

2.8 Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the proposed listing of private gardens:

Does the Minister give his proposed listing of private gardens a higher priority than the major development planning applications that are awaiting his determination that would contribute to necessary stimulus to our local economy?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

No, this work does not enjoy a higher priority than dealing with major planning applications, as the Connétable well knows.

The Bailiff:

Do you wish a supplementary, Connétable?

2.8.1 The Connétable of St. Peter:

If I had known the answer to the question, I would not have asked the question in the first place. I think it might be best if I pointed out to the Minister I visited the department's website over the weekend and I found a very long list of large planning applications outstanding since 2007, and I wondered what the Minister had proposed to do with regard to these applications or is he proposing to focus on listing gardens instead?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

As I mentioned earlier, there is no formal link between the 2 workstreams. Indeed, the work, I must stipulate, does not detract from the important job of dealing with planning applications either by myself or by my department. Under the terms of the service level agreement with Jersey Heritage, they make recommendations to me about which aspects of the Island's historic environment are worthy of protection. The contract for the Historic Environment Review is being managed by Jersey Heritage and does not therefore impact on the work of my department in dealing with those planning applications. I only become directly involved in this process at the completion of the survey process, when decisions about whether to list the buildings and places are under consideration and where landowners have objected to proposals to list their property. Now, it has been referred in the press and media that there is an extensive list of outstanding applications. There is an extensive list of planning permissions that have been given. There are some 1,500 that are waiting with builders and speculator developers to be built. There are some 51 items that are outstanding and over 13 weeks old. The department, under my ministerial responsibility, implemented a tightening of the process and I am told that the current performance in 2012 is that 84 per cent of all applications are dealt with inside 13 weeks, which is the target date, and that this is the highest level of performance since 2005. Of the 50-odd items that are over 13 weeks old...

The Bailiff:

I think, Minister, you are going into a little too much detail, so I think we need to be concise.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

If I may, a supplementary?

The Bailiff:

No, you have had your first supplementary, Connétable. I will come back to you at the end. Connétable of St. John.

2.8.2 The Connétable of St. John:

Given the Minister stated at a Scrutiny hearing that it was not his intention to enforce officers being able to enter gardens for the purpose of surveying for S.S.I.s (Site of Special Interest), that

being the case, will he withdraw the zany idea and save the taxpayers' money, and if not, why not?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

It is not a zany idea. In fact, the Constable should realise the reason why this work is being undertaken. Jersey is a signatory to the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1985) and I am bound under the terms of this - and this House is bound also - to ensure that the Island's heritage assets are appropriately protected. Those parks and gardens that are being reviewed include an assessment of around 30 private gardens and some 60 other properties which are not private, which include public parks and cemeteries, and the work needs to be done because it has not been done to date in order to tie in with the conventions, as I mentioned earlier, that this Island has agreed with. If indeed those persons not wishing to participate come forward and suggest that they do not wish to be part of a listing process, if indeed there is a difference of opinion, there is a legal process that will be entered into in order to allow those persons to have full say in a way that is fair.

2.8.3 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Well, it has sort of been answered, but I will ask what I have written down. Would the Minister consider scrapping the proposed listing of private gardens to enable his staff - which I believe does take staff time - to focus on delivering planning applications in a quicker and more efficient timescale so that our construction industry, including private households that want extensions, are able to employ and deliver much-needed investment in our economy? Will he undertake to place all the research papers relating to this policy and put them in the waste bin, preferably for recycling?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

No, not until the survey work has been undertaken. I will place the papers on Members' desks and they will be the judges as to what they do with the papers thereafter.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Le Hérissier and then a final question to the Connétable of St. Peter after that.

2.8.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder if the Minister could tell us what are his planning priorities at the moment.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

This Minister's planning priorities, as I mentioned earlier, was to tighten the performance of the department in treating applications. The statistics to date show that that has been done and I reiterate that the performances, a target of 84 per cent of all applications are being dealt with in 13 weeks. There do remain some legacy items that are on the books and you stopped me, Sir, when I was indicating the break-up...

The Bailiff:

Yes. Well, I am afraid I will stop you again then, Deputy.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Saved by the Bailiff, thank you, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Then a final question from the Connétable of St. Peter.

2.8.5 The Connétable of St. Peter:

A question of clarification, if I may, initially. The Minister commented there are 1,500 approved applications. Could he also confirm over 1,000 of those are in the name of one developer? But my actual question is the Minister attended the Construction Industry Awards evening last Saturday evening, as did I. Did he share the concerns expressed by the President of the Construction Industry?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I was sitting on his table and I certainly did share his concerns, but having explained the position, I think we both came to a fuller understanding of where the difficulties lie.

The Bailiff:

Very well, then we go to...

The Connétable of St. Peter:

The clarification on the number of approved applications. I asked for a point of clarification initially, Sir, that would he confirm that over 1,000 of the approved applications were in the name of one developer?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Anecdotally, that is being put forward. I do not think I am at liberty at the moment or in a position to confirm that, other than to say that there are around about 1,500 homes that could be built tomorrow, should be built tomorrow and will be built when the developers involved decide to build them.