

**4.10 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development regarding a planning approach referred to in a speech to the Chamber of Commerce (OQ.207/2025):**

Further to his recent speech to the Chamber of Commerce, will the Minister outline his priorities in relation to the new planning approach, which will see economic impact being taken as a key consideration in the determination of future planning applications?

**Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development):**

I am really pleased to have been working with my colleague, the Planning Minister, on this joint approach, which is to ensure that in both the short and long-term creative economic consideration is given to planning decisions. In working with my fellow Minister, I am pleased that my department is also aligned with planners to improve advice for decision makers. This is a staged approach, ensuring economic weight is given to applications while also assessing processes to improve outcomes for businesses and eventually ensuring that the next Island Plan becomes a framework that better supports future sustainable economic growth. There is no doubt that this is a joint effort with success being dependent on the quality of inputs, the clarity of process and the strength of shared understanding. The focus is on the quality of evidence provided by applicants, the formal economic input from the Department for the Economy and the understanding of economic factors and outcomes by planners when factors are being balanced and decisions are being made. The most obvious, most visible example of this work, is in the online planning hub that has recently been launched.

**4.10.1 Deputy T.A. Coles:**

I did not necessarily hear a key priority for the Minister there. One of the challenges we face on the Planning Committee is evaluating the proof of redundancy that is made for a change of use or a removal of employment land. Can he confirm that his department or indeed Jersey Business will be well informed to be able to make decisions based on maintaining things like light industry?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

It is really important that my department is not involved in decision making. My department is involved in providing advice that then the Planning Department and the Planning Committee, and ultimately the Planning Minister, are able to take into account when making their adjudications. The joint approach has 3 main areas: the input and impact, approaching on immediate actions and responses and ensuring that economic factors are given material weight in the planning process; the processes themselves, addressing the systems and mechanisms that support consistent and informed decision making, and I think that is where the matters that the Deputy refers to would fit in; and that strategies are forward looking, shaping the long-term vision and embedding economic thinking into planning policy and practice. From that perspective, information that the Planning Committee would be provided with by the Department for the Economy would be used by the Planning Committee in their considerations. With regard to the matters that the Deputy refers to directly, I am not sure that the Department for the Economy itself would necessarily, although it could, talk about whether sufficient advertising and publicity had been given to a particular property with regard to a planning application. That is something that we absolutely can look at but I know it is something that is difficult to determine.

#### **4.10.2 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:**

Does the Minister accept that the Bridging Island Plan includes multiple references to the need to consider economic impact in it? Therefore, can he identify exactly what is lacking in the process at that moment that has gone wrong, given that that mechanism is already very strongly embedded in the Island Plan?

#### **Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I must disagree with the Deputy in that I do not believe that economic consideration is sufficiently embedded within the Bridging Island Plan. I do note that the Bridging Island Plan itself made no new sites available for economic use. Certainly from the perspective of policy, while there are policy matters that talk about economic consideration, I think there has been a job of work to be done, which we have done with the Planning Minister and his team, to help Planning officers understand the nature and meaning of economic considerations.

[10:45]

#### **4.10.3 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Given that answer in particular, does the Minister accept that there is a risk that this might be seen as an attempt not to add balance but to make economic factors trump environmental factors within the system? What will he do to ensure that that is not the case?

#### **Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I think the planning law, the Bridging Island Plan makes very clear the many considerations they take into account. I do accept that with any piece of work where you are trying to bring something up the agenda, which is effectively what this is, in theory you can go too far. It could be seen that economic matters are being taken too much into consideration. That is part of the political balance. That is one reason why we have the Planning Committee. My department is working to help provide advice and understanding. It is not working to make decisions. It does in itself not make decisions. That is down to the Planning officers, the Planning Committee and the Planning Minister. They take the advice provided and it is up to them how they interpret it. Obviously the balance of considerations is always that it is political and it is in the minds of the people making those decisions on the day but I personally, at the moment, am not concerned about it being overly taken into account because, at the moment, economic matters are fairly taken into account in planning considerations.

#### **4.10.4 Deputy T.A. Coles:**

Would the Minister like to see either the Department for the Economy or Jersey Business become a statutory consultee so when matters of economy are required they are taken firmly into consideration?

#### **Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I must admit that is something I think should take place. I do believe the economic impact of almost any site - it could be residential housing all the way through to a new laboratory or something - is important and I believe should be taken into account. Therefore, I can see there is a strong case for making, as the Deputy said, either Jersey Business or the Department for the Economy a statutory consultee.