

The Island Development Plan review

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Chris Crew, Senior Planning Consultant at Collas Crill, considers the dilemma facing Guernsey's Development & Planning Authority (DPA) as it seeks to deliver updated policies to boost housing delivery and support economic growth.

The DPA launched a review of the Island Development Plan (IDP) on 23 January 2023, with the aim that it be completed before the current political term ends in June 2025.

The review has a particular focus on housing land supply and delivery as this is a category 1 action in the Government Work Plan, and the most pressing domestic issue to tackle.

The review will also cover employment land supply, an update to Area of Biodiversity Importance designations, and other minor clarifications.

A parallel review of the planning law, ordinances and regulations is also planned, with the aim of identifying opportunities to streamline future IDP preparation and reviews.

Guernsey's planning system

Guernsey's planning system requires decisions to be made in accordance with the IDP, with limited scope for departure from adopted policies.

The IDP's principal aim is:

'To ensure land use policies are in place that are consistent with the Strategic Land Use Plan and which help to maintain and create a socially inclusive, healthy and economically strong Island, while balancing these objectives with the protection and enhancement of Guernsey's built and natural environment and the need to use land wisely.'

To make best use of land and natural resources, the IDP also ensures that its policies:

'...have an emphasis towards encouraging brownfield development in the interests of the most effective and efficient use of land and protection of the environment, although it is accepted that some greenfield development may be required to meet the social and economic requirements of the States.'

The dilemma facing the DPA

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Deputy Victoria Oliver, President of the DPA, has previously expressed her frustration over the 'tightrope' the DPA has to walk when balancing competing policy objectives and the often strongly-held views of those affected by development proposals; something that will be familiar to decision-makers in many jurisdictions.

Large-scale and strategically important developments are invariably contentious, as recent proposals for new schools, residential development at Pointues Rocques, and key-worker housing at the Princess Elizabeth Hospital illustrate.

But these types of developments are exactly what is needed, '*...to maintain and create a socially inclusive, healthy and economically strong Island*'.

This presents the DPA with a dilemma; how to balance often-competing socio-economic and environmental factors, and how best to engage with stakeholders in a way that inspires confidence in the system and actually delivers the investment and development that the island desperately needs.

Risks of a piecemeal review

The IDP review will focus on specific policies required to meet strategic priorities, rather than developing an entirely new framework; a "refresh", as described by DPA member Deputy Sasha Kazantseva-Miller. This is understandable, given the time and resources that a wholesale review would demand and the likely need for the States of Guernsey to revisit its *Strategic Land Use Plan* ahead of that.

The risk, however, is that a piecemeal review may not break down existing barriers to the delivery of new housing and other important economic investment, nor make the DPA's tightrope any easier to walk.

Given the urgent need to tackle the housing crisis and support economic recovery, failure to convince stakeholders that a revised IDP will be fit for purpose could leave the DPA – and Guernsey – no better off than it is today.

For these reasons, and despite the review's tight timeframe, the DPA must instigate meaningful stakeholder engagement and consultation at the earliest opportunity.

For more information or advice on engaging with the IDP review process, contact [Chris Crew](#) on 01481 734253.

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