

5.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding Island Plan consultation:

Will the Minister's consultation "with the Connétables and Parish Deputies to explore other options to meet our housing needs", as mentioned in his press release publicising the Inspectors' report on the Draft Island Plan, include the Parish of St. Helier?

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

I have written to each Connétable, including the Connétable of St. Helier, requesting that they and their Deputies consider how they can assist in meeting future housing needs by identifying additional sites in the Parish that they consider suitable for affordable housing developments in the next 5 years. This could be for first time buyers, Jersey Homebuy or social rented, but they should be additional to any sites currently being considered by the Parishes. Indeed I am scheduled to meet the Comité des Connétables in a few days to discuss the matter in general terms.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Le Claire, do you wish a further question?

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I am willing to wait to the last one.

5.4.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

The Minister will no doubt be aware of the battle that the residents in Le Pouquelaye have been fighting for the last 10 years to keep Field 1248 green. My question to the Minister is, is he going to stick by his assurance that he has given, and certainly his department has given, that any additional sites to be considered will not be greenfield sites and they will come either from the built-up area or currently brownfield sites?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The Deputy can be assured that I will always seek to honour my commitments. It is really up to the Connétables to bring forward sites that they consider appropriate. That is the purpose of asking them for their support and help. All those sites will then be considered by the Planning Department as to their suitability and, of course, the preference will be for brownfield sites.

5.4.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Just following on from that, in his response the Minister said it would be up to the Constables to put sites forward, so I would ask him again if a Connétable was to put forward a greenfield site who basically ... I need to know whether he is going to honour that commitment because if a Connétable does put forward a greenfield site is he going to put that before his own assurances?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

My assurances take precedent but I make it clear that while I have asked the Connétables to consider sites that may be suitable I am also hoping the Connétables will consult with their Deputies to ensure that we have the full representation applying itself to the search for sites in the Parishes.

5.4.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Would the Minister agree that the working party set up by the Constable of St. John for this purpose and to assist the Connétable is working well?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

It is an excellent example and I hope that other Parishes will follow suit. In fact, some already have.

5.4.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

The Minister has referred a couple of times to the needs of the Connétables and Deputies; does he not agree with me that such an important decision as to build on a greenfield site, in particular, should be taken to a Parish Assembly in each case?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Yes, personally I think they should be taken to a Parish Assembly but of course that will be a matter for the Connétables themselves.

5.4.5 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I was researching another proposition and I realised that when I went to school at St. Lawrence there were 60,000 people in this Island, there are now 90,000-odd. Can I ask the Minister whether when the review of the population policy happens this year, which it is scheduled to do, will the Minister be taking the position that it has to end so that this crazy cycle of finding ever more, ever more, ever more sites to build on this Island comes to an end, or will he be taking the line of least resistance?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Other than my 4 children, I am not responsible for the increase in population, and I will seek to respond to the needs of the Island in the best way that I can. That includes the provision of affordable housing to those who need affordable housing to be provided.

5.4.6 The Deputy of St. Mary:

With respect, the question was about the ever rising population, it was about the population policy, which at the moment is plus 150 households net increase every year. This will inevitably lead to the urbanisation of the entire Island, and I am asking the Minister what position will he take when the Council of Ministers refuse the population policy as they are due to do this year? Will he take his planning responsibility seriously?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Of course I take my planning responsibility seriously but the decision in relation to population control and balance will be a decision finally made by this House. I am one of 53 Members.

5.4.7 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

During the consultation will the Minister be taking account of what I believe are many frustrations on the part of Parish Constables and Parish Deputies when dealing with agencies, for example, such as Property Holdings, who seem to have much more power within the individual Parishes than necessarily either of the Parish representatives. So will he be speaking to both Jersey Property Holdings on this front and to the Parish representatives to make sure that more power is given for both

maintenance and to deal with housing needs to the Parish, rather than constantly being obfuscated by Jersey Property Holdings?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am not sure that we are constantly having difficulties emanating from Property Holdings. This is a simple exercise in asking the Connétables, who are the fathers of their Parishes, and through them the Deputies, to consider whether or not they can think of any sites in their Parish that are suited to the provision of affordable housing in the categories that I have outlined. It is a pretty simple proposal and Connétables can either make recommendations or not.

5.4.8 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

The Minister has responded to many of the questions, it would seem, focusing on where we build houses. The Inspector's Report on the Draft Island Plan highlights the fact that no type of housing, whether it be a 3-bedroom house or a one-bedroom flat is affordable to people on ordinary incomes. Will the options that he is asking us to explore also include affordability options?

[11:15]

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Yes, they will. I hope I am not jumping the gun by saying that my Assistant Minister, Deputy Duhamel, is looking at this area at the moment, and he is likely to come forward with some novel solutions to deliver more affordable housing.