

2019.06.18

**11 Deputy J.H. Perchard of the Minister for the Environment regarding the inclusion of underground carparks in States developments: (OQ.155/2019)**

In light of the Assembly's agreement that there exists a climate emergency, is it the Minister's assessment that States developments should continue to include the building of underground car parks, given they are predominantly used by carbon-emitting vehicles?

**Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):**

Another excellent question. I thank the Deputy. The planning system currently requires a development of land to comply with Island Plan policies and various guidelines, including the one on provision of parking spaces and, of course, that applies to whether, or not, those spaces are above, or below, ground. What it seeks to do is to direct development to the most sustainable places and reducing travel needs. Unfortunately, those guidelines are well out of date; they are 1988. They were not intended to be inflexible and in reality the Planning Committee and officers have had to make individual judgments, bearing in mind our sustainable transport policies. There is no question that this Assembly will be asked to approve new policies to influence behavioural changes that greatly accelerate a move to a more creative sustainable transport. I have had a draft of the new parking guidelines. It is 57 pages long, one of the most complex documents I have seen and, therefore, I have not approved it, because we have a summer of consultation with the Island Plan, south-west Helier, climate change, *et cetera*. So, I think what we are trying to do is produce some strategic options documents that will help us to make the choices, starting next month. This is a difficult task, so I am encouraging everybody to get involved in this consultation process and we have choices. We can either eliminate parking altogether and provide difficulties for our urban areas to function properly, or we can recognise that, for certain uses, we need to have those parking provisions and try to set some greater clarity in the rules. But always, I think, we have to move towards reducing commuter parking.

**3.11.1 Deputy J.H. Perchard:**

Does the Minister agree that we should not be allowing commuters to park carbon-emitting vehicles in town in the future?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

Some of the guidelines I refer to, because it is a bit complex, at the moment do not allow, for example, the provision of private parking for commuters.

[11:00]

So, private, non-residential, car parking would not be permitted and that has been the case for some time. Obviously, we are dependent on public car parks. Public car parks support commercial activity in the town, so again we have to find out where to draw those lines, but should we be discouraging commuting? Absolutely. Should we be doing things about car parking? Absolutely, to reduce the commuting car parking and shift towards the use of bus and alternative transport. Yes, we should.

**3.11.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I welcome the question and the response by the Minister, but would he not agree with me that the problem is not car ownership, but car use? There is a danger that the new policies he talks about and, in fact, the existing policies, discriminate against people who live in urban areas by removing

parking from developments, whereas people living in St. Helier have as much right to car ownership as people living in St. Mary and any policies that he introduces should be fair right across the Island.

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

I think the Constable's question illustrates the difficulty. What we do know is by restricting, which we have done, developments providing onsite car parking in town areas, what happens is that displaces the private vehicles into surrounding streets and makes it more difficult for residents in those communities. I think that is something we have to take into account, in setting our new policies. I think it is a question of looking carefully at the uses and there will be certain uses where it is essential that we provide car parking, to enable that function to take place, including accommodating visitors, to a degree, but where we cannot we should not have it. I think this does mean a wholesale new set of urban policies and that is the challenge for the Island Plan. Unless we do so, I fear for the future of St. Helier, I really do.

**3.11.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:**

The Constable of St. Helier asked my question, but I have another one. Does the Minister agree that, in the amendment brought by the Constable of St. Mary to the Sustainable Transport Policy and the amendment that I brought to the previous Island Plan copying that wording, that it was not right to penalise those through parking provisions, who do not have a reasonable alternative and, therefore, there was an impetus on the States to provide better sustainable transport, rather than plan out parking provisions to protect those people who do not have reasonable alternatives? Does the Minister still agree with that principle?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

Yes.

**3.11.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Minister agree that owning a private vehicle will inevitably be replaced with accessing a vehicle of some kind? Will he, as Minister for the Environment, look at planning requirements that look towards carpooling and developments that have some kind of collective car space, where a smaller number of cars can be loaned to the residents and used communally?

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

Well, the Deputy makes some interesting suggestions. I think we should look at all possibilities in developing our new Island Plan policies. I think we will be limited by the scope of the law. I am not quite sure that the planning law allows us to make rules for the use of people's vehicles. It probably does not, nor do I have the power in the law to say that we should set a date when carbon-producing vehicles should be removed. But I think we have to use the tools we have got; the planning law. I am hopeful that I will be able to bring forward enhancements to the planning law as part of the Island Plan process. My aspiration is that it will enable us to make sure that those policies are as fit for purpose as they can be, so I am trying to do that at the same time as the Island Plan, to make sure we have got the legal powers to deal with these matters. Good suggestions.

**3.11.5 Deputy J.H. Perchard:**

Does the Minister agree that there is, in fact, a contradiction between the States building office blocks such as the I.F.C. (International Finance Centre) buildings and providing underground car parks for each one and the policy to reduce commuters driving carbon-emitting cars to work? In

fact, in some ways, it could be argued that the States building such car parks encourages people to drive to work from outside of town.

**Deputy J.H. Young:**

Absolutely, there is no question. I was never a fan of the States developments, S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company), but I have accepted as reality that we need to provide modern office space. But what I did notice and protested about, I think I probably objected in the planning applications, that it was always intended that there would be public car parking, that those buildings would not have private parking spaces in the way that was done. But, nonetheless, they have happened and I would certainly not be keen on seeing any more of that, because it has exactly the effect that the Deputy says.