

Construction professionals urge caution on Guernsey development plan

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Less than a week before a debate that will finalise development plans in Guernsey for the next ten years, politicians have again been urged to support amendments to car parking and affordable housing proposals that the construction industry say will otherwise stop building activity and cost jobs.

In total 17 amendments to the Island Development Plan have been proposed ahead of the debate next Wednesday, and at yesterday's meeting experts urged Deputies to vote for amendments #4, #5 and #12.

The Island Development Plan affordable housing and car parking policies have been criticised by the Construction Industry Forum, the Property Development Forum, the Guernsey Housing Association and firms in the industry.

They say that setting the policy in place for ten years so soon after the strategic housing target of 300 homes per year was overwhelmingly voted down by politicians, and in the absence of a full review and a fresh target, would be a mistake.

Martyn Baudains said: "The Island Development Plan must be right first time - getting it wrong would affect house prices, development and the security of jobs in the construction sector.

"It is clear from the questions that were asked that many Deputies are concerned about the correct scale of the housing problem and possible double counting issues.

"That of course was at the heart of the Seminar we organised with Professor Christine Whitehead at St James and that is the principal reason the Planning Inspectors findings were in favour of the IDP proposals, which forced upon the Inspectors the discredited Housing Target of 300 new homes each year and the policies set out in the SLUP, even though the target had been expressly rejected by the States as unworkable and monstrously big last September.

"Surely it must be right to build a plan with such fundamental importance around solid up to date data and research.

"All we are saying to Deputies is that without that data and research, the social housing provisions, planning covenants and rezoning will not deliver new affordable homes and will lead to delay and additional cost, and more viability planning appeals - that's not a sensible or sustainable way to deal with a policy that will dictate every element of housing development activity for a decade."

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