

3.9 The Deputy of St. Mary of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the use of agricultural land for allotments:

Given that the availability of suitable land for allotments is likely to be limited and in light of the Minister for Economic Development's support for the concept of allotments and their importance to the community, would the Minister commit to not marketing or disposing of any agricultural land for 6 months in order that the Allotment Working Group's report can be considered before any such disposal?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

Sir, can I ask Deputy Le Fondré to be rapporteur for this question?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources - rapporteur):

I cannot commit to not disposing of any agricultural land but where there is a possibility that the land may be suitable for allotments, any sale will be delayed pending direction from the Allotment Working Group which is led by Economic Development.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I ask how you will assess whether ...

The Bailiff:

Through the Chair, please, Deputy.

3.9.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry. Can I ask the Assistant Minister how such suitability would be assessed in the absence of ... or whether he would communicate with the Allotment Working Group for each site or whether he proposes to take these decisions on his own?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Firstly, the assessment for suitability, I believe from discussions between my department and Planning and Environment Department, is that the land should be close to the main areas of population and not to take land that is better used for agricultural purposes. Yes, we have to an extent already reviewed certain areas of land because there are only a certain limited number of fields that we are considering for disposal and those have previously been approved by this Assembly. Of those sites, certainly 2 or 3 of them are basically considered too small for allotments in any case. They would not be suitable.

3.9.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

It is well known that one of the impediments has been provision of parking space. While I am glad to see the Assistant Minister ploughing on, I would like to rake over the old issue of whether it is conditional that there be many parking spaces in order to proceed with allotments?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I think to an extent that is something we would have to be guided by the Allotment Working Group and obviously in their discussions with Planning. If I am informed that land is suitable for allotment then it is suitable for allotments but I have to be guided by the working group.

3.9.3 The Deputy of St. John:

For some months people have been calling out for ... longer than months - years - for allotments. Could the Assistant Minister inform the House when we will get a response to this because I am aware of people in my Parish and over the border who require allotments and yet we in this House are dragging our heels? We need a finite date when these allotments will become available, if any.

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I hate to say this but I think he is asking the wrong politician. The Allotment Working Group is being led by Economic Development. I would have to say speaking personally I believe the first time I was asked a question on the matter was certainly during this session and I believe it was January. So from our point of view we have not been dragging our feet.

3.9.4 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am a little bit concerned when the Minister talks about 2 or 3 sites that are too small. Is the Minister committed to the importance of allotments in general and will he commit to proper consultation before disposing of any sites, regardless of their size?

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Firstly, I have previously indicated, yes, I am committed to the principle of allotments. In fact I think that was a written answer to Deputy Power I believe in January or February. But the advice that we have received that of the sites that we are presently considering to dispose, I can give you a breakdown. There is one in St. Brelade which would appear to be suitable. There is one in St. Helier which meets the outline criteria but it has quite difficult access which probably touches on Deputy Le Hérissier's comments about vehicle and parking. There are some in either Trinity or St. Martin, depending where the boundary is, which would probably not be acceptable from a visual point of view from a planning perspective and there are sites that are considered too remote. The other sites, to quote, are small: "2 fields which would not be suitable for allotment. A third needs further consideration." So the point, I think from a preliminary analysis if the preliminary analysis in conjunction with the Allotment Working Group is that the sites are not suitable then we consider carrying on with disposal. If they are considered potentially suitable for allotments then obviously we will wait on the findings of the Allotment Working Group. But, as I said, that is a matter I believe ... that is being led by the Minister for Economic Development.