PlanForum

Guernsey Agents Forum
Meeting 21 May 2010 @ Les Cotils

MEETING NOTES

PlanForum *members in attendance*

David Aslett	Aslett Naftel
James Barker	Create Ltd
Jill Bray	Courtillet Design
Tony Charles	Charles Planning Associates Limited
David Falla	Falla Associates International
Peter Falla	PF+A Limited
Carl Foulds	Direct Architectural Solutions
Robert Le Page	Robert W Le Page Architects & Chartered Surveyors
Bill Lockwood	Chartered Architect and Planner
Esther Male	Cresswell Cuttle & Dyke Ltd
Drew Robertson	Dunnell Robertson Partnership

From States of Guernsey

Claire Barrett	Principal Planning Officer
Richard Brache	IT Projects & Business Change Manager
Elaine Hare	Principal Planning Officer
Jayne Roberts	Planning Officer
Faith Rose	Director of Planning Policy
Jim Rowles	Director of Planning Control Services
Alun White	Principal Conservation & Design Officer
Tony Yates	Building Control Manager

On the 21 May 2010 the following topics were discussed by members present:

Websearch & explorers   Richard Brache provided an interactive overview of on-line facilities available for agents. Feedback needs were discussed, as were suggestions for improvements.

Key points:
- The Planning Web Search has made a vast change in access to information on the Department's caseloads and is proving useful to professional agents.
- On-line access to information on planning and building control applications, updated each day at 3am allows agents to access decision information and application progress quickly and efficiently.
- Bookmarking applications, hyperlinks and favourites folders are all options and information on how to set these up were discussed, including the Planning Application Check Procedure.
- Agents were advised that whenever a new application is submitted a record appears on the States website. The record ID will always be the same and by saving the URL of the application agents are able to quickly and easily check on daily progress for all applications [guidance note attached]

- Details of Protected buildings, Monuments and Protected Trees, Appeals and Enforcement notices also accessible [Click for link to Planning website]
- Guidance notes, application forms and other documents available to view or download: [Click on links to go to Guidance Notes; Application Forms; Exemptions; Fees; Development Briefs; Planning Appeals]

Planning Applications	Led by Claire Barrett, Jayne Roberts and Jim Rowles the group discussed the *'Right First Time'* approach to planning applications, discussed common mistakes made that result in invalid applications and provided an insight into the validation process, including information on why certain information is required by the Department. Members examined some mock planning applications to work through some of the common problems encountered in a practical workshop session.

Key points:
- Members were advised that the law is explicit on what is required to make an application, and that it is <u>essential</u> that applications are made using the latest application forms [Link to Current Application Forms] and that <u>all</u> relevant parts of the form are filled in.
- Appropriate and timely submission of information reduces the need for multiple conversations between the department and agent, which slow the process.
- The more information the better – agents were asked to consider what a neighbour might need to understand the application and what a planning officer will need to properly assess it.
- Vague descriptions and generalised descriptions such as 'extend and alter' or 'variations' are not suitable. With a change of use, hours of operation and vehicle movement information would be useful.
- Any revisions made should be clearly identified and numbered on plans.
- Where location plans and block plans are required, partial floor or block plans are not sufficient. It is advisable to include the proposed development on block plans.
- Members were reminded that the Department needs to be in a position where it is confident that the plans submitted are accurate and dependable. Agents play an important part by ensuring mistakes are not made [Refer to the Guidance Notes provided to help you].
- Fees: Inadequate fees amount for about a third of invalid planning applications. Agents advised to complete Section O to demonstrate to the department how any fees have been calculated. [If you're unsure about fees, a guidance note is available: Planning Fees Guidance Note]

Building Control Applications	Tony Yates led an interactive session on fees and exempt works using the *'Right First Time'* approach.

Key points:
- Members were advised that since June 2009 (when building control fees were introduced) 1,564 applications had been made. Of those, 5.59% required a refund of fees and more than 6.3% were invalid because the fee paid was incorrect or underpaid. This has resulted in loss of income and increased administration for both the department and agents.
- Members were advised that the Fees Schedule contained guidance notes that might help them to avoid costly mistakes.
- Agents were asked to keep the department informed with suggestions of

helpful updates to Guidance Notes (not just fees) to keep them relevant and useful. Frequently Asked Questions on exemptions and fees will be provided shortly and will be available on the department website

Development briefs, Planning & Design Statements (PDS)	Faith Rose and Alun White led a discussion on Development Briefs and the use and effectiveness of Planning & Design Statements as part of the design process.

Key points:
- Members were advised that in some circumstances PDS were required by policies of the Urban Area Plan (UAP) and Rural Area Plan (RAP) [Click to go to Development Plans]. It was noted that the recent RAP review introduced greater discretion on their requirement.
- It was suggested that in their current form PDS are not entirely fulfilling their purpose i.e. to add value to the design process, aid assessment of the application and clarify how the design has been reached.
- It was agreed by all that a workshop to discuss PDS and to brainstorm improvements would be useful and that this would be planned in due course.
- It was agreed that PlanForum would be well placed to contribute feedback to the design aspects of the UAP/RAP review and that this would be pursued.

PlanForum feedback	All present discussed the PlanForum group, strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement, current membership and suggestions for future activity.

Key points:
- It was agreed that there was a need for better communication between the department and agents so that each could understand the constraints the other is under and to facilitate better joint working
- The department would work with members of PlanForum to discuss suggestions for improvements
- It was suggested that as a first step a newsletter would be prepared, to be circulated by email and uploaded on the website. Similarly notes from meetings would be circulated and available on the website.
- It was suggested that PlanForum could launch a number of forums/workshops for both agents and department staff to improve relationships and communication – this would be explored.

Date & time of next meeting: Wed 17 Nov 2010 9.30am – 12pm (venue TBC)

PlanForum

List of members (updated 09.08.10)

Name	Representing
Aslett, David	Aslett Naftel
Barker, James	Create Ltd
Bray, Jill	Courtillet Design
Charles, Tony	Charles Planning Associates Ltd
Cooney, Robert	Premier Developments CI Limited
Representative	Chartered Institute of Building (Guernsey)
Duquemin, Nigel	Nigel Duquemin & Co
Dyke, Andrew	Cresswell,Cuttle & Dyke Ltd
Falla, David	Falla Associates International
Foulds, Carl	Direct Architectural Solutions
Hibbs, John	PF+A Limited
Le Page, Robert	Robert W Le Page Architects & Chartered Surveyors
Lockwood, Bill	Chartered Architect & Planner
Male, Esther	Cresswell,Cuttle & Dyke Ltd
Robertson, Drew	Dunnell Robertson Partnership

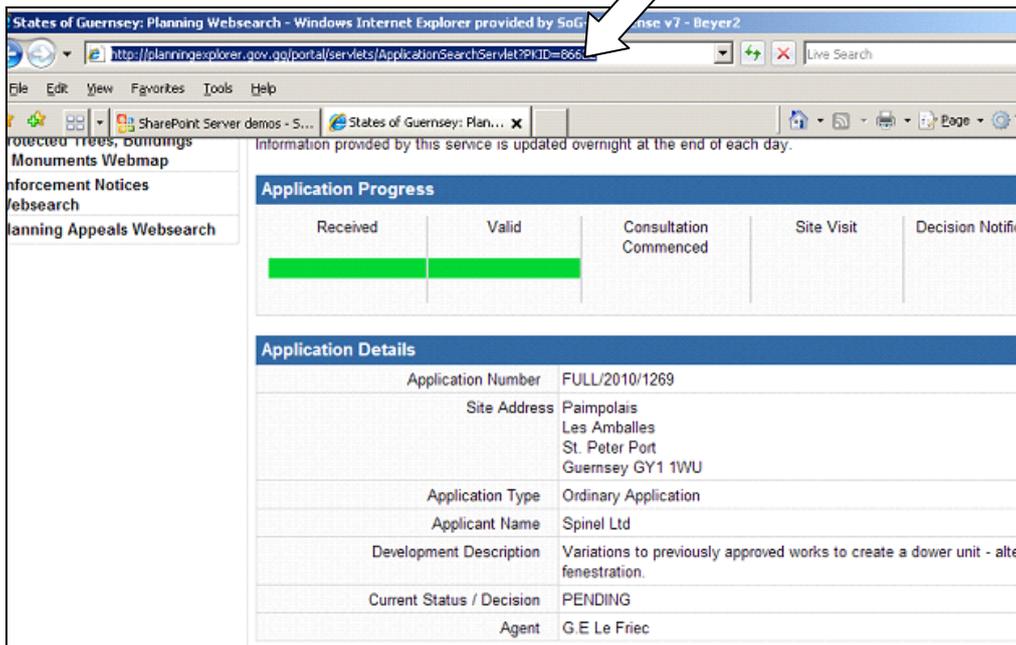| Reserve members	
Whitmore, Alex	PF+A Limited
Falla, Peter	PF+A Limited

Keeping track of your applications

Keeping track of what's happening with your current planning applications is very simple if you follow these steps.

Step 1: Find my application

Click on **Find my application** and you will be taken to the Planning Websearch page of the website. Enter your details to find your application (e.g. Application Number, Applicant Name, Address or Planning Appeal Panel Reference).

Step 2: Follow my application – copying the URL

When you have found your application, highlight and copy the link in the top box by pressing **Ctrl and C** on the keyboard at the same time (tip: hold down Ctrl first, then press C).

Step 3: Follow my application – pasting the URL

When you've copied this link (known as a URL) you will need to put it in a word document. Open the document you want the link to be in, and then press **Ctrl and V** on the keyboard at the same time to paste the link into the document (again, hold down Ctrl first, and then press V).

Doing this creates a link between the application page on the Planning website and you.

You can create links to all the applications that you have ongoing at a particular time. You may like to put all the applications that you need to check into a table like the one below:

Planning Applications Table:

Application No	Follow this application
FULL/2010/1269	http://planningexplorer.gov.gg/portal/servlets/ApplicationSearchServlet?PKID=86622

Keeping track of my application – Complete!

By checking the list of all active applications you have with the Department on a daily basis, you will be always aware of current progress.

You can check if any decisions have been made, or whether a Decision Notice is in the post that morning. You can also see a copy of the Decision Notice before it arrives!

You can then either phone your customer to give them the good news or (perhaps better still) send them an email with the link to the application so that they can see for themselves.