

2017.03.14

4.7 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Environment regarding the Department's policy in respect of the use of brownfield sites: [1(167)]

Will the Minister advise whether it his department's policy to use brownfield sites for the provision of new homes in St. Helier, rather than building on amenity space? If so, will he agree to encourage the release of such sites as the Le Masurier land in Bath Street, the site of the former theatre in Royal Crescent, and other similar sites, for development?

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (The Minister for Environment):

The policies for the development of land here in Jersey are set out in the Island Plan, which is approved by this Assembly. It is these that are used by the Planning Committee and my department, under delegated powers, to determine planning applications. These policies do indeed encourage and support the better use of brownfield land in the built-up area, while also seeking to protect valuable amenity space in St. Helier. There is a strong presumption in favour of the redevelopment of brownfield land. I have also issued and developed master plans and supplementary planning guidance to support and catalyse the regeneration of areas of the town and specific sites, including the North of Town Masterplan and a development brief for the Le Masurier land in Bath Street. This has already encouraged other landowners in this area at sites such as Jersey Gas, the BOA Warehouse and Ann Street Brewery, to bring forward development schemes for new homes on brownfield sites.

4.7.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I wonder whether the Minister does have a view about the site of the former theatre in Royal Crescent, which perhaps has not been on the radar of his department. It clearly, aesthetically, is a site that could well be restored and provide useful housing, would he agree?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I have said a number of times, publicly, that I think that the use of surface-level parking is the worst possible use of land in the built-up area and specifically in St. Helier and I would look forward to working with the Constable to try to find ways to encourage owners of surface-level car parks to develop for the benefit of everybody.

4.7.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is the Minister for Planning aware - I hope he is anyway - that the Royal Crescent site is used significantly for parking and what alternatives would he be offering residents, who have to try and find somewhere to put their cars in the middle of town?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Minister for Environment has quite recently received an application for quite a large car park not very far from that site, and I would hope that people, who might be displaced, could possibly go there. But the building of a structure on a surface-level car park does not necessarily mean, of course, that the cars on that site go anyway, it is just the principle of surface-level and nothing else. You could build on top of those cars and maintain the car parking space.

4.7.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

How does the Minister's policy on amenity space being protected in the Island Plan square with the encouragement his officers have given to Andium Homes in their pursuit of an approved scheme for

La Collette low rise where public amenity space and very important urban trees are being built upon? [Approbation]

The Deputy of St. Martin:

As the Constable will know, and I am sure Members will know, planning is never straightforward and it is also always a question of balancing policies against each other. When it comes to brownfield sites, such as La Collette, it is very much a question of taking a step back to take 2 steps forward; or in La Collette's case, taking very many steps forward. We have plans which will, initially, I agree, remove a few trees and some green area, but replace it with more square footage, but most importantly will replace 159 flats of the best possible quality. At the moment we have tenants living in accommodation, which is just not good enough. We should be ashamed of having people in such accommodation. We are trying our best to replace it and we need to be able to get on and do that work. But, I would say to the Constable: this scheme does deliver in the end more open, more green, more amenity space. Not all the trees are being lost and while I accept that certain green areas will go, we are replacing with others, and with planning it is always a question of a compromise and in this case I feel the outcome will be better than we have currently.

4.7.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could I just ask the Minister to confirm that the amenity space being provided as part of this scheme will be private amenity space and it is replacing public amenity space, publically accessible grass and trees, and that is what cannot be replaced in this scheme?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am not aware of that, but I will find out and report to the Constable.