

2020.06.30

15 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the repurposing of the site of the former police station at Rouge Bouillon: (OQ.179/2020)

Will the Minister explain what progress, if any, is being made with repurposing the site of the former police station, given the need for more space for Rouge Bouillon School and the lack of public amenity space and residents' parking in this part of St. Helier?

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

The COVID-19 virus has put a temporary halt to the site review works of the former police station. The recast capital programme provides a sum of money that will be made available for review of the competing requirements for the site, which are a combined fire and ambulance station, Rouge Bouillon School extension, affordable housing, key-worker accommodation, amenity space and residents' parking. G.H.E. are working closely with the other stakeholders to ensure that the wider needs of the community are met in the decision and to resolve all the requirements across the available sites in public ownership.

4.15.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister will be aware that this matter has been raised in the States before, not only by me, but by former Deputy Andrew Lewis. It is now several years since questions have been raised about the future use of this site. When does he expect some proposals to be available for discussion with the Parish?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Hopefully as soon as possible. I know the Constable is a member of the Regeneration Steering Group and they are very active in this and it also is being discussed at the Council of Ministers, so as soon as things move forward with the review the Constable will be the first to know.

4.15.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

The Minister will probably remember that I have also raised this issue several years ago after I visited Rouge Bouillon School and noted that the nursery and reception, or it might be reception and year one, the classes do not have their own outdoor areas and they are having to share and split the time, which in my mind is not good enough given that early years is so important. While the plans sound really good, could the Minister make some use of that area and to create some very basic outdoor space for the school, perhaps just with some grass and wildflowers fenced off so that they can have that use of that area sooner rather than later?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Deputy will be aware that the area is currently being used by the Jersey Fire Service, so obviously health and safety is paramount. But more than happy to mention that to the team as part of their review.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I would be grateful if the Minister would get back to me on the outcome of those discussions.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely.

4.15.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

I absolutely echo in the question the Education Department's interest in this site, so just to reiterate that. Can I therefore ask the Minister, from his answers, what discussions, if any, have been had with potential sites for relocating the Jersey Fire Service?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

That is a little wider than what I can at the moment, but there is a possibility that it may be expanded where it is; that it may be moved out. That is very much up in the air at the moment. So basically it is the old police station site, part of which had a former educational use, so, as has been mentioned by States Members at the moment, there is a lot of competing ideas for the use of the site, which of course we will take on board.

4.15.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Can I therefore ask for the Minister to go back, speak with his officers, and issue a statement or report on the options that are being considered regarding the site and the neighbouring one for the fire service?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The fire service is down the road at the moment but I have just read out a list of the competing uses for that site, which is something that we are looking into. It is: combined fire and ambulance station; Rouge Bouillon School extension; affordable housing; key worker accommodation; amenity space; and residents' parking. Those are the ideas that have been put to us by various groups at the moment for that site.

4.15.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Does the Minister have a timescale for any of the possible projects for repurposing that he had mentioned?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As I say, the review was underway, which has been interrupted by COVID-19, so obviously a lot of our key staff have been redeployed and we are just getting them back together now to continue their reviews. As soon as things get moving again, I will be more than happy to consult Members on that.

4.15.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is there any form of timescale, a year, 2 years, 3 years; would he have a maximum and a minimum time during which he would like to see the repurposing of that site?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

It would depend on what it is eventually used for but hopefully we will have a decision within 2020.

4.15.7 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Can I ask the Minister how long the building has been empty?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

A few years now, so since the building of the new police station next to Green Street roundabout. It has been used for training purposes and by other departments on a temporary basis, but it has been empty for a while.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Has the Minister not been briefed on how long the building has been empty?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As long as the new one has been built. As I say, it has been used on a temporary basis by other departments but it has not been used probably for some time now.

4.15.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, I do, and I am troubled by several aspects of the Minister's reply, not only the time this is taking, but the fact that we are now talking about competing interests. Does the Minister agree with me that the priority for this site must be the expansion of Rouge Bouillon School and that must be a top priority and the other competing interests, particularly he refers to more housing, more accommodation for key workers, these must surely be at the bottom of the list once the needs of the school are supplied? Does he not agree that amenity space for this densely populated part of St. Helier, and parking, must come second?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would not agree at all. This is why we are having the review to find the best use for the area. I have read out a list of competing demands here; I have not said anything, which is a priority, and which does not form a priority. But that will come out as part of the review, which will be done in due course.