5 ENVIRONMENTAL

5.1 Climate change

GENERAL SITUATION

Guernsey is already experiencing long-term weather patterns similar to predicted climate change scenarios of warmer drier summers and milder, wetter winters. In the last few years, air temperatures in Guernsey have been generally higher than normal. There has been a significant reduction in air frosts and severe frosts appear to be a thing of the past. Sea surface temperatures are also increasing.

KEY FACTS

- Mean air temperatures have increased in the order of 1°C since records began in 1843. The long-term average for the period 1843 – 1980 compared against the period 1981 – 2006, shows that every month of the year is getting warmer, with July and August showing the biggest increase of 1.1°C while March and November have also shown significant increases of 0.9°C and 0.8°C respectively and small increases shown of 0.2°C in February and 0.4°C in December. 2003 was the warmest year on record, with a maximum air temperature of 34.3°C on August 9th and other local record breaking temperatures in March, April, May, July and September. Nine of the months in 2007 recorded a higher mean air temperature than the 30 year average.

- Since 1946, a long term average of 5.3 frost days per year has been recorded, but the average for the last decade has been just 1.3 frost days per year and no severe frosts have been recorded in the decade.

- Since 1843, average annual rainfall has decreased by about 4%. During the same period, summer/autumn rainfall has fallen by 16% and winter/spring rainfall has risen by 10%. In 2007, a total of 868.7mm of rainfall were recorded, which was 5.5% above the climatic mean. Eight months of 2007 experienced more rainfall than the 30 year average.

- Since 1980, there has been an overall increase in the mean annual surface seawater temperature (taken from St Peter Port Harbour) of about 1.7°C.

  Information from Cherbourg suggests that sea level in this part of the Channel has risen by over 4cm in the last 30 years. Future projections suggest a potential sea level rise of up to 74cm under the medium-high scenario of climate change.

See Key Issue 5.1.1

KEY ISSUES

5.1.1 Adapting to a changing climate

Changes in the climate have had a dramatic effect on agriculture in Guernsey. Warmer soils mean that seeds germinate earlier, crops continue to grow throughout the winter and there are fewer cold snaps to kill crop pests and diseases. Wetter winter months mean that although grass may continue to grow, the ground may flood and become 'poached' under the weight of cattle and farm machinery. Summer droughts mean that dairy cattle, which rely on a plentiful supply of fresh grass, often need to have extra conserves of food (such as grass silage) provided during the driest months. Some crops that could not be grown in Guernsey 30 years ago are now commonplace. Farmers and growers may wish to exploit opportunities for niche crops, such as outdoor herbs and exotic fruits and nuts, which thrive in frost free environments. It is conceivable that Guernsey growers may even consider planting vineyards and commencing wine production.

As a result of warmer seas, local fishermen have had to adapt to changes in fish stocks; for example, it is now more profitable to fish for bass, which are in abundance, than for crabs which are in decline.

Many would welcome the prospect of hotter, sunnier days with less rainfall and warmer seas. The island may even become a more favoured holiday destination as others become intolerably hot and the cost of long haul air travel begins to escalate.

On the other hand, the risk of flooding due to higher winter rainfall and by sea-water, especially during extreme storm surges, could increase in low lying areas of the island. Where appropriate, we will need to review sea defences and take action to protect vulnerable properties. In addition, greater consideration will need to be given to the possibility of flooding before new development proceeds. Serious flooding could also cause pollution of fresh water supplies, with much drier summers it will be even more important to conserve and protect water resources (see section 4.2: Water; and 5.2.2: Freshwater quality). Public urban open spaces, such as parks and gardens, may play a very important role in adaptation strategies for urban areas under projected climate change impacts (see also: section 2.4.3 Urban open spaces).

By assessing the impacts that climate change may have on factors such as infrastructure, agriculture, water resources and flooding, it is possible to plan for adaptation so that damages and costs can be minimised and perhaps some potential benefits realised. Adaptation to climate change needs to be embedded within all strategic planning processes. Planning for highest predictions could waste money. Planning for lowest predictions could jeopardize infrastructure adequacy, with greater costs.

Key Issue 5.1.1

How can adaptation to climate change be embedded within the strategic planning process?

5.2 Air and water quality

GENERAL SITUATION

Air quality in Guernsey is generally very good. The use of low sulphur fuels at the Power Station and the importation of electricity via the cable link can help to keep industrial pollution to a minimum. Since December 2000, 'real time' air quality monitoring has been set up to measure 'roadside pollution levels' in the Grange and 'background levels' on two sites some 200 metres away. Analysis of the data confirms that vehicle emissions from commuter traffic are the main source of atmospheric pollution in Guernsey.

The quality of raw water in storage and the quality of treated water for supply are excellent. Water that is fed to the customer's tap now reaches every water quality parameter set by the EU and UK.

The bathing water quality around Guernsey is very mixed. No local bay has consistently achieved the EC Guideline Standard in every year, although the Island is not legally committed to the European Bathing Water Directive. Beaches that have failed the Guideline Standard in recent years include Ladies Bay, Cobo, Petit Bot, Pembroke and Vazon. If the provisions of the new Bathing Water Directive (approved by the EU on 15th February 2006) were applied in Guernsey, there is a risk that the water quality in these popular bays may not meet its requirements.

KEY FACTS

- Taking into account all pollutants, Guernsey's greenhouse gas emissions were 578 ktonnes in 1990 and 579 in 2006.
- During 2007, levels of particulates rose above World Health Organization (WHO) standards. The maximum recorded levels for sulphur dioxide and ozone both dropped although ozone remained above WHO standard.
- Although background levels of nitrogen dioxide rose, the roadside level of nitrogen dioxide was the only air quality indicator to fall in 2006.
- Coinciding with both the morning and evening peak traffic flows, pollution levels in The Grange are almost twice as high as background levels and also double those on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.
- Over the last decade, the annual average nitrate levels found in the Island's stream catchments has declined by 41%.
- Catchment Protection staff investigated 70 raw water incidents in 2007, a third of which were as a result of potential sewage pollution.
- Since 1998, the number of beaches gaining the EC Guideline Standard has declined from 11 out of 12 beaches (91%) to only 7 out of 13 beaches (53%). Others only pass the minimum water quality standard and one, Pembroke Bay, failed the European mandatory water quality standard. In Jersey, 11 of the 16 passed the Guideline Standard (69%). Historically bathing water quality at Pembroke Bay has been excellent. However for the period 2002-2006, results have shown a decline by 25% on that for the period from 1997-2001.
- In the 15th National Beachwatch Survey (2007), a total of 40 beaches were surveyed in the Channel Islands of those 31 were in Guernsey. Once again the Channel Islands recorded the lowest density for Sewage Related Debris (0.7 items per km).

See Key Issues 5.2.1 – 5.2.3

KEY ISSUES

5.2.1 Air quality (see also section 4.1.2: traffic and transport)

The main issue for air quality is the growth in motor traffic and fuel consumption. Traffic volumes and imports of transport fuel reached their highest recorded levels in 2006. The impact is mainly localised in a few streets such as College Street and Fountain Street where the polluted air is trapped by topography and buildings and it is less easily dispersed.

With a high level of car ownership and usage, existing peaks of atmospheric pollution associated with high pressure systems are likely to increase and lead to increased respiratory disease, particularly of acute asthma, and of exacerbations of chronic pulmonary disease.

Key Issue 5.2.1

What can be done to address the localised impacts of traffic on air quality in the urban area?

5.2.2 Freshwater quality (see also section 4.2: water; and section 5.1: climate change)

Being so heavily reliant upon surface water does expose Guernsey to the risk of contamination especially from inundation by sea water, flash flooding and the concentration of cesspits in certain areas. The greatest potential threat is to the Marais Stream catchment, which feeds into the Longue Hougue reservoir. Longue Hougue will shortly become the major water treatment facility and it is imperative that this resource is protected from activities that present a real and present risk of contamination. The increased risks of flooding could cause pollution of the freshwater supplies and therefore a drainage and surface water management plan for the St Sampson's Marais catchment is essential.

Key Issue 5.2.2

What can be done to protect the island's water resources from the risks of contamination?

5.2.3 Sea water quality

The discharge of raw macerated sewage into the Little Russell continues to cause concern to many Guernsey residents (see also section 4 above). However, the existing long sea outfall was designed and engineered to dilute sewage so that the natural marine processes available in the Little Russel were not overloaded. More than 95% of the bacterial contamination is removed by natural marine processes within the area between Fermain in the south to the Plate Fougere lighthouse in the north. Regular inspections of the outfall, bathing water quality and shellfish are undertaken. These reveal the present abundance and diversity of marine flora and fauna, which is considered to be indicative of water quality in the Little Russel. A Benthic survey would provide further evidence to assess the long term impact of sewage discharge on the marine environment.

So the pattern of bathing water quality is not easily explained by discharges from the wastewater outfalls, which suggests there are other local sources of pollution to be investigated and addressed. Surface water discharges are one factor that can adversely affect the quality of bathing water, particularly in shallow enclosed bays where streams discharge directly onto the beach. Potential solutions might

include measures such as completion of the Network Extension Plan, longer surface water outfalls or reinstating natural wetland water storage. The installation of reed beds at St Saviours Reservoir provided an environmentally friendly solution to combat water quality pollution.

Key Issue 5.2.3

What can be done to improve sea water quality?

5.3 Land and accommodation

GENERAL SITUATION

The island's land and accommodation represents a scarce resource which plays a valuable role in determining our well being. Some is used commercially and contributes to GNP, other areas are used for open amenity and recreation and some fulfils an essential social role in providing the housing and other community facilities. With a limited amount of land available, how we use this resource in the future will be a key factor in shaping the quality of life in environmental, economic and social terms.

KEY FACTS

- Guernsey's landmass totals 6,358 hectares (38,796 vergees) compared to Bermuda at 5,301 hectares, Jersey at 11,793 hectares and the Isle of Man at 57,198 hectares. The Urban Area represents 13% of the Island's landmass whilst the Rural Area accounts for 87%.

- The States property portfolio accounts for 650 hectares (3,966 vergees), or 10% of the Island, and has been valued at around £1.5billlion.

- 15% of the island is built-up leaving 85% as open landscape. Buildings and their curtilages account for most of developed land (39% of all development or 6% of the Island), followed closely by roads and car parks (36% of all development or 5% of the Island). This type of developed land increased during 2006, whilst the amount of land used for greenhouses decreased.

- Between 1996 and 2001, 64% of all buildings erected in the island (measured in terms of building footprint or site cover, including extensions to buildings) were situated in the Rural Area. Between 2001 and 2006 this figure had fallen to 56%. By the same measure, during the period 2001 – 2006 39% of domestic development took place in the Urban Area whereas 53% of non-domestic development took place there. The overall trend indicates that a greater area of building site cover took place in the Urban Area during 2001 – 2006 than in the period 1996 – 2001.

- There is an average of 0.28 hectare (1.7 vergees) of land per household or 0.1 hectare (0.6 vergees) for each member of the population.

- In 1981, the States agreed to reclaim 11 hectares of land from the sea at Longue Hougue.

- 595 hectares (9% of the total landmass) are used commercially. At 387 hectares, agriculture uses 6% of the Island's land, horticulture covers 130 hectares (2%) and business activities such as office, industry, retail tourism and gardening utilise 77 hectares or 1% of the total landmass.

- Island wide, the proportion of buildings that are single storey (including those with roof accommodation) is 72% (30,214), whereas in the Urban Area the proportion of buildings with 2 or more storeys is 51% (6,371).

See Key Issues 5.3.1 – 5.3.4

KEY ISSUES

5.3.1 Optimum use of land and accommodation

Guernsey is a small Island. Certainly compared with its main offshore competitors, with a similar politico-geographical and economic composition, it is one of the first to come up against the limitations of space. For example, it represents 54% of the landmass of Jersey and just 11% of the Isle of Man.

Elsewhere in this paper, a number of issues have highlighted the significant pressures for development and the extent to which other limitations constrain the island's capacity to accommodate it. Simply to maintain current lifestyles and to provide, for example, enough decent housing, recreation space and economic opportunities will increase the demand for more land and accommodation. Thought needs to be given to how we can ensure we are making the most of the land and accommodation available to us whilst balancing equally the needs of all members of the community.

A strategy of targeting brown-field sites has been successfully used to accommodate a range of developments from small infill to much larger developments such as the Mixed Use Redevelopment Areas at Glategny Esplanade and Admiral Park. The Leale's Yard MURA remains undeveloped although informal proposals are being prepared and a formal planning application expected some time in early/mid 2008.

Encouraging the development of taller buildings is another way of providing more floorspace to meet demand without increasing the building footprint. Although a very high proportion of buildings in Guernsey are single storey (with or without roof accommodation), there are also a great number with two or more floors, particularly within the urban parts of the Island. Indeed, there are parts of St Peter Port where 4 and 5 storey buildings are not uncommon and the island's tallest building, Cour du Parc has 10 storeys of accommodation.

Some higher density developments within the Island have adapted a conventional 'clos-style' design approach by scaling down the development and providing each property with its own garden area, parking area and front door. This can give the impression of cramming too many buildings into too little space. However, there are now some noteworthy and indeed award winning examples in the island where relatively low density and poor quality development has been replaced by higher density developments which offer a much better living environment and makes better use of the land available.

Beyond the confines of the Island's land mass, thought could be given to creating additional land through reclamation from the sea. Such development has already been carried out, most significantly at Longue Hougue, St Sampson, where 27 acres of land will be created once the area has been completely filled with inert waste.

Key Issue 5.3.1

How can we make optimum use of land and accommodation and increase the amount of space available for occupation?

5.3.2 Distribution of development

Site coverage figures indicate that the current land use strategy has successfully concentrated development in the Urban Area while allowing the Rural Area to continue to flourish. In particular, planning policies are having an effect in directing major commercial developments to sites in and around the urban centres of Town and the Bridge.

There are a number of ways that future development can be distributed throughout the Island all of which will have some environmental impact. The current land use strategy has sought to concentrate it within the existing built-up areas through a number of methods.

Concentrating development in the urban areas brings vacant and inefficiently used land and buildings into use, it creates new opportunities for people to live and work in better designed places and provides support for community services including public transport. One of the factors which favours the concentration approach is the notion that it reduces the need to travel by car by reducing travel distances, improving opportunities to combine trips, and offering patterns of development that can be more easily served by public transport. It also means that both town and country dwellers can enjoy what is left of the countryside. However there are dangers if urban residents are forced to carry the burden in terms of a loss of local amenity space and neighbour or traffic impacts - an over emphasis on residential development can lead to a loss of urban variety and of employment sites.

It has been argued that spreading development more evenly around the island would be more equitable. But would this just add to the wholesale suburbanisation of the island, thereby degrading the overall character and attractiveness of the island? The costs of dispersal could be the loss of what little countryside is left and the impact on personal mobility with the need to access shops, workplaces and services leading to an increase in car use.

Key Issue 5.3.2

How can we ensure that the distribution of new development makes a positive contribution to the island and does not detract from the character and quality of its urban and rural environments?

5.3.3 States owned land

The effective strategic planning of States' land and accommodation can play a crucial role in facilitating new development schemes. An enlightened and proactive attitude towards asset management will help to gain the widest regeneration benefits and make the most of opportunities that may emerge. This approach will be particularly relevant for sites relating to the public realm and potential land reclamation schemes.

Where there are extensive States' land holdings (e.g. Castel Hospital and the Bouet/Chateau des Marais, a better corporate planning mechanism could assist in not only identifying development opportunities/requirements but also resolving many strategic and physical issues at an early stage. By bringing together public sector land holdings and private development interests early on in the process, the planning system can help to use States' land and property assets to lever private sector investment in various forms of community-related benefits and infrastructure.

With 10% of the Island falling within the ownership of the States of Guernsey, not all of it will be appropriate for development and it might not always offer the best location for identified States development. However, the States could consider land swaps with the private sector and/or land donations to enable the right development to take place in the right place and equally to enable environmental enhancement and meet social needs.

The appropriate protection and management of States-owned open land and valuable buildings will be an essential component in the maintenance of high quality open space and physical environment.

The framework for rationalising States' land and property assets will be addressed by the forthcoming States Property Rationalisation Strategy (identified in the Government Business Plan – Operational Plans Supplement, July 2007). The new Planning Law will bring States development within the planning system and supersede the formal consultation procedure that was established by States resolution in 1991.

Key Issue 5.3.3

How can we provide a framework for the effective strategic planning of States' land and accommodation, especially where extensive States land holdings could contribute to wider planning objectives?

5.3.4 Under-used and vacant accommodation

There is some evidence of inertia and inefficiency in the commercial land and property market, which means that some land and property is being under utilised. There are a great many reasons for this. In some cases the beneficial owner is simply not interested in realising the full development potential of the property, in others the owner may be daunted by the prospect of obtaining the necessary permissions, undertaking the work and managing tenants.

Studies of the central areas of Town, focussing on the Mill Street/ Mansell Street 'old quarter', have revealed the potential to rehabilitate and refurbish under-used and vacant accommodation. There are also some examples of successful attempts to reintroduce living accommodation into these areas, such as the celebrated Cour du Bordier development.

The combination of fewer visitors and a shorter length of stay has seen some obsolete hotel sites usefully redeveloped to provide much needed residential and commercial accommodation.

A recent survey of the potential for new industrial development on brownfield sites found several areas where the existing haphazard and inefficient use of sites provided opportunities for redevelopment to accommodate new business enterprises.

The recent trend towards mergers in the financial services industry and the consolidation of firms on single large floor-plate sites has released secondary and intermediate accommodation. Some of the space has been refurbished and re-let to the burgeoning business services sector, but some has been retained as disaster recovery or business continuity space. Some sites offer the potential for redevelopment to provide modern large floor-plate accommodation which would be better suited to the finance industry.

Key Issue 5.3.4

How can we encourage the rationalization and re-use of under-used or vacant accommodation?

5.4 Habitats and landscapes

GENERAL SITUATION

The island's rich biodiversity is evidenced by a high number of natural habitats. Fragments of threatened wet meadow habitat are managed for their display of Heath Spotted, Common Spotted, Loose-Flowered (which does not occur in the UK), and Southern Marsh orchids, which may be seen in May each year. Le Grand Pre and the Vale Pond are primarily large reed beds, and of interest for their birds, particularly during the spring and autumn. In the fragmented woodland, warblers, long-eared owl and short-toed tree creeper breed, while wheatears and pipits rest in the dune grassland. The characteristic earth bank hedgerows are home to endemics such as Guernsey vole, greater white-toothed shrew and Guernsey fern. The inter-tidal zone supports a wide range of marine species and many species of waders. The saltmarshes of the Colin Best Reserve, plus the Claire Mare, Lihou Island and most of the Lihou Headland has been designated as a Ramsar site, indicating that it is a wetland of international importance.

KEY FACTS

- Over a half of the Island is covered in grassland (improved and amenity grassland). This compares to only 3% of the Island which is wooded.

- A review of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in the Urban Area has identified 15 areas for potential designation; however, most of the sites currently designated have declined in quality.

- Guernsey boasts nearly 2000 species of plants, which in turn support a diverse range of invertebrates.

- Since 2000, monitoring of the island's breeding bird species indicate that 25% are decreasing.

- All 11 species of breeding sea birds did well during the period 1970-1992. However, from 1992-2000 only three species continued to increase their populations. Manx Shearwater, Common Tern, Razorbill and Puffin are now under severe threat with populations decreasing by up to 78%. Shorebirds are doing very poorly; four out of ten of the commonest species are all under severe threat.

- Over a 20 year period, 60% of the commoner migrant birds arrived earlier and 30% arrived later. Three species of migratory birds overwinter in Guernsey, namely Chiff Chaff, Blackcap and Sandwich Tern.

- In the last 20 years, the average flowering dates of 19 out of 21 spring flowering plants have become earlier, 7 of which are statistically significant. Overall the mean flowering date has been one day earlier each year

- More than 130,000 trees were planted between 1992 and 2005 as part of the States Tree Planting Scheme.

  Since June 2003, the annual number of planning applications relating to tree works has more than doubled from 56 applications to 126 applications per annum.

See Key Issues 5.4.1 – 5.4.2

KEY ISSUES

5.4.1 Habitats

In 1999, a comprehensive habitats survey revealed the extent of different habitat types in the island. The Biological Records Centre maintains records on a site by site basis, but the impact of development and change on the island's habitats since 1999 is unclear and the evidence is patchy. A preliminary review of the Sites of Nature Conservation Interest in the Urban Area suggests that the affects of urbanisation combined with inappropriate or non-existent land management practices appear to be threatening some of the island's habitats. In some cases, over management through inappropriate mowing regimes, weeding or the application of herbicides and pesticides is having an effect. In other cases, a lack of management seems to be leading to colonisation by non-native species that crowd out the natural vegetation or is facilitating the uncontrolled encroachment of scrub. The long term impacts of climate change on the island's habitats are unknown, but are likely to be significant. Controlled access to and interpretation of threatened habitats may help to foster greater appreciation and awareness of bio-diversity and best management practice.

Key Issue 5.4.1

What can be done to encourage the restoration and management of threatened habitats in accordance with best practice?

5.4.2 Landscapes

Developments that respond to the underlying landscape character are more easily assimilated into the environment. For example, St Peter Port's escarpments and deeply incised valleys have been able to absorb relatively tall buildings more readily than would be the case elsewhere.

The loss of green-field sites has been largely abated in recent years, but in some respects the distinctiveness of the underlying landscape character is still being eroded. Particularly due to the removal of the previously predominant tree cover of mature Elms and the introduction of inappropriately ornamental hedges and tree/shrub planting. This general tidying and domestication of the landscape has meant that in places some relatively featureless suburban developments dominate the landscapes of the Inland Scarp and Central Plain. Nonetheless, many of these changes reflect shifting lifestyles driven by the transition from a largely land-based economy to one which is dominated by the service sector and a more leisure oriented, cash rich-time poor society.

The contribution of landscape character to local distinctiveness needs to be fully understood; this will become increasingly important as we adapt to climate change and respond to key design influences such as slope, orientation, airflows and surface water drainage.

Key Issue 5.4.2

What can be done to conserve and enhance the distinctiveness of the underlying landscape character?

5.5 Design and the built environment

GENERAL SITUATION

The Government Business Plan asserts Guernsey's independent identity, through preserving and enhancing the Cultural Heritage. Protected Buildings and Ancient Monuments are registered under specific legislation. Many composite elements of Guernsey's built environments contribute positively towards the island's unique identity. The historic town of St Peter Port is rich in architectural heritage and features. Local architecture is prevalent within the main town area, and buildings such as Elizabeth College, the Markets and St James are valued historical legacies to the Island. Many other individual buildings are of cultural, architectural and historic significance. Napoleonic and WWII Atlantic Wall fortifications are iconic features of Guernsey's coast and hinterland.

KEY FACTS

- 40% of the existing building stock was built before 1914; approximately 40% of dwellings have been erected since 1960 and are of cavity wall construction.

- In 2007, there are 1600 protected buildings and ancient monuments on the register, the number of entries has risen by less than 1% in the last decade; it is estimated that 3% of dwellings are registered as protected buildings.

- 76% of protected buildings are dwellings, 9% are commercial and 15% are agricultural.

- 20% of protected buildings date from before C17, 10% date from C17, 25% from C18, 43% from C19 and 3% from C20.

- Over 500 applications for listed building consent are received annually of which 90% are approved.

- Complete demolition of a protected building is rare; however, applications for partial demolition are on the increase and affect 8% of all listed building applications in a year.

- An on-line poll of 172 people shows that Sir Charles Frossard House is the most disliked building (32%) and the Airport Terminal is the most appreciated building (31%). The development at Admiral Park is liked and disliked in almost equal measure (12% and 16% respectively). Three times as many people dislike the new Court building as like it (9% and 3% respectively), whereas Royal Place appeals to three times as many people as it offends (10% and 3% respectively). No-one likes the Tudor House development.

  A study of 11 housing developments in the urban area based on the Building for Life criteria found that 55% of schemes were below average with scores of 9 or less out of 20; while only two developments scored above 14 points, which is considered good practice, raising questions of the value of new buildings for occupants and the community in general.

See Key Issues 5.5.1 – 5.5.3

KEY ISSUES

5.5.1 Cultural heritage

Over the past 15 years, most of the substantial new developments have been concentrated in the urban areas and particularly on previously developed land. It is evident across the whole island that increasing affluence has been reflected in the improvement, renovation and adaptation of older buildings. Individually and cumulatively, these developments have had a significant impact on their immediate settings and on the island's character generally.

Development and change also affects the island's cultural heritage in terms of archaeology, monuments, and buildings of architectural and historic significance and areas of important townscape character. In some cases, irreplaceable cultural and historic assets have been lost forever or altered radically. Whilst the social and economic causes of these changes may be understood, the measure of support for managing these forces in order to conserve the island's heritage is less clear. On the one hand the island cannot be preserved in aspic nor can it be overly nostalgic about its past, on the other hand, what is preserved, why it matters and how it informs the way the island manages and supplements its cultural heritage, needs to be better understood.

There has been no structured audit of development and change in the built environment - or any evaluation of whether development and change has been for the better – so much voiced opinion is down to people's perceptions with some modern developments both lambasted and applauded in equal measure. In shaping new environments for the future, as well as conserving what is of value from the past, an appreciation is needed of what is critical to preserving the island's cultural identity and its local distinctiveness.

Key Issue 5.5.1a

What is the value of investing in heritage as a driver for positive development and urban change and as a key contributor to sustainability?

Key Issue 5.5.1b

How can we balance the need to preserve and enhance the island's cultural heritage with the need to accommodate development and change?

5.5.2 Quality of new buildings

In Guernsey, there is a strong movement towards preserving the identity of the island, whilst allowing development to meet the needs of the population. Although most new developments are able to integrate and complement traditional building forms, height, scale and materials, the quality of much new development appears to raise questions of sustainability in social, economic and environmental terms. New development should promote or reinforce local distinctiveness whilst encouraging design innovation. The best schemes are usually those that recognise the individuality of a place, and either tailor standard solutions or create particular and original architecture for that site. The impact of sustainable building standards with the technologies required to deliver lower, low or zero carbon emission properties is gaining increasing attention and will need careful consideration.

Key Issue 5.5.2

How can the quality and sustainability of new buildings be improved in terms of design, construction and integration with the built and natural environment?

5.5.3 Quality of the public realm

Despite the fact that the built and natural environment in Guernsey is of relatively high quality, our public open spaces and thoroughfares - the public realm - lack quality, cohesion and inclusiveness. This is illustrated by the poor quality of major civic environments such as the harbours in both St Peter Port and St Sampson. It is important to understand the community benefits of a safe, attractive and well cared for public realm.

In some recent developments, more attention has been given to roads and car parking than to the arrangement of the buildings and the quality of the spaces created between them. Rigid application of highway engineering standards for roads, junction separation distances and turning circles can create an environment which is unappealing and difficult to use, especially for pedestrians.

Key Issue 5.5.3

How can we improve the quality, cohesion and inclusiveness of public open spaces, such as streets, squares and parks in the urban area?