

20.10.20

18 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the use of the former Les Quennevais School site (OQ.288/2020):

Will the Minister advise whether he has been approached by any groups who wish to use the vacant building at the former Les Quennevais School site, and will he give consideration to allowing the site to be used on an interim basis for community purposes; and if not, why not?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I can confirm that a number of groups have made contact with requests to use the old Les Quennevais School premises. The first point to make is that the transfer of certain school equipment from the old premises to the new facility is still taking place and therefore third party uses cannot be considered until that is fully complete. The second point is that the old school was towards the end of its life, which is obviously why we built the new one, and only essential maintenance was carried out. So it may need money spending to bring it back to full use, if that was decided. The third point is that our focus remains on determining the future permanent use of the site and our preference is to concentrate on delivering that. Once that is known and agreed, depending on the timescale before the future plan is implemented, there may be scope to accommodate certain groups on short-term arrangements. It should be noted that I am always keen to work, where possible, with the community and in fact the Back to Work teams are using the portacabins on site. To answer the Deputy's question, we are in discussion with ministerial colleagues and certain government departments about possible interim usage. The library continues to operate on the site until a permanent relocation is resolved.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I did not mean to cut off my Reform Jersey colleague but he can wait his turn. I wanted to ask how long the Minister thinks it will take before some of these groups are likely to be able to move in, if indeed the Minister is so minded to allow them to move in?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I cannot really give a date at the moment. As I mentioned the school is not fully transferred yet. It is my information that the Les Quennevais School will be transferring to the new premises, which they have already done, but there is still some equipment on site which they will either transfer, I believe, or possibly auction off. I am very keen to see the premises used wherever possible so I take the Deputy's comments on board.

4.18.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can the Minister confirm that a final decision on the use of the site has not been made and that full consultation will happen, particularly with the local community, before any final decision is made?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

No decisions have been made and I believe the whole Island will be consulted on that. Of course the Parish and Parish Deputies will also be consulted.

4.18.2 Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade:

The decision-making wheels of Property Holdings are renown for moving quite slowly, could the Minister give an indication of how soon we can expect to see some firm proposals emanating from his department's think tank as to the future use of the old Les Quennevais site?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As I have already pointed out, the decision is not just mine. Obviously I oversee Property Holdings but the school is still occupying the site at the moment. Once they are completely clear then we can make a decision on a temporary basis and it will be down to colleagues in the States as to exactly what happens to the building ongoing. But, as I say, that is a matter for the future, I cannot give an exact timeline at the moment but I do not anticipate it being a long one.

4.18.3 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister agree that there is a desperate need for additional housing in the area for the over-55s? Would he consider supporting that principle with his Property Holdings hat on in due course when it comes to debate?

The Bailiff:

Presumably this relates to the Les Quennevais School site, Connétable? It cannot be a more general question than that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Very much so, indeed. The site lends itself well to the provision of over-55 homes and I ask the Minister if he agreed.

The Bailiff:

Thank you for that clarification.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am in the hands of Members. If that is what is decided then I am all in favour of over-55s housing throughout the Island. There is a desperate need for housing. That particular site will be a matter for Members.

4.18.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can just thank the Minister for keeping his powder dry on that last question. Could I ask him to reiterate that while the future use of the site will be a matter for wider Island consultation that really there needs to be a mechanism whereby the immediate residents of the area can be asked to give their feedback, perhaps in proportion to the distance from the school that they live, about what might go on there and what features might best service the local community as well as the Island community?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, absolutely.