

2.3 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the cost of railings and a wall around the new Town Park:

Can the Minister advise how much railings and a wall around the new Town Park will be likely to cost, why this is better than a hedge, whether there has been any consultation on this matter and if so give details? Will he indicate what support there is for this idea in the planning application and plans for the park drawn up by Burns and Nice?

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

The planning application submitted by T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) already included containment railings or fencing on the north and south side of the Gas Place elements of the Town Park and some of it is quite high. Containment in this area is necessary as this is the location of the children's play area, the ball and pétanque courts and the workmen's building. The only area of debate is the Talman area. My concern with this area is that now the roads are to be maintained in use, the park must be contained to protect children. Therefore on determination, as a holding measure only, I conditioned the consent requiring the establishment of railings on this area. Hedging alone was considered but it would be permeable and unlikely to provide the necessary safety. A meeting was held this morning with the Parish representatives and the Minister for Transport and Technical Services and we decided to progress low railings and hedging on the north side of the whole of the park.

2.3.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I would like a supplementary about the issue of the petition which has been raised, and I just want the Minister to confirm that he does not regard the petition as a full form of public consultation?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The petition is signed by approximately 300 Islanders who are mostly residents of the nearby area. It is a significant matter. However I think matters are really running ahead of the petition and the decision this morning, in principle, was for low railings all around the park which would be largely subsumed by hedging so there would be hedging behind the railings. This is the way forward and we are progressing that as of this moment.

2.3.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

I would just like to ask the Minister has he ever tried being dragged through a hedge backwards or forwards? They can be quite resilient. Does he not think that with a bit of invention, a hedge could be sufficient, with due respect?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I have been dragged through many hedges. **[Laughter]** **[Aside]** There is one option that perhaps would better suit the Deputy and that was considered this morning, and that is that we would erect simple fencing that would be in the centre of hedging so would act as a barrier. However the view is that that would be very difficult to erect and that there would be problems and ongoing running costs in relation to maintaining the hedge. So the conventional model of low elegant railings with hedging behind was chosen as the preferred option.

2.3.3 Deputy P.J. Rondel of St. John:

Historically, we had railings around the park opposite the hospital all the way down to the monument. These were removed. We have children's play areas and the like within that area on a ring road. Given that the Minister is proposing to put railings on a new park, which at the moment is not even completed, does the Minister think, yes, he is jumping the gun by even proposing railings until we realise whether or not a problem exists, and therefore he will be spending public money that may not be necessary?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I cannot help thinking we are making a bit of a mountain out of a molehill over these railings. The issue is that we need to contain the area. It is rather like applying the rules of building a new house to an old house and saying: "Why do I need to have fire doors in a new house when an old house does not have one?" The reality is modern safety standards require some containment in the area. What we need to do is to balance that requirement with cost and ensure that we deliver the most cost-effective solution to ensure that children are not able to run into the road and be injured.

2.3.4 Deputy A.E. Jeune of St. Brelade:

Following on from what the Deputy of St. John said, if we are taking railings away from some places, why we are putting them back? Why we have to have both a hedge and railings I do not understand. Perhaps the Minister can give us more logic on that. Also who is going to pay for this please?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As I have already explained, the proposals included high railings or fencing on the Gas Place site anyway so it is only the Talman site that we are talking about. The Talman site requires some form of boundary to ensure that children cannot run into the road. At one stage, there was a suggestion of closing-off the road. The road is now going to continue to be maintained and traffic will continue to run through. There simply needs to be a barrier. It is pretty simple logic and there would be an opportunity of delivering that through hedging alone but the view of the Planning Department is that that would not provide the necessary safety protection and some form of railing barrier is required, albeit low. We are not talking about something that is more than 3 or 4 feet tall so it is not going to be a significant impact on the visual take of the park.

Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Please, Sir, I did not get the answer to who is going to pay for it?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

It will come out of the budget that T.T.S. administer in relation to the Town Park - the taxpayer. **[Laughter]** If the Deputy would like some idea of cost, the cost of traditional 4 foot 6 high railings around the Talman area would have been around £100,000. I think that we can deliver for significantly less than that by modifying the design and using soft steel.

2.3.5 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

Would the Minister not agree that he is coming at this from a totally fundamentally flawed argument? The small road that is used as a rat run was always going to be closed. Again T.T.S. and the Minister for Planning and Environment have bowed to big businesses that use it as a rat run to get to one supermarket, in particular. Can you

go back and rethink this? It is again big business over the residents around the local area and we want the road closed and we want a park for everybody in there, not for people to use it as a rat run. I do not care how many hedges and railings you put up. If you do not close that road, you are going to have accidents.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I take the blame for lots of things that are not my fault **[Laughter]** and in this case I can assure the Deputy that the closing or otherwise of the road is not my fault and has nothing to do with me. I am more than happy to convey her concern about the closing of the road to the appropriate department, but I am afraid I cannot participate in providing a solution.

2.3.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

The question relates to fencing in general not just the one area by the children's park. Can the Minister advise what consideration has been given to whether a fence is needed at all or any kind of railing and whether the idea was considered just to have a completely open park which would be completely accessible to everybody at all times of day and why that is not considered desirable?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

We continue to make heavy weather over this. I have already explained that the position is that the park would not be safe without some form of barrier and the barrier at the very least needs to be some form of hedging. It simply cannot be open to allow children to run from the park into the road. We all know the consequences.

2.3.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can have a quick supplementary. It is simply to do with access. Of course there can be different forms of fencing, there can be hedges, but the question is are the fences there to keep people out or are they to keep people in?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

The fences - and they are not fences they are railings - are to stop children running from in the park to outside the park into the road.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Hilton, I gather you have had your light on for a while. I am sorry. Do you want to ask a question?

Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

My question was asked by Deputy Martin so I will not mention the road again.

The Bailiff:

Okay. The final question, the Deputy of St. Mary.

2.3.8 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Cost is the issue here I think. Can the Minister confirm that this additional expense of rail plus hedge is due to leaving the road on the north side of Talman open? That is the first point. Can he also confirm that the traffic proposals for the south side of the park are that the road running along the Talman part of the park will be closed so can he tell Members what the safety concerns are in that regard? And I suppose finally ...

The Bailiff:

I think there are 2 questions already Deputy. I think that is probably ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, well I was going to ask whether he has ever experienced a barberry hedge. It is quite unnecessary to have railings as well.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am beginning to wish the Deputy had stayed in Liverpool with his glasses. **[Laughter]** The road situation does not help, there is no question about that, and I think regardless of whether the road was used part of the time or all of the time, if it is going to be used any of the time, we need to protect children. What we will now seek to do is to deliver the minimum in terms of a rail barrier at the minimum cost that is aesthetically acceptable for the area as determined at the meeting this morning.