

2016.04.26

3.16 Deputy R.J. Rondel of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding possible sites for the future hospital and building on Green Zone land:

With regard to a possible site for the future hospital would the Minister advise under what, if any, circumstances he would support building on Green Zone land?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

In the 2011 Island Plan policy SC02, Healthcare Facilities, indicates that new healthcare facilities, which includes hospitals, will be permitted in the grounds of existing healthcare facilities or within the Built-Up Area. The policy also indicates that in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that no other suitable site within the grounds of existing healthcare facilities or within the Built-Up Area can be identified, a site can be developed where this is supported by Health and Social Services Department and where rezoning of land for this purpose is approved by the States as a draft version of the Island Plan. More recently the 2014 revisions of the Green Zone Policy, NE7 of the Island Plan, allows for elements of significant public infrastructure within the Green Zone where it can be demonstrated that there has been a proper assessment of alternative options. Therefore, if a Green Zone site were considered appropriate either or both policies could provide the way forward.

3.16.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Thank you for the answer. Could the Minister elaborate on ... one of the concerns I have got is that a lot of his staff within his hospital, their main issues are the cost of housing over here and a lot of people I have spoken to during the last year are struggling, and one of their main reasons that they may either have to go back to the U.K. or fail to come over and that there is a recruitment crisis which he has indicated, it is because of ... how do you marry the policy that the Council of Ministers have got at the moment, an increasing population, but not allowing development of housing on agricultural or Green Zone land?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I think he is asking the wrong Minister that question. The development of Green Zone land other than in healthcare facilities is a matter for the Minister for the Environment.

3.16.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Perhaps we can find a question that should be directed to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Is it not the case that the Minister is examining Green Zone sites under pressure from other Ministers not to give up the opportunity cost of alternative different building, either offices or flats, on the Waterfront site? Is that not the case?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

No.

3.16.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Has the Minister had any conversations with Ministers from the Council of Ministers about that particular subject and the opportunity costs involved on the Waterfront?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

No. What I have done though is have discussions with Back-Benchers about the way that they see the way forward and I have a second meeting with Back-Benchers on Thursday.

3.16.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

At the last sitting the Minister told us, on the second attempt of trying to get the information, that the Waterfront site - of the last remaining options - was the best clinical option. Will the Minister not bring the Waterfront site as an option for the States to debate before perhaps a Back-Bencher is forced to do so?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That is entirely up to Back-Benchers what propositions they bring but at the moment I am working with Back-Benchers. It is a pity that I did not see Deputy Tadier at one of my workshops. I have another one on Thursday, if he is free, working with Back-Benchers to help me and inform me on the best way forward.

3.16.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

It seems to me that there has been a change of heart. In the past we had lots of experts who were telling us that the People's Park was the best site for various reasons and even if it was unpopular the Minister was going to bring this because it was the right thing to do. Now it seems that he is scrambling around trying to find the answer with various Back-Benchers to see what they might be able to pull out of their back pockets and work it out on the back of a fag packet. Is that the new policy format that the Minister is looking for?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

We certainly would not be calculating anything on a fag packet in Health [Laughter] but that said I got a very clear message from Back-Benchers that they wished to be involved and they did not want to be presented with what they saw as a fait accompli, and the complex case around the People's Park was very different. We were trying to have confidential conversations about compensation, about the possibility of using the park. It was a good site but emotion overtook the fact that it was a good site and I respect that. Therefore, I am working with Back-Benchers to find the best possible site that is most affordable, clinically safe and appropriate for this Island.

3.16.6 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister will be aware that in the U.K. a lot of new hospitals are built on greenfield sites for all the reasons he will be aware; economy, space, easy planning and so on. Is he satisfied that enough greenfield sites have been added to his list to review as possibilities or is the presumption to try and develop sites that are either brownfield or in St. Helier?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

As I said, at the moment I am going through a period of reflection. I am satisfied that we have sufficient scope for different sites under review again. To pick up on a comment that was made before, this is in conjunction with using the Back-Benchers to work with me in terms of the realistic delivery of the project but also working with my experts to make sure that we produce the right hospital at the right place, that is clinically safe and at the right price.

3.16.7 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Would the Minister agree with me that the most precious and sacred land within St. Helier is presently used by the public, such as People's Park and Les Jardin de la Mer?

[11:30]

Would he agree that this type of land presently used by the public should stay in public use?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Let me say right from the outset that I have no plans for either parcels of land that the Deputy referred but sometimes it is a good thing to look at and challenge the use of a site if you can provide a better alternative. But, having said that, I am not looking at either pieces of land.