

4.3 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for the Environment regarding the likely environmental impacts of proposals to build new homes and locate the catering facilities for the proposed new hospital in St. Peter: [1(582)]

Would the Minister outline the likely environmental impacts of current proposals to build new homes on agricultural fields in St. Peter and to locate the catering facilities for the proposed new hospital in St. Peter?

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

The outline planning application that has been submitted by Andium Homes to develop 65 3-bedroom homes on 2 fields in St. Peter represents a substantial departure from the current Island Plan. Because of this the proposal will be scrutinised at a public inquiry by an independent planning inspector who will make a recommendation to me in order that I might determine this application. I will make the decision to formally commence the public inquiry process shortly. I would expect all of the likely environmental impacts of the proposal to be identified and considered by the inquiry, and I will need to consider them carefully relative to the potential benefits of the scheme such as this, that might deliver. It is not appropriate for me to speculate on what those environmental impacts might be at this stage. Turning to the proposed relocation of hospital catering to St. Peter's Technical Park, there will be a need to ensure that the operation does not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent residents and this is what the current planning consent for the operation of this industrial estate seeks to do. My department is advised that the proposal will not have a major impact on residents. Filter systems will prevent odours from escaping, traffic movement will be similar to previous occupants of the units, and the hours of operation will be restricted to daytime hours. I believe that the future hospital team is meeting with residents to address any concerns that they might have.

The Bailiff:

Your 90 seconds is up, Minister.

4.3.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am grateful to the Minister for his comprehensive answer. This Council of Ministers' transport strategy is a little obscure but I am assuming it still includes the objective of reducing the need to travel, and I am concerned particularly with respect to the hospital. I am sure it is great they are going to look after nearby residents but surely there will be an increase in traffic resulting from this which will prejudice the lives of everybody who lives between St. Peter and the site of the new hospital?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

As I have said, I am not aware that the use of this unit at St. Peter's Technical Park will create any additional traffic movement to the occupants that were there previously. But I would say to the Constable that while I have not been involved in any way with the new hospital application it must be obvious that if we are to relocate the hospital on its current site we will have to move some amenities away from the site in order to facilitate any new building. I think we must expect not only with catering but with other aspects of the hospital that some parts of it will have to be relocated temporarily while we set about the construction of any new hospital.

4.3.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

Just a clarification of something the Minister said earlier. He mentioned that there are restrictions on the use of the property at St. Peter's to within daytime hours. Is it not the case that the catering facility would be working outside those hours in order to produce all the things for the hospital?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am aware that there is a generic consent for the whole of the technical park at St. Peter, and I am also made aware that, as far as I am aware, that the use of the catering facilities would not be outside of daytime hours.

4.3.3 Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter:

Does the Minister agree that the Parish of St. Peter has gone to great lengths to ensure that the environmental impact of the development both in St. Peter and also the hospital catering has been well established? Just to further clarify a point raised earlier, the number of movements of food from the units will happen between 8.00 a.m. when it starts work and 5.00 p.m., which comprise of 3 vehicle movements throughout the whole day. The food currently prepared at the hospital goes out to all the outlying areas, including Sandybrook and St. Peter, St. Saviour and many other places including home delivery for certain people. So does the Minister agree that we have done a lot of work in the background in the Parish to look after both the transport and the necessary environmental measures of both these areas?

The Bailiff:

I am not sure, for the reasons he has given, the Minister is able to answer that question.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The only thing I would say is that while I am aware the Constable and his parishioners have done a huge amount of work on this project, I have not yet quite obviously come to study any of the detail in the environmental impact study.

4.3.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

We heard this morning on the radio that there is also a proposed development of a large number of houses on a Green Zone area near Goose Green Marsh. Really my question for the Minister is how safe are the Island's greenfields in the hands of this Council of Ministers? In the old days such developments used to come to the States for a debate, now we have a U.K. planning inspector giving his views and a single Minister signing it off. How safe are our Island's greenfields?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

There is a presumption, as we all know, within the Island Plan that there will not be development on greenfields. I said quite publically in a recent speech that I was disappointed with my own performance about not safeguarding enough greenfields for the future and all I can say to the Constable is that we take very seriously applications in the Green Zone, especially when it comes to the taking of greenfields. I too heard the report on the radio this morning and started my brain thinking about how the case the Constable mentions was similar to the St. Peter's one, but I think in the case of Beaumont there are already buildings on the site. The case at St. Peter is a greenfield which is used on a regular basis for the grazing of cattle. But I do say to the Constable, we do take it very seriously and moving forward I think we need to continue to take the building on greenfields extremely seriously because we only build on them once and they do not - or very, very, very rarely - return to pasture land.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister did not reply to my - perhaps I was not direct enough - does he feel that such developments are significant incursions into the Green Zone and should come to the States for debate as they used to?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The States debate the Island Plan and that is the Bible, if you like, that planners use for the development of the Island. But the plan is due for revision and a new plan will be out in 2021. I certainly would expect officers at the department to start work on that next year. It is an extensive piece of work and I would be looking for not necessarily some new but maybe some harder guidance on how we use our Green Zone and how we build on it. I think the Island in the future is going to have to make the big decision as to whether we allow the continuation of the expansion of village developments, which is very important to the Parishes, especially out in the rural areas, or whether we continue to concentrate on building more property in St. Helier. I think it will probably be a combination of the 2.