

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
BY DEPUTY J. M. MAÇON OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 2nd JUNE 2020**

Question

Will the Minister advise the Assembly when he is intending to hold the Island Plan debate; is he giving any consideration to amending legislation in order to defer the debate until the next parliamentary term of office; and, if not, why not?

Answer

As with many aspects of government business, the Island Plan Review has been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and cannot now be delivered based on the previously scheduled programme, scope of the review, and the planned extent of public engagement and consultation. This is because of the logistical problems, diversion of resources and the huge uncertainty of future government policy required by our post Covid recovery.

With the advice of our external planning partners Arup and officers of the Strategic Policy team, I have considered the options to respond to the situation: this has included the potential deferral of the review until the next parliamentary term of office. However preliminary discussions with my Ministerial colleagues have rejected this possibility and I have been requested to further consider an island plan being lodged and debated in time for the May 2022 elections.

There are pressing community needs that remain to be addressed, such as affordable homes and key worker accommodation; local parish housing needs; improving the quality of the island's urban environment and public infrastructure, such as a new hospital. Some work in progress is partially complete and can continue to be progressed but much cannot be started until our Covid status allows.

The Council of Ministers maintain their aim to deliver a new Island Plan within the current parliamentary term. This necessitates changes to the process of review and adoption; as well as reducing the scope of the plan because the situation is too uncertain for reliable forecasts and medium-long term planning to be undertaken.

Our external advisers consider it will be very challenging to meet the shortened timescale. Early stakeholder engagement will be significantly reduced however it may be possible to hold virtual events with their assistance and, whilst not ideal, the extended 12-week lodging period would run in parallel with wider public consultation; a full examination in public would follow to consider public and States Members' views. Detailed timescales can be set out in an amended Island Plan Programme shortly.

These changes will require a wider political discussion before they are adopted. It remains my intention to hold in-committee States debate as soon as possible in order that elected members can contribute their views. The significant changes of process and scope required can be discussed. At the same time as the issues that the Island Plan Review can sensibly address in the remaining timescale before the elections, given the future public policy vacuum which Covid has created, particularly in matters such as population, the economy and the need for sustainability. We need to recognise that it will be several months before we begin to see what "new normal" in Jersey can look like and may well take longer.

