.</p>	<p>The above comment applies her.</p> <p>The Planning authority, working with DED, Environment, Housing, the Parish and others as well as the Chamber of Commerce etc., needs to spear head an ongoing effort.</p>
<p>Zero Energy Development. Carbon Neutral living.</p> <p>What steps should the Island take towards embracing energy efficiency and environmentally friendly design?</p> <p>How do we overcome traditional values to achieve those ideals?</p>	<p>My earlier comments do not need to be re-iterated here.</p> <p>We have every opportunity to work together and demonstrate that a small island nation state is willing to play its full part alongside much larger ones. The solution lies in local action for global gain. Or as the long-term slogan goes: think global, act local.</p> <p>It comes down to each of being motivated to do our bit as long as we can share in the vision, led by the appropriate body, as part of a groundswell of public community determination and action.</p>

<p>How useful are models showing scale.</p>	<p>I have always believed in the use of models since I was taught about them at school, in my apprentice years and since then in various endeavours.</p> <p>They play a part just a profiles can do and modern technology.</p>
<p>How would you define sustainability in relation to homes?</p>	<p>Sustainability to me means “visualizing, creating, designing and building a place where people of all ages can live that is a home – regardless whether it is an apartment, a bungalow, multi-floored, stand-alone [detached] or shared structurally – that is comfortable, easily maintained to retain its value, and that will out-last the first few people [families] who have owned it and enjoyed being there.</p>

<p>Other comments or observations within this section.</p>	
<p>Other comments or observations.</p>	<p>I welcome the invitation and the opportunity to set down some of my thoughts. Regrettably, I have not given a lot of time to this. The time available to me was less than I would have liked to be more considered in my writing. Should you wish me to give evidence orally, I would hope to do some research to support some of my views.</p> <p>I believe your questions are asking a lot of anyone. Just because I have been on the Planning authority/committee on two different occasions (1996 – 1999) under then Senator Nigel Queree's excellent leadership and my own curtailed Presidency (2002 – 2003), with colleagues leading the Planning side of its responsibilities, does not mean I limit my contribution. I value also the experience of nine or more homes on four continents that I have lived in – perhaps that has contributed more than the time involved in politics.</p> <p>This small place has such an amazing variety of contexts in which homes have been established for such a long period of time, that it is going to be difficult for your panel to assimilate and come up with any sort of consensus of views. And there in lays the value of such an effort. This study will no doubt provide quite a kaleidoscope of views and opinions out of which I hope you can draw some useful threads to form a better set of guidelines or directions, as appropriate.</p> <p>Thank you for reading this.</p> <p>Maurice Dubras C.Eng., MIMechE., MSHR Saturday 25th November 2006</p>

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