

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 60/2007

1st June 2007

The Opposition is well aware that the Government considers that it is disgraceful for anyone to question any of the decisions it takes. However, the Opposition is convinced that it has a duty to bring to the notice of the public issues which the Government prefers should be kept silent.

The fact that the Government sold Lind House for just over £ 1 million pounds and that this site has now been given an estimated development value of £15 million shows the degree to which the original sale has been mishandled by the Government.

The winner of the tender, who the Opposition had not identified, but who has chosen to identify himself in public, has said that it took some time for the Government to agree to the demolition of Lind House after he was awarded the tender. It cannot have taken that long. The tender award was published in December 2004. Only four months later, in April, the Minister for Trade and Industry Joe Holliday told the House of Assembly that the Development and Planning Commission had already issued a permit for its demolition!

The total plot area was given by the Government in the House as 2177 square metres. The site that is being advertised by the UK estate agent that is marketing Lind House is 3900 square metres. There is nothing to explain how the site has nearly doubled between the end of 2004 and the middle of 2007.

This question of the area is an important issue given that the Chief Minister himself told the House of Assembly in April 2005 that permission had been given to demolish Lind House and reconstruct one on the same footprint, which means in the same place and covering the same area of land as the original house.

The Opposition does not know how many hands the property has gone through since the original purchaser sold it, or indeed what profit has been made every time the property has changed hands. What we do know is that a plot sold for just over £ 1 million has been given an estimated development value of £ 15 million.

It is clear from the valuations that have been given to Lind House as distinct from the actual site by property experts in the United Kingdom, that the site is worth much more than the house. This is probably the case with a number of other former MOD properties that the Government have sold. The Government say that the respective valuations of £ 4 million and £ 15 million seem far-fetched to them. However, they should be grateful to the Opposition for uncovering this if they had not realised it before.

It will be recalled that the Government said at the time that the money raised from the sale of this property would be channelled back to create homes for

people on the housing waiting list. It must be obvious to everyone that precious little of the £ 1 million received for Lind House has actually been devoted to this purpose to date. If any such funds are eventually recycled and people are removed off the housing waiting list, how much better it would have been if the Government had received £ 4 million instead of £ 1 million for Lind House.

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