

PlanForum

Guernsey Agents Forum
Meeting 17 November 2010 @ Sir Charles Frossard House

MEETING NOTES

PlanForum members in attendance

David Aslett	Aslett Naftel
James Barker	Create Ltd
Jill Bray	Courtillet Design
Tony Charles	Charles Planning Associates Limited
Nigel Duquemin	Nigel Duquemin & Co
Peter Falla	PF+A Limited
Carl Foulds	Direct Architectural Solutions
Robert Le Page	Robert W Le Page Architects & Chartered Surveyors
Hibbs, John	PF+A Limited
Bill Lockwood	Chartered Architect and Planner
Esther Male	Cresswell Cuttle & Dyke Ltd
Bob O'Brien	States of Guernsey (representing CIOB)
Drew Robertson	Dunnell Robertson Partnership
Mitchell Sneddon	Falla Associates International

Apologies: Carl Foulds, Chris Lovell, Mark Frampton, James Barker

From States of Guernsey

Claire Barrett	Principal Planning Officer
Nigel Chescoe	Senior Building Control Surveyor
Nicola Gough	Communications Officer
Elaine Hare	Principal Planning Officer
Faith Rose	Director of Planning Policy
Jim Rowles	Director of Planning Control Services

On the 17 November 2010 the following topics were discussed by members present:

Strategic Update Faith Rose provided an update on the progress of the Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP) and the subsequent review of the Urban Area Plan (UAP) and Rural Area Plan (RAP).

Key points:

- The group were advised that a major review of the SLUP was underway. Guernsey Tomorrow had sought to bring together a broad range of issues about how Guernsey is developing.
- A number of decisions need to be made, with one of the most important being whether there should continue to be an urban/rural split or whether plans should be island-wide, and whether this would be a better way of managing the island's land resources.
- SLUP: States members have been asked to approve a Green Paper for

consultation on the options, essentially whether the majority of future development should continue to be in the urban area, whether development could be in rural centres or whether new development could be dispersed across the island.

- It is anticipated that the SLUP will be in place by April 2011 (TBC)
- The Island development plan/s must conform to the overall spatial strategy put forward by the SLUP.
- Amendments to the UAP have been made since their initial adoption in order to keep the plans fresh and to adapt to changing circumstances.
- The current Urban and Rural Area Plans are deemed, by the new Law, to be Development Plans and have a 10 year 'life'. The UAP lasts till July 2012 and the RAP till December 2015 (a short-term extension is to be sought for the UAP).
- The Forward Planning Team is currently engaged in preparatory work for the plan review.
- The plan review will be subject to full public consultation.

Planning Update

A brief update was given on recent changes to the planning website and other planning information.

Key points:

- A brief demonstration of the planning website as a useful tool for accessing planning and building control information was given.
- Links to general information are accessible via the [website front page](#).
- Links to planning application information is available via the [development control page](#)
- Links to building control information is available via the [building control page](#)
- Useful information available on the website includes [Guidance Notes](#); [Application Forms](#); [Exemptions](#); [Fees](#); [Development Briefs](#); [Planning policy](#). Details of Protected buildings, Monuments and Protected Trees were available on the [conservation and design](#) pages.
- Records of any [Appeals](#) and [Enforcement Notices](#) served on unauthorised developments are also available on the website.
- Links on the left-hand column could be used to navigate.
- Also recently added to the Planning website are online maps for the Urban and Rural Area Plans. These are interactive maps that show the areas covered by the Urban Area Plan & Rural Area Plan and the planning policies that apply to different areas. Written Statements were made available to download online earlier this year and can also be accessed via www.gov.gg/planning on the 'detailed development plans' page.
- Officer reports: From 11 November 2010, anyone can download officer reports for refused planning applications from the Planning website
- Reports may be viewed via the [planning application websearch](#) (link from front page), entering the details of the application and clicking on 'decision notice.'
- The group were advised that at present, only a small proportion of applications made are refused planning permission. However, it is this small proportion which seems to be the focus of most peoples' interest. In view of the additional work involved, it was felt appropriate to first focus resources on publishing information on refusals. However there is an intention to roll this out to all planning applications.
- Those present were informed that these steps had been taken to allow Islanders to gain a better understanding of how planning decisions are made, and the legal and policy framework that decisions are made in.
- Jim Rowles gave an update on open planning meetings. Following fact finding

meetings to the UK and Jersey, a report has been approved by the Board and work is underway to bring in open meetings in 2011. There was a need to draw up probity guidance and this was underway. It was agreed that the introduction of open planning meetings was a significant step forward in achieving transparency in the planning process and that it would undoubtedly alter the dynamic of decision making.

- There was a discussion about the practical aspects of open planning meetings including structure of the public speaking section (although it was noted that this would be phased in and public speaking would not be part of open meetings initially). It was reported that in many authorities in the UK applicants and objectors were given a maximum of three minutes to put forward their case. In most cases, public speakers were not permitted to answer questions once the members had started discussion. It was suggested that such a rigid structure as this could be counterproductive, for example, if a member wished to ask a question specific to the development that only the applicant could answer. Some authorities asked public speakers to submit a synopsis before attending the meeting. It was agreed that this could be a sensible approach and would be considered. It was suggested that the Department put their public speaking guidelines on the Planning website. Basingstoke and Bristol authorities were used as examples of where open planning meetings have been put in place.
- Those present also discussed the possibility of live broadcasts via webcam. It was suggested that webcams were a useful tool but that they did throw up lots of additional things to consider, such as website links and whether microphones etc would be required. The use of webcams and other technologies would be explored following the introduction of open meetings.
- The group were advised that open meetings would only consider planning applications referred to the Environment Board within the terms of the published arrangements as currently occurs; the existing Scheme of Delegation would remain in place as otherwise achievement of planning targets would suffer.

Building Control and Planning Exemptions

The group discussed planning and building control exemptions and related matters

Key points:

- Issuing Completion letters: There was a need to let builders know that these can be issued upon the satisfactory completion of the building work
- The review of Building Regulations was underway and this will include a revision of the current Exemptions and it is proposed to have Guernsey Approved Documents in a PDF format. These will be specifically written for Guernsey.
- Proposed changes to exemptions might include bringing the measurement of floor areas in line with planning exemptions.
- Self Certification Schemes were discussed. At present there was no provision in the Guernsey Building Regulations for work being carried out by 'approved installers' (e.g. CORGI) and there was a move to change this in future. At present all installations of controlled appliances require a commissioning certificate stating that the installation is satisfactory. It was discussed that approved installers might need higher insurance and therefore the option might not be popular; however, as this was only an option and installers could still come to Building Control if they preferred this was not seen to be a problem.
- However, it was agreed that further explanation on roof lanterns (i.e. should the exemptions be expanded to allow them on existing flat roofs) and whether

exemptions should be changed regarding the roof pitch requirements in some categories would be helpful.

- The idea of having public 'drop-in' sessions for exemptions was welcomed.
- Two 20m² extensions would not be exempt if they were joined together internally, even if added later, as this would effectively constitute a 40m² extension.

Workshops and other activities

Feedback from Fees and Planning & Design Statements workshops and discussion of reciprocal office visits

Key points:

- It was agreed that the recent workshops had been useful. A workshop on protected buildings would be set up in the New Year.
- The group were advised that planning and design statement guidance is provided in the annex of the urban and rural area plans.
- There was a discussion of possible use of proformas for planning and design statements. However it was felt that this could turn the process into a tick box exercise which wasn't the desired approach. Rather focus should be on thinking through the design process and documenting the evolution of the design.
- It was agreed that Forum members would submit ideas for workshops that planners could participate in.

Any other business

Opportunity for agents to give general feedback and discuss any issues.

Key points:

- The possibility of applications being submitted electronically was discussed. This was not possible at present but would be explored once the new States website was in place.
- Building control: Agents raised the issue of badly done 'exempt work' causing difficulties with conveyancing. It was suggested that something be done to assure quality of work. The Department would look into this.
- Admin staff should now be giving out pre-application meeting reference numbers. Agents were asked to give this number into the Department to avoid duplication.
- Architects panel – it was suggested that it would be useful for the panel to be involved in more applications. It was suggested that the Panel could make themselves aware of applications coming through and discuss any that they believe would benefit from input from the panel with the Department.
- The action list from previous meetings would be circulated with the notes from this meeting.

Date & time of next meeting: Wed 18 May 2011 9.30am – 12pm (venue TBC)