

3.19 Deputy J.A. Hilton of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding standards for parking, amenity and storage space on new developments:

In what circumstances, if any, would the Minister reduce the standards for parking and amenity space on new developments, and does he believe there is a need to provide storage space in application for apartment blocks?

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

I am aware that some permissions have been issued with the reduced parking provision. Typically this was when the site had a particular difficulty in providing the required spaces, possibly due to an unsafe access, or where a development was located very close to the centre of town where residents could be expected to walk or cycle to most destinations. In respect of amenity standards, these are rarely compromised. Members will be aware that the 2011 Island Plan focuses new development in the existing built up area. We cannot expect to raise densities in these areas without providing adequate public and private amenity space and, therefore, I consider it important that space standards are upheld and improved. Finally, I agree that there is a need to provide storage space for residents in apartment blocks. These requirements are set out within the department's standards for new residential development.

3.19.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

The reason I asked this question was because I looked at an application last week which was a very large development in St. Helier and I was surprised to be told there was no provision for storage whatsoever. The Minister, in answer to my question, said that where developments happen near to town that they expect people to walk. Well, people may choose to live in St. Helier but they also have a right to have access to a vehicle and just because we live in St. Helier does not mean to say that we do not want to drive out of St. Helier, so I do not think that is a good enough reason in my opinion. Has the Minister inspected other developments by this developer to give him a thorough understanding of what it is like to live in minimum standard space housing and, if not, why not?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

If the Deputy would like to approach me through the department and to point out which particular development we are talking about then I would be happy to speak to her. But I do have some information which suggests that in relation to 2 large developments, Westmount, 256 spaces were provided or have been asked for, for 242 units, but additionally 245 cycle spaces. With Le Coin I am told there are 18 spaces for 23 units and also a store for cycles. As I mentioned, it is absolutely vital that people do have enough amenity space for the storage of their goods and ...

The Bailiff:

I think you have given that answer, Deputy.

3.19.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I would like to follow up on Deputy Hilton's questions about space. Dandara, I went and looked at one of their developments and they counted the floor space of the balcony outside as part of the overall floor space of the apartment. They had specially fitted furniture that was cut down, compared to what you would normally have in a property, and there were absolutely no cupboard spaces. I would like to know if the Minister thinks that is an acceptable thing because those people, finally they move into a house, they have to buy totally new furniture that fits the size of the building, and there is not sufficient space. Is that acceptable?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Quite evidently, no, it is not acceptable. Buying undersized furniture for oversized people is not something that I would support.

3.19.3 Deputy J.H. Young:

Would the Minister confirm that where those parking standards are relaxed, particularly in town, that the likelihood is that will impact on the need for public car park provision, and would he please comment on the impact potentially on the threshold of 4,000 public car parking spaces in town of these parking standards?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

The thresholds for the amount of car parking space as set out by a different Minister, the Minister for Transport and Technical Services, in terms of the Sustainable Transport Policy, and Planning do have a lot of regard for that document. In relation to the space standards, perhaps if I just read out a short part of the guidelines where it says: "It will not always be practical or environmentally acceptable to implement normal parking guidelines where it is proposed to extend or redevelop certain existing properties or subdivide large houses into small units. In such cases it will be necessary to balance the need for the proposed accommodation against the environmental cost of not providing adequate onsite parking." The whole process at Planning is one of balancing those 2 competing aims and needs, and in some instances there will be decisions on one side of the middle point and in other cases decisions on the other side.

3.19.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

The Minister just said it was all about balancing the needs. I am talking about the Westmount Quarry site, about the lack of storage space. There are, I believe, 245 units and 256 parking spaces but when you consider a lot of those units are 2 and 3 bed units, I do not believe the provision is enough. St. Helier - especially in the centre and west - has a big problem with lack of parking for residents and visitors and so any lack of parking provision in private development impacts very unfairly on residents who are already living there. So I would ask that the Minister does not relax the conditions on these large town developments.

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Every case will be taken on its merits and I must observe that the Westmount Quarry site is due to be determined, so those will be material factors to whoever decides on that.

The Bailiff:

Very well, I am afraid that brings questions on notice to an end.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Could I request that Ministers circulate the answers to 20, 21 and 22?

The Bailiff:

Yes, that is standard practice. I think it was agreed that Ministers would circulate their answers questions have not been asked, was it not?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is surely is, yes.

The Bailiff:

You have requested that your question ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

21 in particular, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

May I ask the same of 22, which I am sure is normal.

Deputy J.H. Young:

I am happy to withdraw 20 because I think it was covered by the Chief Minister's undertaking to bring this to the Council of Ministers.