

Island Plan Review – Examination in public

Minister's opening statement

I would like to begin by welcoming everyone to the opening of this Examination in Public for the draft bridging Island Plan.

This is a critically important part of the Island Plan review process.

It is where those who have made representations about the draft plan - including States Members, members of the public, organisations and business interests – have an opportunity to explore matters of contention with independent planning inspectors. It is where the draft policies and proposals set out in the draft plan; together with some of the potential changes that might be made to it; can be scrutinised, probed and tested in a public forum within the time available. Its purpose is to independently test the adequacy of the plan; and to ensure that it is fit for purpose relative to the challenges that the island needs to address in the short-term.

I would like to express my thanks to those who have contributed to the Island Plan Review process to get us to this stage in what has been, and remains, a challenging timescale and set of circumstances.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my officer team who have done an incredible job, in difficult circumstances, to ensure that we have a draft plan to examine. They have given me great support to develop the draft policies and proposals that are under consideration at this examination. They will be representing my position at the examination on my behalf with my full support and endorsement.

Secondly, I would like to welcome the planning inspectors, Keith Holland and Geoff Salter, to Jersey; and to thank them for the tremendous amount of work that they have already undertaken since their appointment earlier this year, including that of their colleague, Derek Stebbing. They have digested the plan, reviewed evidence documents, considered representations and further representations, and examined proposed amendments from States Members. I know that they have already been to the island several times to familiarise themselves with the island context and have visited a range of sites associated with the Island Plan Review.

I would also like to thank Helen Wilson, the programme officer, whose experience and knowledge of working in Jersey has already proved invaluable, and I am sure she will continue to provide support to all involved in this examination. I am grateful to her for supporting this examination process in challenging circumstances.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to all of those islanders who have engaged with and continue to participate in the Island Plan Review process. The Island Plan is a crucial policy tool for Jersey that will literally serve to shape the island over the immediate future; but will also lay the foundations for the next Island Plan Review to address some of the longer-term challenges that the island faces. It is important that, as a community, we get this right.

I have been heartened, and am grateful, for the level of engagement that the Island Plan Review process has enjoyed. We have had over 700 initial representations; 61 States Member amendments; and there have been nearly 300 further representations.

This demonstrates to me that islanders care deeply about the future development of the island and have had the opportunity and willingness to express their views about matters of concern to them.

Whilst I, as Minister for the Environment, am charged with the duty of preparing a draft Island Plan, it is important that the plan which emerges from this process represents the objectives and aspirations of the island community. It needs to be a plan which addresses the big issues of most concern to islanders by; improving the supply of housing, especially affordable housing; protecting our marine, natural, and historic environments; responding to the challenges of climate change; and supporting a sustainable economy.

The examination in public provides an opportunity to help ensure that the plan that we produce together is one that appropriately responds to these challenges and is as robust and resilient as it might be. It provides an opportunity to raise specific issues and concerns and for the inspectors to make recommendations about how I might respond to them. In so doing, I will not only need to consider issues of detail, but also the wider strategic interests of the island. Approval of the new plan, as amended, will ultimately rest with the States Assembly.

I hope that everyone will engage and contribute to this process having regard to the procedures set out for its conduct; and will respect the need to ensure that discussion remains focused on the issues which the inspectors wish to examine further. That is all I wanted to say at the start of this important stage in the Island Plan Review. I will leave you in the hands of the planning inspectors to progress with the examination. I will be listening intently to proceedings online and look forward to hearing all contributions.

Thank you very much.