

2.11 Senator J.L. Perchard of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding planning applications for Field 528, St. Saviour:

Will the Minister confirm that the process he will follow should an application to relocate the Good Companions Club to Field 528 be submitted to his department will be the same as is currently applied to all applications to build in the Green and Countryside Zones? Before the Minister answers, I think it would be appropriate for me to point out to Members that I have just recently found out that I have technically an interest in that field as a business of which I have a financial interest in leases Field 528. I can assure Members that my interest in this field is not financial in any way. My interest is that I seek to protect this wonderful landmark parcel of agricultural land from development; no more, no less.

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

I confirm that the conventional planning process will apply to any application on the site in line with any other application in the Green Zone or Countryside Zone. Officers have already provided pre-application advice explaining that the current Countryside Zone designation limits the development opportunities and that if a planning application were to be submitted, it would be likely to be considered a departure from the Island Plan and a public inquiry may be called. Subsequent to a public inquiry, the Minister at the time would receive a report from the Inspector prior to determining the application. I cannot at this stage provide further comment as I must not obviously predetermine an application. It should be noted that the new Island Plan proposes the site be designated within the Green Zone.

2.11.1 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Just a supplementary, Sir, if I may. The Minister informed the Assembly just now that there had been very limited pre-application advice given by his department. The Rotary Club of Jersey wrote to Islanders and certainly its members on 18th March saying it is to apply for planning permission to build a new Rotary Community Centre on Field 528. Will the Minister advise the Assembly what, if any, personal involvement has he had in giving formal or informal advice to the Rotary Club of Jersey?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I have been involved in giving pre-application advice. However pre-application advice is always on the basis that it is without prejudice, and of course all applications must follow the normal procedure, and the potential applicant has clearly been informed that should an application be forthcoming, that the probability is that a public inquiry will be called.

2.11.2 Senator J.L. Perchard:

I feel that I must press the Minister to just put the record straight. Has he been involved in any way in giving formal or informal advice to the Rotary Club of Jersey over this application?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I have already said, yes I have. However, pre-application advice is on the basis that it is without prejudice and the applicant has been clearly informed that should they come forward with an application at any stage, that such an application is likely to require a public inquiry. I do not think I need to explain further.

2.11.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

The Minister has just confirmed that he has been involved in pre-application advice to Rotary who do a fantastic job, and I know that they have been looking for a very, very long time to find a suitable site. Is the Minister able to inform Members whether either himself or the department has given pre-application advice on the Samarès Nursery site at St. Clement please?

The Bailiff:

I am not sure that arises out of the question but anyway.

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am not sure of the answer. I would assume that at some point there must have been discussions with officers of the Planning Department. Whether that would constitute pre-application advice or not, I do not know. I think Members are aware that pre-application advice occurs on the vast majority of large schemes anyway and it is just a part of the process. There is no obligation on the part of the department to follow through in relation to advice that has been given at the pre-application stage, and it is always made clearly on the understanding that the Minister may or may not have regard to that pre-application advice at the point of determination of the application.

2.11.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Supplementary, Sir. Would the Minister not agree that the Samarès Nursery site in St. Clement is eminently suited to this development?

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy, you are getting too far off the subject now. Members are straining at the leash this morning I can see in terms of relevance. So Senator Perchard, do you wish to ask the final question?

2.11.5 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Yes, one final question. While there are brownfield sites that could be developed for such a very good cause as a new community centre for the Rotary Club of Jersey, is the Minister aware that should Field 528 in St. Saviour be rezoned for development that most Islanders will lose complete confidence in the planning process?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am not quite sure what the purpose of the last supplementary was. I have made it very clear that if there were to be an application, that the application more than likely would require a public inquiry. There will be an open process in relation to that public inquiry. Members are aware now of how a public inquiry operates and of course the right decision for the Island will be made at that time, but I do not want at this stage to be seen to pre-determine an application or to bind a future Minister for Planning and Environment.