

5.4 The Deputy of St. Mary of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the Town Park:

In his consideration of the Town Park and associated issues, has the Minister taken account of the uplift in land and property values in the surrounding areas which would result from the construction of the Town Park, and has he considered, and does he support, the findings of the PwC 1999 report in this regard, and if not, why not?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

The north of town is in urgent need of regeneration and urgently needs a park but it needs to be a well thought out park, having the maximum chance of providing the catalyst for regeneration. This will maximise the chances of increasing property values which in turn will act as a catalyst for further improvement. A successful park and increasing property values and investment in those properties are interrelated. The 1999 PricewaterhouseCoopers' report was a socioeconomic and environmental impact appraisal of 3 separate development options for the Town Park: the first park occupying the entire surface of the Talman and Gas Place sites with underground car parking, the second, a park occupying the entire surface of the Talman and Gas Place sites with no car parking, and the third, a small park on the Talman site only and surface car parking on the Gas Place site. The PwC preference was for option 1 but they made it clear that they had ranked all objectives equally and made it clear that the then Planning Committee may rank the objectives on a different basis. We are presently concluding the North of Town Master Plan to have the final version with Members in the second week of May.

5.4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister repeatedly said that there was an urgent need for a Town Park in the north-east of town. Why then is he introducing something - his master plan - which puts buildings on the park, not green space, and introduces further delay into any possible solution for the Town Park?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As I have repeatedly tried to explain to Members, I think it is important that we get the best park. It may very well be that this House decides that some development on the periphery of the park is the best option. It is certainly not a decision for me alone but I do not believe that we will be delaying the park significantly and we could certainly make a start on the Talman site immediately which could be an unencumbered park in the vision that the Deputy has. Thank you.

5.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister aware - he must surely be aware - that any building on the Town Park site is likely to require a new E.P.I.A. (Environmental Protection and Improvement Area) and therefore introduce further delay because of the need for proper remediation if you start digging things out for underground parking and to pile for building?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I would remind the Deputy that the States decision was for a Town Park with underground car parking. At the moment it looks as though it is very difficult and very expensive to deliver a significant quantum of underground car parking but I think it is certainly worthwhile spending a little time to get to the end of this matter and for this Assembly to form a conclusion. Thank you.

5.4.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

In his finalising of the North of Town Master Plan, will the Senator undertake to review the decision already made by this Assembly back in 1999 in respect of the projet (Millenium Project) brought by the Policy and Resources Committee P.27/1998? Will he undertake to look at that debate which was passed by a majority of 45 votes and accept the States has already decided - and it decided many, many years ago - to create a Town Park on the site? **[Approbation]**

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am not doubting that we should create a Town Park on the site. It is a question of what park we should create on this site and, as I have already explained, it is rather difficult to deliver the States ambition which was a Town Park with underground car parking below. The North of Town Masterplan, as I have said, will be completed in the next couple of weeks and it will then be for States Members to decide which option they prefer.

[10:30]

5.4.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Just a supplementary, if I could. I would ask the Minister to refresh his memory of P.27 because when it was a Millennium Project the key emphasis of that debate was on the Town Park itself. **[Approbation]**

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I thank the Connétable. I do not need to refresh my memory; I am well aware of the various States decisions. I am simply doing my best to try and present the options to the States. Thank you.

5.4.5 Deputy D.J. De Sousa of St. Helier:

Will the Minister not admit that to put building around the Town Park will simply make it a posh lawned area for the townhouses and flats?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I do not really fully understand the question. I am trying to give this Assembly the option of delivering the best park for the residents of the area. I do not believe that creating some residential development on the site on the periphery will do anything other than improve the nature of the park and I am therefore unable to understand the nature of the question. Thank you.

5.4.6 Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier:

The Minister mentioned car parking. If the plan went ahead as he envisioned, how many of those spaces would be available for public use and how many would be for private use?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am afraid I do not know the answer to that question yet. We are in the final stages of the master plan and as soon as I have the answer I will ensure that all States Members have a copy of the final version of the master plan. Thank you.

5.4.7 The Deputy of St. Mary:

In the Hopkins North of Town Master Plan - the draft that went out to consultation - there were lots of sums about how much things would cost and absolutely no information about benefits, either psychological or health, or indeed property uplift. My question to the Minister was, and still is, will States Members be properly informed when the debate comes about the value of the different options and that does include the downsides of the different options but also, of course, the upsides? I just want to be absolutely sure that States Members are going to have adequate information on the benefits of different options.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I will certainly do my best to provide that information but whether States Members consider it adequate is, of course, up to them. Thank you.