



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel

Bridging Island Plan

Witness: The Minister for the Environment

Wednesday, 23rd July 2025

Panel:

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair)

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair)

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Witnesses:

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin, The Minister for the Environment

Mr. K. Pilley, Head of Place and Spatial Planning

Dr. Louise Magris, Director for Housing, Environment and Placemaking

[10:30]

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair):

Welcome to this special stand-alone hearing of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel. Today is 23rd July 2025 and this is a special hearing to focus on the Bridging Island Plan 2022-2025. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. Please ensure that all electronic devices including mobile phones are switched to silent. So I suggest that we do a round of introductions. My name is Deputy Hilary Jeune and I am the chair of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Coles, vice-chair and member of the Planning Committee.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Alex Curtis, panel member and vice-chair of the Planning Committee.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

Constable David Johnson, panel member.

The Minister for the Environment:

Deputy Steve Luce. I am Minister for the Environment.

Director for Housing, Environment and Placemaking:

Louise Magris. I am Director for Housing, Environment and Placemaking.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Kevin Pilley, Head of Place and Spatial Planning.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, and we have 2 hours for this hearing and a lot of questions for you, Minister, and officers. So the Bridging Island Plan is the Island's main planning framework or rule book. It sets the rules to help protect and improve our environment while also meeting Jersey's development needs up to 2025. Usually an Island Plan runs for 10 years but the Bridging Island Plan was created as a shorter, 3-year plan, due to the uncertainty caused by major events like COVID and Brexit. The B.I.P. (Bridging Island Plan) was designed to focus on 5 areas: making homes more affordable, improving life for town residents and enhancing placemaking, tackling the climate emergency and transport challenges, protecting the Island from poor quality and inappropriate development and providing an initial response to the impacts of the pandemic and Brexit. As we now approach the end of 2025, the point when the Bridging Island Plan was expected to transition to a longer-term Island Plan, the panel's intention is for this public hearing to focus on whether you believe, Minister, that the Bridging Island Plan as a rule book remains the right tool for Government to effect changes that the Island requires now and into the future. So on that note, my first question is could you describe how you feel the Bridging Island Plan is operating in practice?

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you, chair. I think it is doing okay and I think we have benefited from Island Plans over a number of years, decades now. We adopted a planning system many decades ago which was a plan-led system and we have developed various Island Plans during that time. You are absolutely right that the Bridging Island Plan was in response to mainly the COVID pandemic and Brexit and for a number of reasons we decided to do a shorter plan and, as you know, we did that. It was a slightly shortened process, a slightly different process, and we came out with a plan that we have

been using now for the last 3½, 4 years. I think it has worked relatively well and I would say, right at the outset, that if the housing requirement and population numbers had done what we thought they were going to do at the time of coming up with that plan I am sure that the department and the Minister of the day would have come forward with some proposals to find the money to do what we thought we were going to have to do during this year, last year and next year, which was to come up with another 10-year plan. I do not think we must underestimate the cost of a major 10-year Island Plan review, the implications on staff resource and time. It is not an inconsiderable piece of work and Kevin is here to vouch for that. He and one other officer were very instrumental in the Bridging Island Plan. It is a huge piece of work and if we undertake it we must make sure that we have all the various resources necessary.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We will explore a bit the assumptions that you have just touched on a little bit there and some of the Bridging Island Plan context in more detail during the hearing but have any key challenges arisen specifically from the operation of the Bridging Island Plan given the current context both locally and internationally?

The Minister for the Environment:

I take a view that generally speaking Island Plan reviews are driven by housing demand, the need to rezone more fields or sites for housing, whether that is affordable, over-65 or whatever. Housing usually drives an Island Plan and, as I said at the outset, had the housing numbers and the population numbers gone through 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 in the way that we expected when we developed the Bridging Island Plan I am sure we would have come back sooner. This plan I think is still delivering. There are some areas, and I mean I have discussed with all of you, Alex in particular, various sections where we will need to develop some more space for various industries, for various things, infrastructure things and all sorts. At the moment that is not really pressing and we have a number of sites, housing sites, in development. Some have been completed and some yet to start from that Bridging Island Plan. We know that we still have got some to deliver and the population numbers indicate that we are okay in regard to supply and demand at the moment. There is nothing pressing. Having said that, there is no doubt in my mind that the moment a new Government comes into office next summer, in a year's time, one of their first big decisions will be are we finding the resources to do another Island Plan review and, if so, let us hook those in, let us get officers. Kevin may say more but certainly before we get to the next election the team are certainly going to be doing some preparation work for what we will need to do.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, and we will definitely touch on that.

The Minister for the Environment:

After the next Government there will have to be a key decision. It is probably a 7-figure number when it comes to money. It is over £1 million.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

But do you see any challenges that have arisen? You have mentioned that we have still got the space for the development of the housing that has already been rezoned but have there been any other challenges around delivering?

The Minister for the Environment:

I suppose it depends how serious the challenge is. I have always said light industry is badly represented, and I think that is certainly an area that we are going to need to look at seriously in the next Island Plan. We know that mineral resources are something else we are going to have to address. In the previous Island Plan it was pretty much said that we were looking towards the end of our own on-Jersey mineral resources. That is going to have to be reviewed again. We have got 2 quarries. Do we change tack there? Water is a very important issue and I am working hard to make sure that we are going to review the 5-year strategy that Jersey Water are about to launch in the very near future to see whether we agree with them as to how we secure enough water for the future. That may involve some big chunks of land. We do not know yet, depending on where they go. There are various ways of providing that water. Some of those big issues will be dealt with. We know we are starting to address rising sea levels, which is another one and the in-ground infrastructure may be something we need to look at as well. I think at the moment we are under control but we know that we do need to start work soon, and an Island Plan review is probably going to be a 2-year process from start to complete finish and we need to make sure that we have got that 2 years up our sleeve so that we do not find ourselves desperately needing a plan 9 months before it arrives.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, and I think some of those elements and challenges you have touched on we will definitely drill into a little bit later, but I also expect you will touch on more of the operational structure of planning between policy development and regulation potentially in some of the questions that we have coming. So maybe it would be helpful to briefly get an explanation about the difference. How are the Planning Department and the Regulation Department managing the changes brought about over the life of the Bridging Island Plan such as changes to key policy areas from the 2011 Island Plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

The Regulation Department have a number of areas, things that have come out of an Island Plan, that they have to look at. We are, and I think it is quite common knowledge, under-resourced in the

Regulation Department. We have some vacancies that we are trying to fill. It is a very demanding department. Most complaints to politicians are something to do with regulation; either people have been regulated or they are not being regulated. Certainly the Planning Department I know have responded fantastically well in the last 18 months and are really putting some serious work in to get our Planning Department into a position now where applications are dealt with in a very timely manner. Certainly the professional industry out there are very much happier with the way they are working with, and I stress working with, the department. A lot more discussion goes on. Pre-application advice is meaning something now. We have an Industry Partnership Board that has come out of the reform of the Planning Department which I have been so keen on. That seems to be working really well and lots of people on that board are very happy with the way that it is operating. The resources are what they are. We are all pushed for resources, whether that is financial or numbers and certainly in the Regulation Department. While I believe both development and building control are both up to speed on numbers there are other parts of the Regulation Department where we are short of staff and we are trying to fill those vacancies.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I think the other side of the question that we would also be interested in is, in essence, when a new Island Plan comes into force the applicant and then the Regulation Department have to learn how to apply that new plan and of course pretty much approval in the Assembly changes the rule book, changes the policy regime, under which applicants have to apply and also how the Regulation Department have to interpret the nuanced language of what is a very big document. It is whether now, 3 years in, compared to, for example, the day of implementation in changing from applying the rules of the 2011 Island Plan to interpreting the landscape under the Bridging Island Plan anything has arisen from the department having to learn, as it will always have to, that new muscle of applying a new set of rules.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, absolutely and I suspect Kevin Pilley may answer this, but I imagine that in the days after final approval of a new Island Plan Policy officers go in, I imagine, to Development Control and have a sit down with the planning officers and talk through all the changes that have happened, because it does mean literally from one day to the next that officers are having to take a different interpretation. One thing I would say, more than 10 years ago now when I was previously Minister, a bit before that maybe, you went into the Planning Department at South Hill with your application and your plans and all your reviews, and I think the checklist of things that you needed to do probably stretched to one side of A4 but no more. Now the various things that we have added to the requirements for an applicant is quite a considerable document of various reports and investigations and reviews that need to be done and submitted with any application. That is certainly not only an onus on the applicant with cost involved but it is also now ... and I get where you are going to now. There are a

lot more policies for planning officers to consider and making decisions on applications is not getting easier from that perspective because there is such a wide variety of considerations to be taken into account and they are all material considerations. We keep inventing - which is probably the wrong word - we keep bringing more and more into it, are we considering this, are we considering that? In the old days it was quite straightforward, does the design fit, is it too big, is it overbearing, fine, that is okay. Now there is an awful lot more work that needs to be done before an application is put in and consequently officers have to consider all that and there are a lot more consultees. It is not as straightforward as it used to be. Is that good or bad? Well, it is good that we are taking a much broader approach to consideration but it does not make the job easier either for the applicant or for officers as there is just so much more to consider. Kevin, do you want to add anything about how officers 2 days after an Island Plan finally put to bed work with Development Control?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes. There are a number of things to bear in mind. While we do have that challenge in Jersey, the way the law is written at the moment as soon as one Island Plan is approved the other one falls away; so immediately, literally as States Members approve it the new plan becomes the basis for new decisions and clearly colleagues in the Regulation Department need to respond to that.

What I would say however is that it is not entirely a surprise. Clearly the draft plan has been published for some considerable time and we engage with our colleagues in the Regulation Department both in terms of the development of the policy itself and also in terms of the evolution of the policy as it goes through the plan-making process.

What I would say is what we have seen in Jersey, looking at our successive plans, and we are quite fortunate in Jersey we have had full plan coverage of the Island since 1987. In some parts of the U.K. (United Kingdom) they do not have up-to-date plan coverage so we have been fortunate in that we have maintained that plan coverage for the Island. We have seen, I would suggest, an evolution of policy, not a revolution of policy. So even though the policy numbers and some of the detail of the wording of some of the policies may change, some of the principles that sit behind those policies are very familiar to planning officers. If you think about protection of the countryside, for example, we have had various types of policy that protected the countryside and officers just need to get used to the new wording of policy. It is not a revolutionary change in terms of policy direction.

What I would say however is when we do review a plan we clearly review it and we look at the performance of policies and look at how they have worked, and we look to adjust those policies to see if they can work better or more efficiently. We are also mindful in terms of reviewing the plan. One of the purposes in doing that is to look at other decisions that the States have made and look at other States policy objectives and look at how the planning system can help deliver those. One

of the things that we saw between the revised 2011 Island Plan and the Bridging Island Plan was the reflection of some of the sustainability considerations, so we had the Sustainable Transport Policy, we had the Shoreline Management Plan, we had the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, so the new plan is much more considerate, if you like, of sustainability issues.

[10:45]

There have been some new policy areas that colleagues in I. and E. (Infrastructure and Environment) and applicants have had to deal with. The Minister referenced the flood risk, so work on the Shoreline Management Plan, that was supported by an additional piece of work that we did for the evidence base for the Bridging Island Plan that looked at not only shoreline management but also inland flooding, so now flood risk is a material planning consideration. It was not in the 2011 Island Plan so planners now need to deal with that. We have got flood risk maps that are now part of the plan. Applicants need to submit flood risk assessments where their planning applications are in flood risk areas, so that is a new area, and what we will do over the period of the plan is work with colleagues. The Minister has referenced the Industry Partnership Board, work with industry to see what people are making of this policy, how easy it is for them to use, what sort of issues they are having. That is one example.

Another example is Policy GD5, which is the demolition policy. It is quite a hard thing to measure the performance of an existing building relative to a development proposal and so we have worked to try to look at a methodology that colleagues can use to assess planning applications to demolish a building relative to the performance of new buildings. How do you measure those? That is an evolving field of inquiry everywhere. There is no established methodology to do that so we have to find a better fit that works for Jersey, and that will always be a bit of iteration. So over time we will look at how those policies are landing.

Clearly the Minister has got an option to produce guidance. If there are particular difficulties with a policy then the Minister can prepare some guidance that sets out what the expectation is in terms of what people will provide to support planning applications and also how that policy might be interpreted and applied. So there are tools available during the plan period where the Minister can complement the existing policy regime in the plan with more tools.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We have got some questions focused specifically on those. You have touched on stakeholder feedback and the fact that you have built this Partnership Board to help bring the industry along on this Bridging Island Plan journey. You have talked a bit about that feedback but is there any further feedback about the plan itself or about the impact that it has had that would be useful to know, noting

that we have also gone out to some stakeholders to ask them for their feedback as well as part of this evidence panel?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think that most professionals in the construction industry or architects, engineers, major applicants, all understand the principle of an Island Plan which is that there are policies that cannot be changed between Island Plans and supplementary guidance can help to clarify but it cannot change policy. While they might not be happy about a policy I think they understand that no amount of pressure on the Minister or officers or people in Development Control is going to make any difference because the policy cannot be changed. All we can do is just give more guidance. I am trying to think, the Partnership Board, certainly one of the pieces of work they are about to start on is how they feel about policy, strangely enough. I think that is one of their subjects to cover. I do not go to every meeting but I have made it clear that I want to go to meetings on a regular basis so that I can hear from them directly what they want to say. Certainly the first bits have focused on the planning reform inside the department and performance and how we can improve the performance and certainly the Partnership Board have helped us to work on the pre-application and the discussion, the working together ethos, and that has all been good. I am conscious that they are going to look at policy and come up with some ideas themselves, so maybe while I do not have an answer specifically to your question, chair, I think the Industry Partnership Board are going to come up with some challenges to some of those policies.

Kevin mentioned just now the new policy about whether to knock a home down or refurbish what we have got, and that is a major application. I think in the next Island Plan we are going to have to look at the policy, whether trying to heat a historic building versus the listed building and how do we balance this? We know with the Carbon Neutral Roadmap it is going to become increasingly difficult, we are going to make it increasingly more challenging to burn carbon to heat homes. There will be a challenge there. I know people are going to say to me: "How do you expect me to heat my 300 year-old home? I cannot do this, this and this. You will not let me burn carbon and I have got single glazed windows, I have got X, Y and Z." We are going to have to face some really difficult challenges as to how we get those 2 sides of the argument to balance. The historic homes are where we burn a lot of carbon; we know that. New builds burn very little carbon because of the way we have come up with the building control rules but that is a particular policy which ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

And I think that is just finalising this section you have touched on it a little bit there because that links into more of a global context that we are feeding as part of the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, for example, but the global context has changed since the Bridging Island Plan was introduced. Has

there been an impact to the success of the implementation because of the changing global context or has that been able to ride the wave of a changing global situation?

The Minister for the Environment:

I think if you are going to talk global context, certainly national and then international, it is clear that some of the housing sites that were approved in the Planning Department in recent years have been demolished and they are not being built. They are not being built, I think, not necessarily because of an issue in the Planning Department. I think we have made quite a few approvals and it is easy to point the finger at the Planning Department and say there is a whole load of stuff that is not getting done and let us blame the Planning Department, well, that is fine, we are used to that. But when you look at sites like Les Sablons, the Apollo Hotel and others, I am no expert but I would say that the reason they are not being built is because of global concerns, the price of money, the price of raw materials. That is basically it I think. Any large development is only taken forward if it is a going concern and when numbers and money are tight the small change in interest rates for borrowing or a major change in the cost of raw materials, either wood, steel, concrete, you name it, those can add up to the difference between pushing a button to say: "Yes, we will go ahead with that large scheme" or not. I think from that perspective, I do not know if it is quite where you are going, but unless other people can think of anything, that for me would be ... if there is an effect of Ukraine and the Middle East and this sort of thing and the American presidential elections, certainly the price of materials has gone up astronomically since this plan came into effect and the price of money is not as cheap as it was.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Could I expand on that slightly? Regardless of where it comes from, it means that certain sites are not being developed under the plans that are approved. Is it your feeling then that the plan is still a route to sustainable development and it should not be the job of the plan, in essence, to bridge the gap to make developments in changing contexts viable? So if we say a developer feels that interest money is too expensive, demand is uncertain, it is not for the plan to compromise too much there because the plan has to balance so much and that sometimes that is just the competing interests of different stakeholders?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, yes, there are sites being developed and mainly they are being developed for affordable homes. We know that Andium are responsible for quite a number, not all but quite a number of those sites. There are schemes in place to help people with shared equity. That is a way of helping people into it and some of the development will be aimed at shared equity, some is affordable. Andium have a business model that they can follow. Other developers may feel they want to do things slightly differently. I do not know how but they will want their percentage on top. It seems

clear to me that moving forward, if we are going to continue to build affordable homes, the Government are going to have to continue to help with shared equity and I think we need to be prepared for that equity figure to be quite high. I do not know what the percentages are at the moment but it could be 40 per cent Government, 60 per cent I.O. (interest-only) but I do not think we should be surprised if we find ourselves in a 50:50 situation soon. In some ways that is good for Government inasmuch as they will invest in a home and they have still got that asset, if you like, on the books but it does mean that Government will have to come up with a considerable amount of cash in order to fund that 50 per cent because any developer is going to need to be paid for the very bare minimum the building costs, the costs of acquiring the site.

I have a small amount of experience with this in St. Martin where we did our own scheme but you have got to pay for the site, you have got to pay for the building, and no matter how hard you try to push down costs with economies of scale the absolute cost, the net cost of building a home, is not inconsiderable. It is hundreds of thousands of pounds and no matter how cheap you try to do it we do not have that many States-owned sites. I know previous Planning Ministers some time ago were saying States-owned sites should be put forward with no cost to the plot.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

No, I think, Minister, where the question is, but I that can be teased out maybe in other questions, is the before, it is that compromise to try to encourage, as you have said at the beginning ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Oh, well, if we are going back to encouraging it is a bit more remote ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

... and where there is a compromise that has to happen with the Bridging Island Plan because ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I am not a great fan of Government getting involved in forcing business. I am free market economy but I appreciate fully that every Government have to have a social housing policy and we need to put a lot of money into it to help people who cannot afford it and the "cannot afford" bit is increasing as the cost of these homes is getting to the point where your average man on the street cannot afford to buy a home, and we need to help them to achieve their aspirations in that regard. As regards ... I do not know quite where you are going, I do not want to mention it but I am going to have to, there is a part of compulsory purchase that says that within 3 years of the plan ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We will touch on that.

The Minister for the Environment:

... if it has not happened that is an option. I am not sure that we want to go there yet. The Assembly would have to decide.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Well, let us talk about that in a bit because I think we first head down the ...

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Sorry, chair, can I just raise the issue in terms of responding to global challenges? We have talked a little bit about some of the climate change challenges and we are talking about economic uncertainty. I think we have to be conscious of the *vires* of the plan. The plan is a development and land use plan and the plan can encourage development activity by setting a positive framework that enables development proposals to come forward. Now, clearly economic circumstances may change over time and clearly decision-makers will decide what weight they give to various parts of the plan in terms of making decisions on planning applications having regard to the context within which they are sitting.

I think we need to be conscious of the legal framework within which the plan is prepared. The Minister has talked about a number of mechanisms that go beyond what the plan can do. Compulsory purchase is something. It is a power that sits under the Planning and Building Law. There is a separate bit of legislation that enables the States to take that forward but that is a mechanism that sits outside of the planning system. Likewise, the issue about how you procure homes, how you deliver homes. The funding mechanisms associated with that are essentially outside of the planning system. The planning system can provide the land, the development opportunities, the policy framework, which will encourage development activity but it cannot deal with all the ingredients that might lead to ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We understand that.

The Minister for the Environment:

Something that has been talked about previously, and I just a minute ago mentioned the cost, the cost of the plot that you put a house on ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We are going to talk about rezoned housing in a minute but I think we need to step back a bit and just go back to the underlying assumptions because I know we are clear that the plan is a certain

plan and then there are mechanisms outside of that that help to move the plan along, but that is a specific rulebook and I think there are some questions and assumptions.

The Minister for the Environment:

I am thinking about other things, and just stepping back from housing and thinking about other parts of the Island that we want to encourage. The panel will know that at the Chamber of Commerce I said some time ago, indicated, that I want more economic value to be ...

[11:00]

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We are definitely going to be touching on those questions. We are heading there but I think we will first turn to Deputy Curtis to talk about those assumptions that underlie the Bridging Island Plan because I think that will help set the context that we are going into some of the details.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Some of the question as to what the plan can do is to what extent does the plan ... do you change what the plan allows? So in the case of development it might be we say: "Well, you can demolish what you like" because we want to see construction at any cost. Now, the plan aims for sustainable development. It is that kind of balance I think we will explore in certain areas in more detail. On underlying assumptions, a little preamble just for those listening.

The Bridging Island Plan was developed around a set of key underlying assumptions that formed a core evidence base and the panel would like to explore some of these and take each of these in turn to discuss whether these assumptions have materialised as perhaps were predicted and what has changed and whether any gaps have arisen from that. Starting on population and housing. I think that was a big area that you mentioned, and the Bridging Island Plan was prepared and approved prior to the 2021 census being published and it included various assumptions on population. But a key one was that in 2019 the population was estimated to be 107,800 and the plan forecast housing demand based on net migration averaging about plus 700 a year during the plan period. To what extent have those assumptions on what population was and what housing demand was reflected the reality during the plan period?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I think it is fairly clear any assumptions we made on population before the Bridging Island Plan were wrong. What has happened is that the population has basically flatlined during the time that we thought it might have increased. You mentioned 700. It might have been that it was going to increase by up to 1,000 people a year. Whether that is right, regardless of whether you think that is

good, bad or indifferent, and where you think population policy is going and we will, as a Government, be doing some work on that before Christmas, the reality is that the population is now flatlining so that we do not have an increased demand on housing from an increasing population. I am not saying we do not have a demand on housing because we clearly do, but it is not increasing because the population of the Island is increasing. So on that basis there are no more people here.

We identified sites for several hundred houses in the Bridging Island Plan. Most of them are in the process of being constructed, some are still to come, some fields have not progressed. It is a mixed bag, if you like. It is a little bit of an aside but I would say this was a 3-year plan, but even those housing sites that came forward or somebody pushed the button on pretty soon after the Bridging Island Plan debate, it is a long period of time between getting the Minister to put in some supplementary planning guidance around a particular site, because each site has had its own guidance put to it. By the time the pre-application has come in, the developers have put a scheme together, they worked on the financials, building control, to put a spade in the ground to build these homes and deliver them it does not happen in 6 or 9 months and there are still sites in the Bridging Island Plan that were identified and rezoned that have not come forward. Again, you talk about things that we can do to make things happen. There were sites that were approved in the Bridging Island Plan that will not come forward because the owners do not want to sell.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

One thing you mentioned, Minister, was that if population had gone the way that the plan forecast we would probably be having a brand new Island Plan now because the need would have been assessed to be there. So in the time that the plan has existed, have your Policy officers worked out what the housing need against what the plan provides for is, where that gap is? So in essence what runway do we have from the plan provision versus where we are?

The Minister for the Environment:

Would one of you Policy officers like to answer that?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

You talked before about how we assess how policies are working and we do that in a number of ways. We talk to industry, we talk to our colleagues in the planning applications team but we also monitor the performance of the plan in terms of the outputs. That is not made particularly easy by the I.T. (Information Technology) system that the Planning Department currently have, but that issue is getting addressed, so we have to monitor the performance of the plan manually.

What we do is we look at all the planning permissions awarded and we look at the completions and try to monitor the output of the plan over time. We aspire to publish monitoring data so that people

can see how the plan is performing against key policy objectives, and clearly one of those is around delivery of homes.

We have done some work to look at housing delivery over the plan period and we have got some high level numbers associated with that, but it is indicating that the plan is performing quite well. It had a target of about 4,000 homes and we think with a combination of completions, work that is onsite and planning permission, that there are around 3,400 homes that are either built or in the pipeline. Relative to where we were the plan is ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

So that is affordable and also private? That is all of them?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

That is all homes.

The Minister for the Environment:

It is a very interesting point for discussion because while the Planning Department and the Island Plan itself may deliver to the point it can deliver, which is approvals for housing, there is no compulsion on anybody to build. I do not have many statistics with me here but just looking at sites over 50 homes that have come forward recently: Les Sablons, 238 homes, site cleared but not started; Apollo Hotel the same, 79 homes; Romerils development has been approved, 53 homes, not started; Savoy Hotel, 53, not started; the Randalls Brewery site, the first phase is complete and there are 96 homes there but they are still under construction; and up at South Hill there are 139 there and that site clearance is underway but that is still to come forward.

I raise the point because the Island Plan can be as good as it is, the team in the Planning Department can be working flat out and delivering approvals, the policies can be working well, but I do not know how many there are there - probably 400 or 500 - and there is no compulsion at the end of the day to go off and do it. There are reasons why I am sure every one of those sites that I have just listed have not come forward and started. There are a number of them, some very big ones, Les Sablons and the Apollo, which are clear and ready to go but they are not. If you are asking if the policy and the plan delivered, I guess the answer is it has delivered up to the point that it can but is it the Island Plan's job to make houses be built out?

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Well, I think Mr. Pilley said that is not the *vires* of the plan. On the assumptions the plan based some of its evidence on a Statistics Jersey estimate that there was a net shortfall of 1,800 homes during the last plan period, so I guess what we are trying to get to the bottom of is, is the plan providing

enough housing supply for our current population needs? Does it go further and does it provide almost a surplus in what is being approved, notwithstanding it may not be developed, and what is the impact, then, on your officers providing an evidence base for what is needed in a new plan? I think your point is by the time the end of this term arises the next Minister will need some evidence. On population and housing, do we have any feeling as to the give in play before we move to the next section?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think you identify that when we start the next Island Plan review setting a planning assumption for the next plan is critical. That will set the framework for what the new plan will need to deliver and there is a political choice there about what population is the Island planning for over the plan period.

First of all, if it is going to be a 10-year plan we have got a series of projections that have been undertaken, population projections, and on top of that Statistics Jersey have done some modelling that looks at those population projections and then looks at the housing demand that would arise as a consequence of those population projections. So there is a key political decision to be taken there about what is it that we are planning for as an Island both in terms of population but also housing supply, and clearly the Island Plan does not set the population policy; it responds to a population policy and seeks to provide the homes that are required to meet that. There is a key political decision to be made there and, as part of that political judgment, a view will have to be taken about how the current plan has performed and was there a shortfall in delivery relative to what happened.

I know you will ask us about the strategic proposals. One of the key issues in there is around setting a planning assumption. We have started to do some work on that in terms of the household modelling that I just talked about, but that is very time sensitive because clearly when the decision is made to review the plan we need to base the decision about setting the next planning assumption on the most up-to-date information that is available at that time. We will not take that decision until there is a political decision to review the plan, and we will sit down with our colleagues from Statistics Jersey and talk to them about what has happened using the data that they have got to the Island's population between whenever that period is and since the last plan was approved.

The Minister for the Environment:

At this moment in time, Andium have, what we look at here, just shy of 1,000 units in train. They are on site developing 680 of those at the moment. They have got permission for another 90. They are actively working on the planning application for another 120 or 130 and another 80 under active consideration. The Jersey Development Company have got another 700 in a similar situation.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay, I am going to whistle through a few more assumptions as other panel members have a lot of questions for you and I am conscious of the time. Briefly touching, and we will touch on the economy focus areas later, but given your focus on the economy and its interaction with planning, there were also assumptions in the Bridging Island Plan on the economy and employment land, whether it be on the general economy or on several sectors such as agriculture, the visitor economy, retail, town centre uses, office provision, industrial. There are a lot of assumptions in there so to what extent have any of the assumptions around employment land and the economy materialised either in general or in specific focus industries where you have seen a difference between the assumption and the required demand that the plan should deliver, whether it be in land or protecting it or changing it?

The Minister for the Environment:

I will just start talking while I try to take all that on board but, in my personal view, I think we have failed ... despite some attempts, we have failed to increase the amount of land for light industry or however you want to put that, what can be put in that bracket, in successive plans now and there have been reasons for that, but we know that light industrial users have challenges from neighbours. I mean, Jersey is like frontier farming if you were in the U.K. All the fields in Jersey are close enough to some neighbours to give you neighbourly issues pretty much, and it is not dissimilar with light industry in Jersey where a lot of our light industrial sites are quite close to residential areas. That gives us challenges. It is a shame that Buncefield and the effect of it made La Collette ... it was unhelpful when it came to try to find light industrial spaces down at La Collette but there is no doubt we have got to work harder, and that is another part of the next Island Plan. We are going to have to work really hard to try to identify some areas, and I am confident that we will do that.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

What I was going to say is that one of the things to be very conscious of is when we are putting the plan together, and the chair made reference to this at the outset, we were in the context of COVID and Brexit so when we were preparing the evidence base for the plan the economic future of the Island was extremely uncertain. We did produce an employment study. We attempted to look at the different employment uses in the Island by sector and we attempted to try to predict what might happen to those industries over the plan period in an attempt to try to work out what their planning requirements were, but because of the economic uncertainty that we had at the time, and if you cast your minds back we did not really know what was going to happen in the next week, let alone the next few years. It was a very uncertain time, it was very hard. So we provided a policy framework that was very enabling but there was no specific allocation of land, I think, aside from an amendment I think Deputy Morel brought about a site in St. Lawrence. We could not translate that assessment of the future into floor space requirements, for example, for a particular sector. So the plan, as the

Minister said, is light in terms of making specific allocations of land or particular types of development other than defining retail areas and things like that.

[11:15]

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So this is the focus in many ways. The plan was built on uncertainty. We are really trying to understand what the impact of extending the plan is, given it was built during a time of uncertainty and knowingly did not create in some cases provision or knowingly had to build policies based on uncertainty. Are there key examples now that we are leaving the period of uncertainty ... we might be going into a new uncertainty, but are there clear examples where the assumptions could cause risk by extending the plan 4, 5 or 6 years instead of the 3 years it was meant for?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Sure, but I think the first thing you need to look at is what is the policy regime preventing? I would suggest that the policy regime that we have got in place in terms of economic development is supportive in terms of it if the development is in the right place then the policy is supportive. In terms of looking to change the plan, we would look to work with our colleagues in the Economic Development team to develop an evidence base around what the specific requirements are for the next plan. I think the Minister will talk a little bit more about that in terms of the work that we are going to do with the Department for the Economy generally but that is a key piece of work and I think even looking within Government, the Department for the Economy is now a different animal to what it was when we were preparing the Island Plan, for example. There are more colleagues in Economic Development, there are specific focuses on different sectors of the Island's economy, so I think we will have a richer base to start from in terms of preparing the next plan, and we can then respond to the evidence and the issues that are identified.

The Minister for the Environment:

I think if there were sectors of the economy which felt they were particularly under pressure from the Island Plan they would have come forward, and I am thinking building is obviously a huge issue but we still have a number of large sites where people can go to buy building materials, scope expansion if necessary. There is some new stuff coming online at Rue des Prés, when it is built out. We know we have had an extension to the west of the Island and a new person come online for provision of building materials, so that has been taken care of. Electricians and plumbers seem to be finding somehow areas to do all their storage and so we are not seeing people coming to us in that regard.

My personal concern was more around hospitality and tourism particularly, which is when I spoke, and you have mentioned the Chamber, I am concerned about the shortage of beds, hotel beds, in

Jersey because I am very aware that if we do not maintain the number of hotel beds then airlines, your Easyjets, your Blue Islands, your British Airways, look to the Island and say: "Why are we putting all these planes on when we know there are not enough beds on the Island for tourists to go to stay in?" The effect on our economic activity, if the reduction in tourist numbers affects connectivity, that affects everybody on the Island. If we have got less planes, less beds, less connectivity happening it has a big knock-on effect. The connectivity affects the finance sector, financial services. I appreciate that the internet is a very different place than it was before COVID came along but I was just very conscious that for a number of reasons the hotel and hospitality industry needs more support, which is why, as Kevin said, there are policies in the plan, but I am seeking to make sure that officers take note of them.

There has been more talk in a spirit of co-operation between Policy, Development Control, the Regulation Department and the Department for the Economy in the last 12 months than we have had for a very long time. There is a lot of interaction, a lot of talking and discussion going on and the Department for the Economy are going to come forward with some ... I am trying to think how they are going to do it but anyway there are some ... not rules and regulations but this is how they are going to do it.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

So are you confident that the policies are good, they are sound to extend and it is the relationship and the implementation alongside economy is a mechanism you need?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, what I am saying is we need to ... we cannot change the policies in the Island Plan until the next Island Plan debate, so it is incumbent on us and the Department for the Economy to make the best use of the policies that we do have until such time as we can have some others. I think we certainly are exploring, have explored, making sure that the Department for the Economy come forward with proper support in cases when a large application comes forward so that the officer can say: "Right, here is a proper piece of work. This is a real material consideration here." The Department for the Economy can put forward all these good reasons, and this is now a proper material consideration to go alongside the size of the development, too high, too tall, the design, the need, environmental and everything else.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

We will focus on one more assumption, which is that of the requirement of mineral extraction and waste disposal. There were assumptions in the plan about the capacity and demand for waste disposal, likewise for the extraction of minerals including forecast lifespan of those, which you

mentioned. Again, is there any impact on extending the plan with regards to the lifespan of those minerals and waste sites?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, that is one of the issues that certainly needs to be addressed in relatively short order because mineral extraction, there is only so much of Jersey and only so much of it we can dig out under the Bridging Island Plan. We know that there is demand. It is clear that the new hospital alone will take a huge chunk of production out of the quarries on the Island to be built. That structure alone is going to be a major requirement. I think it is fair to say that we know that Ronez have had an extension in the not too far away, recent past, and I think Granite Products would like to do the same if they can, but we have had applications from them in the past that have been resisted, certainly before the last Island Plan. What someone might like to do with their land and what they are allowed to do with their land may be different things for quite a period of time. I do not know. I am sure absolutely that if the handcuffs came off and Granite Products were in a position to expand, I am sure they would like to do that but we certainly have got some ... we are talking about less concrete. We are trying to move away from carbon. Producing cement and concrete is hugely carbon ... but at the same time we are trying to build lots of affordable homes. There is always a balance but minerals is certainly something we do have to address because sand is now being imported. We stopped sand from Simon sandpit but importing everything has other requirements: the storage at the harbour, capacity to unload, all these sorts of things, so it is something we do need to think of. We have 2 quarries on the Island.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

And would this be coming sooner than later? Do you see this happening before the end of your political term or it sits within that wider ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Mineral extraction is certainly something that will have to be addressed before we debate the next Island Plan because we will need to know what we are doing.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay, so not necessarily in this term but at least before the next term.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

We know that the issue of minerals was not grappled with by the States previously. We do not really have a long-term supply of minerals. That industry does work on long timescales. We know that Ronez has a certain level of supply. We know that Granite Products has a certain level of supply. We need to look at the Island's strategic interest and come up with a plan to deal with that. That is

an issue for the next plan; we know that and likewise disposal of solid waste both inert and hazardous waste we know there are challenges at La Collette, and so we need to work with colleagues at I. and E. to look at options as to how the new plan would address that.

The Minister for the Environment:

We also know that Granite Products at La Gigoulande was identified as a site for disposal of solid waste, which has not come forward in the way that we expected in the timeframe that we expected. Hence some of the pressures at La Collette.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I do not want to seem to be too parochial but you mentioned La Gigoulande quarry and, as you say, they have gone public and they want to take it forward. To get at the mechanics of this, do you not need to decide on a new policy before they make the planning application or will their application in due course force you to do so?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, the Island Plan contains a number of policies and usually you put an application forward and, on balance, it gets approved or not. There is nothing to stop anybody putting forward any application whatsoever when it comes to the Island Plan. You can put forward an application that does not comply with any Island Plan policies. You are not going to get it passed but you can put it forward. Granite Products have the ability to put forward an application that challenges the Island Plan in a number of policy areas and the job of Development Control planning officers is to weigh up the policies and decide whether the application is worthy of approval or not. We get green zone policies, we get any number of policies that ... sorry, green zone applications, we get all sorts of things that challenge the Island Plan in the form of an application during any Island Plan time period and our Planning Committee members will know it is not unusual.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

So there is provision in the law that allows decisionmakers to approve something that is contrary to the Island Plan but only where they think there is sufficient justification to do so. So depending on the evidence that is submitted to support the application, if it is in front of the Planning Committee, Planning Committee members will look at the proposal, look at the benefits that the proposal is purporting to deliver and then they will weigh that against the Island Plan policy.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I am just trying to work out the mechanism.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Well, they have got 2 options. They either submit a planning application against the current plan where there is no specific policy provision to approve an extension of the site or they await the review of the plan and see if that comes forward with a more favourable policy regime.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, I will leave that one. Thank you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, and I think we will pass on to Deputy Coles who is going more into those different proposals and where you are at.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Just a little preamble, Minister. The Bridging Island Plan outlined areas of work or policies to develop core proposals during the life of the plan. Some of these were to assist in building the evidence base for the next Island Plan review and others to assist the implementation of policy. The panel has been keen to understand the progress of these workstreams. In the letter you provided to the panel on 5th February 2025 detailing the latest R.A.G. (red, amber, green) status for each of the Bridging Island Plan's proposals, out of the total of 40 proposals 8 were complete, 17 in progress, 12 were yet to commence and 3 were commenced but subsequently deferred or held as pending. Minister, can you confirm whether all 12 of the outstanding Bridging Island Plan policies have now commenced?

The Minister for the Environment:

Well, I do not know about the number 12 but I can confirm that not everything has commenced yet because we do not have the time, resource, officers to do the work. Kevin is not a one-man band anymore but he has a huge amount of work on his plate. We have recently recruited a new officer, which will make a big difference and the new officer is going to be a great asset to the Policy Department but, at the end of the day, there are only 24 hours in a day, as Kevin will tell you, and not only does the Policy Department have to develop all this work that we said we were going to do but, I do not know, I imagine during the course of a normal day the email either pings or the phone rings and there are questions and things that need to be done just at the spur of the moment all the time, which means that it is difficult to get on with the stuff that we know we have to do. We are making progress. You mentioned the status of some of these things but some of them are a challenge. They are a little way off yet but we will have to try our best to get through them all before the next Island Plan debate. I would say I am not sure if we have to do them all before the next Island Plan debate because some may well be left over because if we have to wait for everything we may find we do not get there.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, I think the status of the plan, so the legal elements of the plan are the policies and the map. The proposals as you have suggested Deputy are there to complement the plan framework and, in some cases, to help deliver the policies that are in the plan. Some examples might be some new supplementary guidance to help some of the policies, implementation of some of the policies in the plan. As we have just talked about, some of the other proposals are there to develop new bits of evidence base and that will support the next plan. Clearly, if that evidence is not gathered then there is just a risk that the plan being brought forward may not be deemed to be as robust as it might be. Obviously Members will then have a choice about what it is they approve in the plan. If we look at some of the proposals, there is talk about doing masterplans for the west of the Island and places like Five Oaks.

[11:30]

From a planning perspective, it would be great to be able to do a detailed piece of work looking at both of those areas and look at the opportunities, challenges and threats for new development in those areas. Clearly, if we are not able to deliver those masterplans we may get proposals that emerge as part of the Island Plan review and Members will just have to look at those in the cold light of day without the benefit of having a planning framework that supports any sites that might come forward.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, some of it is a bit of chicken and egg in a way and Five Oaks is an interesting case in point. At the last Bridging Island Plan debate we had a number of sites at Five Oaks which were proposed, most of which got rejected. Had more of them been approved, I think the requirement for a Five Oaks masterplan would have been strong and I think that would have had to almost jump to the top of the list, work that had to be done imminently. Because it is clear that if we are going to do a lot more development in the Five Oaks area we need to think holistically about traffic and communities and all sorts of stuff.

The west of Island has been pushed up the list a bit. We have had a States proposition for that. Both areas are really equally important. I am really looking forward to the west of Island piece of work when it is done because there is a fantastic opportunity there for private individuals, for business, for all sorts of reasons. I think there is a lot of potential in the west of the Island.

I am looking at some of this other work which we have not started yet. There is no doubt that I am not going to - somebody might shoot me down - prioritise guidance on the shop front supplementary planning guidance over something like Five Oaks masterplan. It may not be a very big piece of work

but there are some things on the list which clearly are not quite as important as others. I wish something like shop fronts was the most important thing we had to consider but, unfortunately, it is not.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Just perhaps for the panel's information, we have updated this as of July, so we will send this to the panel post-meeting, if that is helpful.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, that would be good, thank you. I think for me then you obviously have not necessarily done that prioritisation yet. We have just talked about the assumptions as well that there is a lot under the underlying assumptions of work needing to be done ahead of the next Island Plan. There is a lot to put on the officers, not only on this but also preparing for the next ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I mentioned the chicken and egg bit but I went off track and delayed myself. But the Five Oaks is interesting; do we develop a Five Oaks masterplan which then helps developers to come forward with sites or do we wait for the plan to be proposed and approved before we do the work? Because in some cases if we are going to do the work and then it is not going to be used because sites do not get approved in Five Oaks, we have got other things to do rather than spend time developing policies which are never going to get used. I do not know which one is more important there.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I am assuming that like a framework or looking at a wider community area is not just looking at where you would put more houses but it is about the distribution of community spaces ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Absolutely.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

... and all the other elements that are in the Bridging Island Plan. It is not just about a particular field that would have housing on there a development proposal would bring, it would, hopefully, widen the ...

The Minister for the Environment:

No, we are talking about community. Certainly I had responsibility in St. Martin for part of Maufant; most of Maufant is in St. Saviour. It is a big chunk of housing which has very little in the way of community facilities. It has got 2 shops and a garage; that is about it. If one was to develop a site

like Maufant further, I am absolutely sure that there would be a lot more community, it is of a size now; community would have to feature very, very heavily. There would have to be a lot more facilities for community.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Coming back to my question, I suppose, before we move on, is how are you going to prioritise this work, understanding the time restraints, resources restraint and officers' restraint to do this work between at least now and the end of your term?

The Minister for the Environment:

There is a very flippant answer that I must not give because it will on the front page of the *Evening Post*. We are going to try our very best to do everything we can between now and the next election. We have identified some pieces of work which we are doing within purdah, which are not significant but there are some pieces that we have agreed we will do within purdah but we will do what we can. We have a long list of things which are in train. We have a long list of things that we know we need to start. As I have said, the team has just been supplemented in the Policy Department of Planning and ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You are doing a specific prioritisation from that perspective. As you have just said, for shop fronts versus Five Oaks ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes. We have some priority work in the immediate short term, and Kevin and I have discussed very recently the guidance that we are going to put out in the next couple of months and some of it in the next few weeks. Work is in train on a number of different subjects and it just depends on how things work out with priorities and emergencies coming through the door and assistance needed from the Policy Department with planning work. Because large applications come in and Development Control officers will come to Policy and say: "Can we have a chat about this?" You meet D.C. (Development Control) on a regular basis, do you not, Kevin?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

We do. The other thing I would say is some of the proposals that are set out in the plan do not sit within the Minister for the Environment's portfolio. There might be other parts of Government that might lead also. I suppose Marine Spatial Plan sits in your portfolio but it was largely led by our colleagues in Marine Resources. We obviously supported them in terms of the planning elements of that. Some of it is not wholly dependent on the resource within our team and we are dependent on other colleagues.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I think where we are trying to get to is, would we see ahead of the Island Plan? Before you start looking at the assumptions again, which we were just talking about and needing those to help or a new set of assumptions to help develop an Island Plan, what we would see as prioritisation under those strategic proposals and proposals that you need to have done ahead of the next Island Plan and ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I mentioned it half an hour ago, I am sure we are going to do some work before the next election on the very basics for what we need to do for the next Island Plan debate. I think that conversation will certainly happen. Within that conversation I think you are right, I think there will be a list of things that we said we might do or with things we will do, things we would like to do. We are going to have to chop that up and move it around and say, right, let us pick a date for the start. How many of these things do we absolutely have to get done, and we have got to find a way to get them done.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Before that date, yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

What is nice to have? Okay, we can miss those off or drop them off and say, right, there is a timescale here, this is the amount of work we are going to have to get done before we start the next Island Plan debate and we will need to start it here. Work backwards and say, right, this is the resource required to get through that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I think the other way of prioritisation - and we hinted at this in the Bridging Island Plan - is some of them are strategic proposals, as opposed to proposals. If you look at the strategic proposals there are 5 of them. We have talked about the long-term planning assumption, that is critical but that is time sensitive, so that will not happen until we get to the review itself. We have talked about the long-term requirements for the energy market, and colleagues are working very much in that space in terms of energy policy, offshore wind, et cetera. The Marine Spatial Plan has been completed. West of Island Planning Framework, we see that as strategically important. Because, as you will know, there has been very much a focus on the built-up areas in the Island that are delivering most of the Island's development needs but particularly St. Helier in previous Island Plans. The purpose

of looking at the West of Island Planning Framework is to look at the opportunities for development in the west of the Island. Les Quennevais was identified as a secondary centre. What opportunities exist for Les Quennevais and other parts of the west of the Island to accommodate more development? That is what the Island needs in the next plan period; that piece of work is what we would see it as strategically significant in that respect. The Minister has already touched on some elements about infrastructure. We have talked about waste. We have talked about minerals. There are issues around coastal defence. We will need an understanding within Government what our colleagues and other Ministers, what their policy objectives are in terms of their portfolios, particularly where they deal with aspects of the Island's infrastructure, be that sort of dirty end dealt with at I. and E. or whether it is community infrastructure, so the schools and hospitals, those sorts of facilities. We will need an understanding of that from colleagues as to what they think the Island's requirements are over the next plan period. Those 5 are some of the big-ticket items.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay, yes. Thank you. I think just going on maybe to the Connétable about supplementary planning guidance specifically, we have touched on already.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, I am conscious of the time. Yes, the supplementary planning guidance related to residential space standards, parking and glasshouses has now been completed. First, can you please provide an update as to how the completed S.P.G.s (supplementary planning guidance) are working in practice?

The Minister for the Environment:

When it comes to residential space the guidance is one of ... Deputy Coles, he has been extremely patient with me, in fact I am surprised he has been as patient as he has. Kevin and I have had a chat about this even today and we are just about there. We will be putting that out. I am very grateful for your patience and forbearing in the time. I did do a number of site visits and we have all been a bit pushed to get it done but it is going to come out. Other pieces of work which are in train to be published fairly shortly: St. Saviour's Hospital, where we feel that we have done a lot of work on potential for St. Saviour's Hospital. Do you want me to carry on? Do you want to talk about St. Saviour's ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

It was more about how they are working in practice now, the current S.P.G.s. Do they see that that has been useful?

The Minister for the Environment:

Parking is a very interesting one and pertinent because we have very recently had a proposal which is going to come to the States Assembly. Parking is always challenging. People get very emotional about parking and you can understand why. We had not changed the parking standards since the last millennia and it has been a huge number of years since we have changed it. The decision was made that we would go for new parking standards. A lot of work was done, a lot of consultation was done. Unsurprisingly, the changes have not pleased everybody and that is the way it happens. There are a number of challenges from not only in St. Helier but outside of St. Helier. No doubt in my mind that there is going to be quite a vigorous debate on the proposition on the Constable about parking standards. I think the department and myself are well aware that there will be a number of politicians who are not happy. We know in the middle of town where there is no requirement, minimum is zero. We know a lot of areas now where we have got some rezoned sites out of St. Helier but are close to amenities, shops, schools, Parish Halls, green spaces and, most importantly, the bus route. We have said those areas the minimum requirement is one car-parking space per unit. A lot of Constables and a lot of Roads Committees and people are not happy because what we have seen in recent years is cars being parked ad lib in all sorts of places. We have never seen them before, purely because residents can get away with leaving them there. There is no law that says they cannot be left there; country lanes, other areas where there is no payment required. It has been a real challenge. Kevin will tell you about it.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Is there anything else, a bit more than parking but in the other elements as well?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

The Constable has asked about how they are working. When the plan was approved there was an explicit focus on developing or reviewing the supplementary planning guidance that focused on housing. Clearly, components of housing relate to the space standards, the residential space standards, that is the parking standards and density. Because, clearly, when an architect sits down with a blank sheet of paper they need to look at all of those elements to work out what the site can deliver. The fact that we have developed a new guidance in some cases for density, revised space standards and parking standards, has meant that the rezoned housing sites, for example, have been able to come forward and to deliver homes that meet with the policy objectives that are set out in the plan, which was to make best use of land, so to optimise density. Clearly, we have got a Sustainable Transport Policy that is trying to encourage less car use and to promote other forms of transport. This is where the planning system can help deliver those objectives. I think from an integrated policy point of view we would suggest that those standards are working well. The Minister has made reference to some of the rezoned housing sites. What is important to remember I think is in most cases, except for the middle of town, the parking standards are minimum parking standards. Developers have choice about the level of parking that they provide. We have seen

some developers have adhered very closely to the minimum standards because they want to optimise their yield on the site.

[11:45]

Other developers have taken a choice that they provide some overage over and above the minimum standard. They have made a decision that they will produce a certain level of yield and they will provide some additional parking for perhaps some larger homes on the site. I think the things like parking standards need to be taken in the round and they need to be considered against the density standards which have encouraged developers to increase yield. Parking standards, they have got a choice whether they can lower them to a minimum. Then in addition to that we have got the space standards, which have also tried to ensure that we are providing good quality homes for people and we are not building homes that are substandard. There are choices there that developers have to make in terms of how they come forward with schemes. But I think a number of those rezoned sites now have got consent. We have got some good yield on those sites and, hopefully, they are going to be creating good living environments in terms of the quality of the homes but also the environments that are being created on those sites. I think all of those bits of guidance have helped to achieve that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, thanks for that. Just on the subject of glasshouses, I mentioned that, I know the one, it is where they wanted to get planning application; it has been paused following a submission by the Cabinet Office on reviewing glasshouses. Is there more work going on in that respect?

The Minister for the Environment:

They issued some supplementary planning guidance on greenhouses last year.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes. Is the case you are talking about related to the application for the solar farm?

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, I am trying to be more general though than that, that is what prompted the thought, yes.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Okay. I think the policy regime that is set for glasshouses in the plan talks about there is a general presumption against the redevelopment of glasshouses. However, there is some encouragement given to the potential for glasshouse sites being used for the provision of renewable energy, like solar arrays, in the sense that clearly they are not entirely dissimilar in terms of forms of

development. That was one of the challenges I think in some of the applications that we have had for solar arrays was the applicant demonstrating that they had given enough credence to examining alternative options, including reusing derelict glasshouse sites for that type of development. That is why that issue was raised in the context of that planning application.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, I do not want to go off each time ...

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

No, that is on the public record, it is all there as background to the application.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you. You have explained how the S.P.G.s have helped the housing situation. You do believe obviously that these S.P.G.s are supported in the Bridging Island Plan in the way that you or the previous Minister intended.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

I do, yes.

The Minister for the Environment:

They cannot do other than support the Island Plan inasmuch as S.P.G.s cannot go against the policy. All they can do is to add detail and guidance, which is what it says on the tin. The policy says that and the S.P.G. will allow you to do this but I cannot issue an S.P.G. which goes against policy, so it is literally that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Generally speaking, do you anticipate that S.P.G.s will be necessary in many cases, aside from that?

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, I think so. Talking about individual rezoned housing sites, for example, each one has had an individual specific S.P.G. issued with it. The policy says that field is going to be rezoned for affordable housing and the S.P.G. comes along with some detail as to how we would like to see that site developed. A lot of considerations which a developer can then put that into the mix of when he comes to crunching the numbers. S.P.G.s on housing sites are very useful to both sides because it allows us to indicate in far more detail what we are looking to see. A developer can say: "Right, this is exactly what they are looking for. We need to come up with a plan which ticks the vast majority of those boxes."

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. Moving forward, how are you assessing the S.P.G.s within the current Bridging Island Plan against the anticipated future need? For instance, what are the impacts in this area in the B.I.P. being extended? Do they help to avoid a new Island Plan? Can you cope with the present Island Plan with more S.P.G.s?

The Minister for the Environment:

Do they help to avoid? It may be in a very small way but at the end of the day the policies are the policies and they have to stay the policies until the new Island Plan is debated. While an S.P.G. can help to the detail of a policy, if we have a fundamental challenge to a particular sector of the Island Plan, any number of S.P.G.s is not going to change that inasmuch as the policy has to remain the policy and the S.P.G. cannot go away from policy.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes. In terms of whether or not we have a full Island Plan in the future, the S.P.G.s, the health of them, they are not material to a new Island Plan.

The Minister for the Environment:

Not as such.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You mentioned that there is a list of course that you are going to carry on issuing S.P.G.s on a number of areas. Are there any that you have come across or any elements of the policy that you have come across that you think that there needs to be an S.P.G. that had not been thought of before? A letter that we received raised, for example, archaeology, looking specifically at archaeology and developing an S.P.G. on that. Have you seen that there needs to be a bit more to add on to the list of what you are ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Strangely enough it came across my desk yesterday. I think there is a proposal going to the Assembly on some changes to historic when it comes to archaeology and rules around treasure, finding of. Yes, I do not know if that is ...

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development is bringing forward a heritage law ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, that is a bit different.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

... it will deal with some aspects of archaeology. There is also supplementary planning guidance on planning and archaeology, but it does require review.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

There is, okay.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Part of that is around process in terms of how people engage with the planning application process on issues of archaeology. We are conscious that that requires revision and it is on our list of things to do.

The Minister for the Environment:

It is on our list of things we know we need to do, yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. Thank you, Connétable. We have talked a lot about the rezoning of affordable homes. I want to maybe focus in, for example, Minister, for the benefit of those listening, can you describe what the term “affordable housing” means in the context of the Bridging Island Plan? To what extent has the price paid for land impacted the viability of housing developments and affordability for buyers?

The Minister for the Environment:

I cannot talk specifically about any particular site about how the price paid for the land has affected the viability. But it must be clear to anyone listening or anyone involved in this type that the more you pay for the land the more effect it has on the viability of a project. I think this is where I come back to what I said very much earlier, is the cost of these projects per house, if you like, now is to the point where the States must not be surprised if they are asked to have an increasingly large chunk of the equity if we are going to have a shared equity scheme. I think I sort of get the hint of where you are going. We have had some proposals, have we or not? I am trying to think now, where there might have been a scheme which would dictate the amount of money paid for a particular affordable housing site, based on whatever that was; the number of vergées or the number of units or whatever, a scheme to yet to be produced. It is clear and has been clear to me for some time that some people, some owners, benefit greatly from a rezoned housing site that they own. But they want more money than developers are prepared to offer because we know affordable housing is what it says on the tin. It is not open market housing, it is not the ability to build large luxury

properties which sell for many millions of pounds. In some cases people do calculations based on other sites which have been developed by the open market and they think: "My site must, therefore, be worth X millions", when in actual fact in affordable housing terms it is not at all because if you are going to pay that much it adds £20,000, £30,000, £50,000, £100,000 to the price of the plot.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Do you think that this mechanism needs to be developed ahead of the next Island Plan to try to limit that kind of push from landowners to do that, knowing that we probably will, as you have talked about, need to be, even from the Government's side, developing more equity schemes or having to pay the extra, which includes potential land costs?

The Minister for the Environment:

As I said earlier, I am a free market economy man. Just because somebody has the ability to build homes on a field that they own, I am not sure that we necessarily need to be forcing them. But we have spoken about various things that we can do. Compulsory purchase is not somewhere particularly I would choose to go. But it is also clear in the policy that a rezoned site where if the building does not come forward, I would be very much happier to take that rezoning away and return that field back to agriculture and say to the owner: "You had the ability to develop this field through the Bridging Island Plan debate, you have chosen not to. That is your choice but you do not retain the ability to do that in the future, you get one chance." I have said that to people when I was previously Minister where small fields were rezoned and the owner wanted more and more and more. I said I am quite happy to take the rezoning away; it did not happen. But we need to think about measures and it cannot be right that somebody through the decision of the States Assembly in an Island Plan debate the value of their land increases astronomically overnight. I do not want to be in a position where I am forcing anybody to do anything at all, but I take your point on board. We could go into an Island Plan debate with 10 sites which we absolutely need because the requirement is for, let us say, X thousand homes. We identify we want to do that and then the owners of the land have the ability to say no. We need to find a mechanism which will allow us to do something in fairly short order. Whether it is these 10 sites have not come forward, we gave them 6 months and they have said: "No, we are not selling." Fine, we will take it away, we will find another 10 sites. I do not know, that would probably be in an Island Plan debate. Would we have a list of sites in an Island Plan debate? Say, right, we will do the top 10, if these do not come forward we will just keep going down the list until we have got to the right number of homes. I am ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

All these different ideas, do you feel as Minister now and would feel that that is something that absolutely needs to happen ahead of the next Island Plan, to come up with some kind of mechanism? Because there is a gap, identified as a gap and, potentially, needs to ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I think it is something which we could certainly discuss when we come to those first meetings when we decide how we are going to approach the new Island Plan project. But sitting here now, I am not sure is the answer to that question, inasmuch as we have not done it before. Generally speaking, we have managed to deliver enough homes through the Island Plan process. I am not sure that the challenge is there but ...

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, I was going to say if you look at successive Island Plans there have been different routes to delivering affordable homes, from States delivering sites themselves, States loan sites. There are current mechanisms that we have got now. As part of the review of the current Island Plan would be to look at how the policies worked and did it deliver? Did it do what it strove to do? But being cognisant of that we also need to be cognisant of the limitations of the planning system. This is where the planning system can work alongside other policy levers. Clearly, the Minister for Housing controls the Affordable Housing Gateway, which is the mechanism that we have used to ensure that the delivery of homes that are delivered through the Island Plan are occupied by people who are in housing need, be that for rent or for purchase. This is where the planning system can work alongside other policy to deliver a particular objective. That review would need to look at all elements of the policy landscape, in terms of how the plan might work in the future.

Director for Housing, Environment and Placemaking:

Yes, maybe if I could add as well, if you think about where we were as Government prior to the last Island Plan and where we will be when we go into the new process, we now have a Strategic Housing and Regeneration Unit, who are supporting the Minister for Housing in delivering their policies and also much more of an understanding about the data around the housing issues that the Island faces.

[12:00]

As Kevin and the Minister said, when we go into the next process, a bit like with the Economy team, we are in a much better position to understand the landscape, the relevance of the particular policy levers that you might use, and therefore be in a better position to fully understand what the plan can and should do to deal with the housing issues. Is it worth now perhaps talking about how a new plan might be formed or used differently to be more responsive to housing?

We have all appreciated, have we not, that housing is one of the more responsive issues that can often change during a long-plan period, if you are going back to a process where you have a 10-year plan, for example. You have seen that the Minister has gone out to consultation on a number

of issues in the planning process, but specifically about what the new Island Plan might look like as a document and does it just necessarily repeat what we have done before or is it something that might have a different model approach? There are decisions to be made aren't there? However, one option could be that you have an overriding Strategic Plan and more responsive parts of the plan to particular issues that change more rapidly. As we have seen, the Island's population is not doing what it used to do, which is be in an obvious and always upward trend, although we know that increasing the population is important for economic recovery, potentially. It could be that you have a process where the plan is able to be more responsive to the impact of different housing policies and the requirement on housing sites as a result of that. You could look at a different format for the future to be more helpful.

The Minister for the Environment:

One thing I certainly would want to do, if it is me, and I do not know if I will get the chance to change the laws before ... but we changed the laws for the COVID B.I.P. The whole plan had to be rewritten. Previously it was possible to look at a particular section on its own, in isolation. It is vital that we get back to that situation. A decade is a very long time for a plan. It is absolutely not impossible that 2 or 3 years into a new Island Plan, some parts of it may need to change dramatically because of global or international pressures or for whatever reason. I do not think it is not right that the only way to come back is to have to review the whole thing when a particular section ... it might water, it might be coastal, it might be infrastructure, or it might be some policy that has to change because of something that happens. I am looking certainly to do that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, you were talking about not wanting to force people to do anything, and the Bridging Island Plan sets out that 15 per cent of new housing developments would be made available to islanders eligible to Assisted Purchase Housing. In the current context, do you believe the 15 per cent threshold for new housing developments with over 50 units still remains relevant?

The Minister for the Environment:

It is a debate which you could go around in circles on. I can see both sides of the argument, but it is important that affordable houses are built, because we need those. I am not 100 per cent wedded to have this percentage on any development over a certain number of units, but I can see the need for it. I do tend to think that we could do better, inasmuch as some sites could yield financially very much more money; money that could then be ploughed into other schemes, which could be better for everybody. The Assembly has taken the view that it is important, regardless of where a site is, if it is a really good site, bad site, has a view or not, or whatever reasons, if it is over 50 units there must be a percentage and that percentage may change. I am not wedded one way or the other particularly.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

This goes back to the issue about mechanisms for delivering affordable homes. Clearly we have rezoned sites that are specifically allocated for this purpose. H6 is a new policy that introduces this notion of the private sector delivering a proportion of affordable homes. Clearly there are potential effects on viability of those schemes. If you think about the current challenging economic climate for development, changing any of those parameters would affect the viability of those schemes. We would need some evidence to what the impact of change might be before the Minister made any of those sorts of changes.

The other thing we would say is that policy is relatively early in its use. While it was approved in the plan, it came into effect when the guidance was published in 2023. We have only seen a limited number of schemes, and the Minister referred to some of them earlier, which have not started.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, while the majority of them are not being built and some are in process, but none are finished yet.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

My last question here, and it is something the panel has reflected on before, around community spaces and within the affordable housing developments and in wider new housing developments in general, how much community space, both indoor and outdoor, is factored into decision-making in that? Does the Bridging Island Plan help to provide more community space?

The Minister for the Environment:

It does. We have spoken about the parking guidance. In creating a minimum limit for things like parking, green space, amenity space, interior space, and the size of rooms, every time we introduce another limit we make it more challenging to make all the numbers add up. If you start off with a particular site of a particular size and you say: "We need to do a certain number of homes", and then you start thinking about the minimum parking, minimum green space, amenity space, community space, bin space and other things that you need to do, and you very quickly find that there is not very much left. You think: "We would like to build these houses a bit bigger," and then the number of units on the site very quickly starts reducing.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

On community space, you were talking about the weighting and needing to make decisions from a weighting perspective, do you feel that community space gets the same amount of weighting as

other elements, since the Bridging Island Plan has come up and the different schemes that have been agreed?

The Minister for the Environment:

We are certainly a lot more conscious of the importance that community space plays in ambience of any development. However, we have to strike this balance between providing as much amenity, of the various different sorts, for the people who are going to live on the site. Ultimately, at the end of the day, the developer has to develop the scheme in a way that somebody is going to pay them the money to do the job. If it is an affordable scheme and it is Andium or it is States or what have you, there is a certain business model there, but if you are a private developer you are looking for a return on your investment and you get to a point where you think: "If I cannot get more than X number of units on the site", all of a sudden the scheme becomes unviable.

It is not community space, per se, but driving around the ring road this morning coming here, St. Saviour Road there, and it is quite clear some of these Andium/States-led development with affordable housing, we have some lovely big open spaces between the development and the road. In the past, where we have had private developers they have been pushing right up to the boundary with tall buildings. That is not community space, per se, but it certainly gives a feeling of thinking a lot more about the community that are living in that area, where there is a lot more space outside. Those on the Planning Committee will know the importance that applications now put to community space, and I wish we could have more. I would be very happy to have a lot more green open space in St. Helier, because I know how much difference it makes to the people who live here.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

The Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Space Standard sets minimum space standards for flatted development and housing development. Minimum standards are set there. The other thing I would say is that when we produced the Bridging Island Plan we introduced a new policy that required specific provision for children's play space, in addition to open space. We have tried to ensure that the plan can deliver good places that support people's health and well-being and enable children to play.

The Minister for the Environment:

There are play spaces in the S.P.G., which are on the list to be done as well.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, the policy hook is there in the plan. We have seen dedicated play space come forward as part of some of these schemes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Moving to Deputy Coles, some of the elements we have touched on already, around economic factors.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

During the States debate on 21st January you said you would issue guidance and use other things at your disposal to assist the construction institute during the times of inflationary pressures before the next Island Plan debate. What specific planning related guidance and procedural changes will you introduce to support builders under current inflationary pressures and material shortage?

The Minister for the Environment:

My ability to do stuff and my intention might not be quite the same thing. I am trying my best, where I can, to help. However, in reality, my ability to make changes in that regard is quite limited. We have spoken about my intention to try to help hospitality, and hotels in particular, and there are policies in the plan, but as we have said all the way through, I cannot change policy until we get to the next Island Plan debate. Some fortunate politician is going to have the ability to take the next Island Plan debate to the Assembly and they will have the chance then, as will all other elected Members, to work on how the policy and the Island Plan comes forward. I have tried during my tenure as Minister to encourage people to work together, to talk to each other, to see what the art of the possible is inside the policies that we have, knowing that we cannot change them. I do stand up in the States and say that I want to encourage and help where I can, and I do what I can, but I cannot change policy, unfortunately.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Yes, one of the things, following the Minister's statement, we have been working with colleagues in Economic Development to look at how decision-makers might give greater consideration to the economic value of development proposals. As part of that, we will be looking at how both applicants and the Planning Department can consider and assess economic value as part of a planning application, so that you, as decision-maker sitting on the Planning Committee, can be presented with some information about the value of this development to the Island's economy and what contribution it will make. Then you can have greater regard to that as a material consideration in your weighing of planning factors. That work is live.

We have used the Industry Partnership Board, where there are people like Jersey Business and other development colleagues who sit on there. They can provide some useful practical advice as to how applicants and business might support their proposals with more information about what the economic value of their proposal is.

It is not about changing the policy landscape, it is about ensuring that more information about economic value is presented as part of planning applications so that decision-makers can have a look at that and take a considered view about it. That work is ongoing and will hopefully be issued shortly.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

You are talking about working closely with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, are there any other Ministers ... the Minister for Housing has key parts in this, the Minister for Infrastructure has key parts of this, what kind of conversations go on across those portfolios with yourselves in developing the policies, ideas and concepts within the Island Plan?

The Minister for the Environment:

I would have to say I do not have a great deal of discussion with other Ministers about the Island Plan, per se. Generally I get correspondence, emails or phone calls from other Ministers about where they have people under their remit who are experiencing challenges, which are brought forward by either the Planning Department, or what have you, or people are not able to do things that they would like to do because they have come up against a planning officer, a policy, an S.P.G. or they just do not seem to be making progress. I would like to think that any Minister that has difficulty with something under my remit would come and see me. They do generally. They email me and ask what can be done or ask for assistance. Generally, it is a question, I find, of getting people together and talking to them. It goes a long way sometimes. One of the big strides that we have made in the Planning Reform is that a lot more discussion goes on face to face between officers and applicants, complaints or what have you. Talking about stuff seems to work well.

[12:15]

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

In the context of preparing an Island Plan, we set up a whole system of governance that is set up, both at an officer level and at a political level. If you take the Bridging Island Plan, for example, we had a Programme Board with representation from interests across Government. That was reflected politically as well. There was a subgroup of the Council of Ministers who sought to ensure that their portfolio interests were reflected in the plan.

It is important to look at the plan not just as a set of regulatory rules that are used for planning applications, but it is there to deliver and enable the community's objectives over the plan period. Of course they are not limited to pure planning issues, other Ministers will have political objectives and policy aspirations that the plan can help to deliver. We do set up that governance and we try to

ensure that the plan represents and sets out a piece of integrated policy, reflecting other objectives from other parts of Government.

Director for Housing, Environment and Placemaking:

That would be, I am sure, the plan going into the next Island Plan preparation process, because it is about that pre-work of getting the policies as fit for purpose as possible, and then they fly free and you start to see them enact and monitor and where they are giving you the outcomes you hoped for. Then you have the chance to pivot in the next Island Plan planning process.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Staying on the economy in this section, I noted interestingly in an inspector's report yesterday published, your commentary on the importance of the economy was considered by them to be now a material factor in applications. You mentioned that helping applicants with business plans and such is one thing, but are there other tools at your disposal to assist in implementing the Bridging Island Plan to help support your ambition of the economy, for example, issuing statements that become material issues in planning guidance? What is at your disposal to ensure this remains a solid base to achieve your ambition?

The Minister for the Environment:

I was personally heartened to read that section of the inspector's report. It jumped out at me when I was reading it. I thought it was interesting that this particular inspector thinks my speech in the Chamber of Commerce is a material consideration. Up to that time I had wondered, because ... I greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk to Chamber that day. I indicated the direction of travel that I wanted to go in, but when I get back to the department and realise that I cannot change the policies in the Island Plan, I think: what can I do?

Speaking to Policy officers, we have devised a scheme now where the Economy Department are going to come forward with more information and they are going to do it in a way that planning officers can use ... yes, I do not think I can change anything. You talk about it is a material consideration - that is a great - but I do not think I have a great deal of ability to get a chunk of black and white document put down that has to be dropped into every officers' desk every time an application comes through. It is being done through enhanced applications and input from the Economy Department as a consultee. When we get to the next Island Plan, it may well be that one could put forward an updated policy on the economy, which gives an even more ... then at that point, that is when you start to make a difference. Whereas something you say in a speech gets dropped into a policy and then officers say: "Right, okay, this is real proper material consideration."

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

Going back to that case, there is a policy that supports that sort of use, so it is material to a decision in relation to that type of use. Decision-makers will need to balance the value of that proposal against its impact. What the Minister is saying is that in the current context sometimes the economic value of applications is not developed. It is not presented as part of a planning application. To enable decision-makers to perhaps weigh that against the environment impact, which is often quite well developed as part of a planning application, more work needs to be done in the economic space, so that you, as decision-makers, can say: "Yes, I can appreciate what this is going to do and I can balance that against this impact", and then you can make an informed decision. That is the work that is in train.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, in the past we may have had an application over here, for example, and there might be 3 or 4 lines supporting, from the Economy Department, saying: "This is an important application. The Economy Department wants to support it wholeheartedly", full stop. That is not good enough. We need all the reasons behind the Economy Department wanting to support it, why it is good for the Island, why it is good for the economy, why it is good for St. Helier or what have you. That is what we are going to achieve through discussions between officers and working out how we can do the job better.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

The last question I want to ask is: how has the Bridging Island Plan helped manage the change of use of land and buildings, for example, from agricultural use to dry storage? To what extent has any loss of agricultural use been assessed with regard to the agricultural industry?

The Minister for the Environment:

There is a challenging question. Where do we start? Historically, farmers have been given permission to build sheds for agricultural use. The idea always was that if the agricultural use fell away the shed would be removed and the land would return ... or whatever. In reality that has not happened. Over the course of a number of years a number of applications for change of use, farm buildings that have become redundant, especially more modern ones have been adapted to meet the requirements of certain parts of the industry. We mentioned light industry before. We have spoken about storage requirements for plumbers and electricians. A large electrician firm needs quite a large space for the storage of all the bits and pieces that they need. The 2 have worked in balance. Whether it is quite as it was always intended, I am not sure. It was always a challenge

where at one end of a country lane a farmer would be applying to build an agricultural shed where at the other end of the country lane a farmer was applying to change a use of a country shed.

I know the difficulty of working on a farm where a lot of your storage is off site, and in some cases a long way off site. It does not help with productivity, it does not help with a whole load of things. It has to be said that the farming industry and redundant agricultural sheds have filled a need that was there in the economy to many extents. Most of them have been used up now. We will always need agricultural sheds while we have a farming industry, especially a growing industry. The use of structures that are built and then not required for that use further down the line will always happen, whether it is a house, a shed, an outbuilding, or a large whatever. That is part of a developing Island and the way things happen, that the farming industry has changed dramatically in 40 to 50 years. We had hundreds and hundreds of farmers and hundreds and hundreds of dairy farmers and we now have small handfuls of both. The requirements that they have have changed. The way we plant our potatoes, for example, you could not believe 20 years ago that we would be doing things like we are now.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Is this something that you think needs to be looked at ahead of the next Island Plan? If you are saying that the Bridging Island Plan is not necessarily capturing that change of use in the way that that potentially could do, would it need to be then looked at in your ...

The Minister for the Environment:

We are certainly looking at change of use in the planning reform. There are certain things that we would like to improve, so that some changes of use could be done quicker and more easily. The change of use of agricultural buildings, has to remain a challenge for the person applying. That is quite clear, because by courtesy of the fact that they are agricultural buildings, they are out in the countryside, we need to be careful how we are developing the countryside. Jersey's environment is so hugely valuable to everybody on the Island. That is why things like the Island Plan are so important, because without Island Plans our countryside might look very different. Change of use of agricultural buildings is an interesting one. We have, more recently, changed the policy on granite. Older farm complexes that are made of granite are much easier to convert than it was previously. That is for 2 reasons. One, they are nice buildings and, secondly, an historic 200 year-old farm building is not much use to an existing farmer. Machinery cannot get in and out. You have hundreds of cattle, whereas in the past you might have had half a dozen. They do not fit into agriculture anymore, other than for accommodation. We know that we have done that. It may be something we need to look at, although, and I say this very much off the top of my head, we have been down to a very few number of farmers for some few years now and I do not know that there are a lot more

farmers to come out of the industry, which is great news. It maybe the demand for change of use of agricultural buildings will not be as great as it was 10 to 15 years ago.

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

It goes back to the issue about evidence. What is the evidence and what is the need, in terms of both for agricultural sheds and also for alternative uses of those assets and how can you provide that in a planning sense? That is part of the work that we do with Economic Development, to look at where the demand is.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, we have a couple more questions, but noting the time, I hope you are okay to go over a couple of minutes. We are nearly at the time.

The Minister for the Environment:

Yes, that is fine.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Turning to Deputy Curtis, you were talking about reviewing the structure?

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Minister, you and your officers have mentioned you are out for consultation on a range of areas, including a review of the form and plan structure. First, we know that the law allowed the Bridging Island Plan to remain in use, but what specific indicators will you use to determine when a new plan is needed, which is the wording the law requires you to then issue a new one? How are you currently assessing that or are you going to wait until your consultation has finished?

The Minister for the Environment:

I said right at the start that housing is the real reason why Island Plans come forward; the need for more housing sites. That will be the overriding case here as well. We have had a general discussion today about whether there is anything that is pressing in the Island Plan outside of the housing section which might be a necessity for the Island Plan to be re-debated. However, it is incumbent upon us ... and we are doing the work, we will continue to keep an eye on the housing numbers, and supply and demand is something which is hugely important to that. We need to be realistic. This Bridging Island Plan came in in 2022. Next year we are going to be half-way through what would normally be a 10-year plan. If it was a 10-year plan, we would not be that far off starting work on the next 10-year plan anyway. Irrespective of what happens in the housing sector, we will have the initial discussions before the next election to have a bit of a plan for a plan, and then after the election the new Government needs to make a decision. I would heavily suggest that they need to

push a button to say: “Yes, we will review it again, irrespective” because so many of the things we have spoken about, it may be water, it may be minerals, or it may be infrastructure, but we need to get on top of a number of issues.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I am conscious of your time as well here. Your consultation has some fundamental changes that could occur in a plan such as a multi-tier plan framework or a singular plan, but you have mentioned the pressing need, in your view, to reinstate the ability to amend a singular plan, even if that is a route to go down. Is that something you think is on the legislative books this side of the election?

The Minister for the Environment:

Can we do that individually? We certainly discussed it. If I have the ability to, I will. As we have chatted about, I do not have the ability to do a lot of things I would like to do, because I cannot change policy, but one thing I could do, if it was available to me, is to make that change. I think it is important to make that change.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Would that relieve pressure on having to make fundamental changes to the plan form?

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

It gives options, does it not? You could split the plan or you could decide that you are going to keep the plan as a singular plan, but you might review parts of it. If you look at the history of the Island Plan, generally there have been interim reviews of the plan in the past. In respect of the 2002 plan there was a review in 2008, to bring forward some elderly persons’ homes. If you look at the 2011 Island Plan, that was reviewed in 2014, principally around housing requirements. We have had that mechanism previous and it has been used to revise parts of the plan.

[12:30]

The Minister for the Environment:

Making that change will be important. To something simple like resources, if we know we are going to the next plan debate and we cannot do a certain number of sections that cuts out a load of work; and time is money.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

If you are going to be looking at things during the period of time which you said you were then to have that States decision in place might give you some background ...

The Minister for the Environment:

I mentioned purdah, only because we discussed recently some work that we needed to do and we decided that purdah was a good opportunity for officers to get on with that. No, I would want to make that decision well before purdah, because that is quite an important decision. I am not sure that I would be allowed to do that ...

Head of Place and Spatial Planning:

The other point I was going to make in terms of the timetable for the Minister dealing with issues to deal the planning framework, it would be helpful to be able to change the planning framework for an Island Plan so that prior to starting a new Island Plan we know what the legal context is for that plan. That is the aspiration to deliver that before the end of this term, so that the new Government have a new legal framework to take the next plan forward.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

This has been a general hearing to assess how the Bridging Island Plan was working, so the final question is: Minister, to what extent do you believe that the department has got its balance, policies and implementation right, particularly when considering the 5 key areas? I can list the 5 key areas if you want, but I am sure you know them off by heart.

The Minister for the Environment:

There is a reasonable balance. The Marine Spatial Plan is a good document and we have it completed and it is out the door and it is working. That is a big tick. Other bits we have not moved forward with quite so quickly. We are cognisant of all those 5 subjects. They are still and will remain important as we move forward.

I would say, getting back to the point we were talking about previously, about maybe changing the way the Island Plan is developed and whether we need a plan as it currently sits or we need 2 plans or we come up with all sorts of other stuff. I personally feel that the Island Plan, as it is at the moment, the way it is developed, has worked well for the Island, apart from the ability to go back to changing the laws and go back to where we were before the Bridging Island Plan. Yes, we said we would, as part of planning reform, look at all the options for various ways of coming up with an Island Plan, if you want to call it that, but for me personally the way we do Island Plans has served us well since 1987. I look around the Island generally and say that I am pretty satisfied. It has done okay. We have had a lot of pressures. We need more people and they all have to live somewhere and that gives us challenges, building in the countryside, but the Island still looks okay. There are always

planning decisions on design that you look at after they have been built and think maybe we should have gone back and done a bit better and some bits of design look great. I am sure officers everywhere get the same. I am generally very happy with the way the plan works.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, you have answered this last question, but our political term is not far from being finished, we have just talked about it; it is just months now. We have gone through a number of areas, strategic proposals, proposals, and the underlying assumptions that we are all grappling with. You have talked about the restraints that you are under. Where do you think you want to leave this work for your predecessor at the end of this term? What are the main things? You have mentioned 2 big areas, but I was wondering where you would feel that you want to leave this at the end of your term.

The Minister for the Environment:

I have been fortunately in some ways to be able to do the work on strengthening the economic input into planning applications. I have done some bits and pieces with historic windows and doors. Until you are a Minister in Government it is very challenging to make changes. It is not impossible as a Back-Bencher. It is easier as a Minister, but even in a Ministry it is not easy. If you are the Planning Minister, who happens to be the Planning Minister between Island Plan debates, it is very difficult to change the direction of travel, because you cannot change policy.

I know when I was Minister back in 2014 to 2018, I said I would value and love the opportunity to take an Island Plan to the States Assembly, purely because as a politician you come into politics to try to do things better and differently. Having the opportunity to propose an Island Plan is probably as good an opportunity as you are ever going to get. It has been a challenge, but I look back at the work that the officers have done in the last 18 months to 2 years and I am grateful that I have been part of the Planning Department particularly and the Policy Department, because they sit in front of Planning ... Development Control, to move forward in the relationship they have with the applicants and with the general public. I am sure the people I speak to now ... I had an email the other day from a retired architect who went through the planning process as a private individual. He wrote to me, and I forwarded it on to the whole department, saying how grateful he was that things were so much better now than they had been previously. We got over that hurdle, but we are now moving to other areas where we need to develop some serious policy and make sure that the Island is prepared for the future and all those key assumptions that the Constable was talking about: minerals, water ... energy is another massive issue that we need to grapple with, as you know only too well, chair.

During the next Island Plan, if it is a 10-year plan, we will see some massive changes in the way we use energy on the Island, courtesy of carbon neutral, and all sorts of other things like that. I am sure

everybody has always said the next Island Plan is important. For me, I see some real fundamental changes to the way the Island is going to have to do things in the next 15 years. This next Island Plan is an important strategic structural document for Jersey as we move into the new era, especially around energy.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Building on the idea that you bring a proposition to be able to ...

The Minister for the Environment:

Debate one part of the plan in isolation.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes. Would that give you an opportunity, in your accompanying report, to highlight some of the points you have mentioned during this hearing?

The Minister for the Environment:

I am sure. When it comes to that, I am sure in any proposition the proposer wants to put forward examples as to why the proposition is a good idea, to try to convince other States Members to support and push the right button. I am sure if we come forward with that proposition before the next election, we will be quoting some examples as to why it is a good idea to do that. I do not think it would be difficult to find any number of examples.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you very much, officers, for your time here. Thank you also for allowing us another 10 minutes over the 2 hours we already grilled you on this subject. So thank you very much.

The Minister for the Environment:

Thank you.

[12:39]