

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 65/2007

12 June 2007

The response of the Government to our statement on the encroachment into King Street of a new office building has confirmed that the concerns that the Opposition made public were correct.

The Government have said that they were already aware of this encroachment from "some time ago, when the hoarding around the building site was removed." The Opposition understands that even though the Government were aware of the encroachment, they still chose to do nothing about it until the matter became a public issue. A number of concerned citizens have told the Opposition that they brought this matter to the attention of the authorities months or even years ago.

It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that they have enough people to monitor the different development projects that are going up all over Gibraltar at the same time. They have to ensure that developers comply with the terms of their planning permission and the licenses that are issued to them. It is not good enough that the Government should wait until the project has been finished, and only then they decide to take action. A stop order could have been issued earlier.

The Development and Planning Commission, of which the Minister is the Chairman, approved two different sets of plans in respect of this project. The Government does not seem to have realised that in both of these sets of plans the drains and the gutter were under the building. The non-structural columns referred to in the Government press release were in the second set of plans but not the first.

Having said that, the Government should note that the narrowest point to which King Street has been narrowed is, in any case, not where a cosmetic pillar is located. The narrowest point is further along near the junction of King Street and Line Wall Road. At the cosmetic pillar the road measures 2.34m and at the narrowest point it measures 2.20m. It is clear that in their rush to impute improper motives to Dr Garcia and conjure up a response to the Opposition statement the Government have shown that they have no grasp of the facts.

Given that the Government says that the so-called non-structural columns will be removed with immediate effect, perhaps they will now address what needs to be removed next in order to deal with the remaining encroachment.

The public and the Government should be grateful that the Opposition is doing its job and monitoring these issues and highlighting the deficiencies that we spot in order that they are addressed. The Opposition, for its part, is very grateful to the civic-minded persons who have contacted us with regard to this issue. Given that there is so much construction going on in Gibraltar all over

the place at the same time, the Opposition can only shudder to think at what must be happening in other areas.

ENDS