

7.12 Connétable G.W. Fisher of St. Lawrence of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding amendment of “Island Plan 2002, Policy H2: Fields 848, 851, 853 and 854” (P.48/2006):

On 4th July 2006 the States approved the “Island Plan 2002, Policy H2: Fields 848, 851, 853 and 854” which was Projet 48 of this year, and requested the Minister to seek to amend paragraph 8.71 of the Island Plan 2002 which related to these fields so that a maximum of 97 homes could be created on the site. Would the Minister inform Members when he proposed to lodge the amendment as requested by the States?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

The Constable’s proposition was a major factor in my decision to personally determine the previous application for this site. My findings addressed the issue of over-development, which was one of the main reasons for refusing planning permission. Previous decisions on H2 sites have led to approved deals which are up to 35 per cent higher than the estimates contained in the Island Plan. The revised number of homes proposed in the current application for Bel Royal is now 5 per cent above the Island Plan indicative yield of 97 homes. The proposed 102 homes is therefore at the lower end of the precedents set by the previously approved comparative sites, but that does not mean that I accept this as an absolute number. Consequently I do not believe that amending the Island Plan would necessarily have achieved the best outcome for this site. Furthermore I am concerned that to change the Island Plan retrospectively in the way suggested, only in respect of this site, when other H2 sites were determined based on the present wording of the Island Plan may be construed as unreasonable. The number of houses built is just one consideration and of equal importance is their design, which must be locally relevant. Furthermore, I must ensure that any new homes provide the space-about and garaging which I believe is so essential if we are to satisfy the desires of Islanders.

7.12.1 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Does the Minister propose to insist that the developer adheres to the development brief, particularly in the 2 following areas? One; that the split of 45 per cent/55 per cent between first-time buyer and sheltered rental housing should be adhered to. Secondly; the development brief required some sheltered housing - and in view of the Minister’s recently expressed support for 400 sheltered housing units across the Island I assume he will - and is he going to insist that the development brief’s requirement for 15 to 20 sheltered housing units plus a unit for a guardian is adhered to in this development?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I am afraid I am unable to accurately answer the questions at the present time. The reason for that is that in consultation with the Housing Minister we are currently reviewing the 45/55 per cent split and furthermore we are reviewing it in relation to our objectives of introducing shared equity. Presently I do not know what the outcome of those discussions are likely to be, but I can assure the House that we will be giving proper consideration to providing the appropriate social element, whether that be by sheltered homes for the elderly or shared equity for other sectors of the community.

7.12.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am sure it is just a coincidence we have a question from the Constable and both the Deputies on the same field this morning. As one who did vote against the amendment

but listening to answers from the Minister for Education and Sport and Culture this morning, my calculation is that in the local schools - in 2 primaries and one senior school - there are only 46 places available. Even with the minimum 97 houses I know these Ministers are consulting, but how much emphasis will the final outcome be put on the availability to educate the children who will be living in these houses if they are allowed... well, 97 will be allowed to be built, but how much emphasis is put on that or is it just consultation?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

As I said in answer to the previous question on this subject, education was one of the 5 reasons that I rejected the previous application and it should be noted that that was against officer advice. I can assure the House that education places will be properly taken into account when I determine the application.

7.12.3 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Clement:

In light of the general discontent with regard to the indicative figures in the current Island Plan, could the Minister give an indication as to how he intends to deal with indicative numbers in the Island Plan review?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I think part of the problem with indicative numbers is that they should be rounded and many Members, as I understand it - and remember I was not in the House at the time - saw specific numbers like 97, 91, 75, 71, and they thought that these were specific numbers. What you need to do is to round and to make it very clear that indicative numbers are just that and that a range should be set around the indicative numbers so that the House knows exactly where they are when they approve anything.

7.12.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

My understanding is that the policy decision of a 45/55 per cent split was brought to the House. Will the Minister assure the House that if he is minded to change this policy he will bring it to the House equally?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

Most certainly I will, Sir.