

21.02.09

15 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding amenity space at Springfield Park (OQ.36/2021)

What assurances, if any, can the Minister give that there will be no net loss of public amenity space, including publicly accessible grassed areas, nor any loss of trees, arising from the current planning application (P.2020/1263) for Springfield Park?

Deputy H.C. Raymond of Trinity (Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture - rapporteur):

Thank you, Connétable. I think I have to go back a little just to explain what the situation is. As you know, there was a planning application passed on 6th December last year at Springfield Stadium. This was to get 440 square metres of grassed area to be replaced by Astroturf to create spectator areas behind the goal at the south side of the stadium and behind the goal at the north side of the stadium. This was to be carried out to accommodate the increased number of football supporters, but it was also carried out for health and safety and to enable Jersey Bulls F.C. (Football Club) to continue to progress through the National League system. To continue to play in this league, the ground needs to comply with the requirements for a minimum audience of 4,000. Even though the application was approved, I can assure you it is not certain whether we will be proceeding, as this is partly dependent on a physical bid at another facility. The other thing I will say is that you are replacing grass by synthetic material. The one area that I cannot be sure on - and this is where you want your assurances - is the trees, but there has not been a complete programme of what we are intending to do. As you know, there is no other facility in the Island that meets the ground grading requirements of the F.A. (Football Association) and knowing a little about this myself - I was a director of a football club also that was trying to get into some of this - you have to assume that you win the league every year for many years. What I can say, this is going to be an ongoing situation. I can give certain assurances, but I cannot give them all to you, the main one being the trees. But what I can say is that I think it is a way down the line before we make any changes to the present football area known as Springfield and I further say that this is an area that, as far as I am concerned, will always be a green site in the centre of St. Helier, used by the local community. Whatever capacity I might be involved, you would have my total support in achieving this.

6.15.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Assistant Minister undertake, if there is to be a loss of publicly accessible amenity space, to replace it in the immediate area? There are of course other parts of Springfield Park that could be allocated for public amenity space which are currently used for carparking and the department also has the area of carparking in the centre of the Gyratory, which is a decent-sized area, which is a cash cow to provide income for the department, currently used for at-grade parking. Will the Minister undertake to consider whether there are opportunities there to replace any loss of trees and green space?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I can certainly continue with that, because as you probably know - and I desperately want to keep you involved in all the work that is going on - we are trying to make Springfield both a community centre as well as a sports centre. All those discussions that you have had with me and the suggestions you have made, I am more than happy to take them on board.

6.15.2 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

I checked the planning website to see what this was about and what has been submitted appears quite unclear to me what exactly is being proposed to happen there. Can I ask the Assistant Minister if he will endeavour to provide a greater level of detail to the local representatives of that area so that they can have confidence that green space is not going to be encroached upon, as has been the case previously in the Springfield area, where that green space is already in very short supply?

[12:30]

The Deputy of Trinity:

Thank you very much, Senator. I am totally behind you on this and I would be more than happy to meet up, go through exactly what is intended and how we mean to go ahead. Your help in this matter, very simply, very much is expected.

The Bailiff:

A supplementary, Senator?

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

No, thank you. I thank the Assistant Minister for his answer and look forward to that invitation.

6.15.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Partly I would like to do the same as Senator Mézec and ask for that consultation and involvement with the Deputy, but also can I ask him to consider the effect on traffic flow and the possible increase in traffic - particularly with Springfield School being so close by and them having serious problems with safety outside of the school - and a real inertia from the department that seems to be dealing with that? Will he commit to ensuring that all of the impacts of these changes will be considered before anything is proceeded with and full consultation is undertaken?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Thank you, Deputy. At the bottom of my notes I had written that in most of these cases where we have this situation, traffic flow and carparking is mostly a central theme. The other thing, as you appreciate, is that if you have bigger attendances we will have a traffic flow problem, though I would certainly consider it, especially with the school being just around the corner. I have no hesitation in making sure that we make everything work, with your assistance.

6.15.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Is the Assistant Minister aware that last time when green space was threatened at Springfield by the installation of the artificial pitch, I brought a proposition to the States to make sure that there was no net loss of green space? His predecessor, former Deputy Patrick Ryan, was willing to make sure that there was not a loss of space and to adjust the plans to prevent the matter requiring a States debate. Will the Assistant Minister agree that it would be far better to guarantee no loss of space or trees to avoid this matter having to be debated by the States?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Thank you, Connétable. I would be delighted to guarantee it. The only thing is that I just need to - and I think with your help - get the overall plan of what we are trying to do and then hopefully we can come to some arrangement. But I would certainly guarantee there will be no loss of space. As I say, the one thing that is slightly worrying me is the trees. It would be silly of me to guarantee it if we have to adapt to sort the trees, but we would be more than happy, because I cannot see the

point of having a debate when we are all on the same side. I will take your views and look forward to meeting up with you and discussing it.