

3.5 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence of the Minster for Education, Sport and Culture regarding capacity at First Tower, Bel Royal and Les Quennevais schools):

Would the Minister inform Members of the current available capacity at First Tower, Bel Royal, and Les Quennevais schools if any, and if an assessment of the projected impact on them arising for the proposed housing development for 129 homes at Bel Royal has been carried out, and if so, what this concludes?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Culture and Sport):

The total number of pupils in Bel Royal School is currently just over its planned maximum, but there are 6 places available in specific year groups. In First Tower, there is space for a further 25 children. Les Quennevais currently has a roll in excess of its planning capacity, but there are spaces for 6 children in specific year groups only. The assessment of the proposed development at Bel Royal indicates the expected child yield will be approximately 163 children under the age of 18. Predicted distribution of these children will be pre-school age, 41; primary age, 70; secondary age, 44; post-16, 8. Of these pupils, it is expected that some 39 children who are not already attending Bel Royal school would seek places there and that 17 pupils, who are not already attending Les Quennevais school, would seek places there.

3.5.1 Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

In light of that answer, Sir, would the Minister advise whether he is considering any redefinition of the catchment areas for Les Quennevais School and, if so, would any affected primary schools and, indeed, the parents, be consulted, or would this be presented as a fait accompli?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

The catchment areas are consistently under review as we have to react to the distribution of children in the Island. We always try to give as much notice as possible and consult as much as possible about any redistribution. What we have to do is to provide education for any child under school leaving age and we do that, though sometimes because of pressures, we cannot provide it at the nearest school in the catchment area and we have to provide places at other schools. We have capacity in the Island. Unfortunately that capacity does not match necessarily where major building developments are taking place.

3.5.2 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I would like to thank the Minister for the information he has given us and ask him whether he is satisfied that the schools mentioned in my question, namely First Tower, Bel Royal and Les Quennevais, are in a position to cope with the future numbers that he has told us may arise if this development at Bel Royal goes ahead?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I hope I have made clear that those schools will not be able to cope with all the predicted children from the catchment areas. We are always contacted for major developments by the Planning Department. When we are contacted, we give our best estimate. Those best estimates change nearer the time to the development being

completed and also with the fact that we are not asked at present our view on the cumulative effect on minor developments, and a number of minor developments can have an effect that fill-up schools with children. We occasionally allow certain year groups to go one or 2 over number, but we will not just allow schools to take far more in excess of their capacity. If necessary, some young people - some children - will have to attend alternative schools. What is important is that if anyone is thinking of moving to a new development, they decide beforehand and find out beforehand the situation regarding schooling as a result of moving into that area.

3.5.3 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

Yes, the figures the Minister has just quoted seem to be at least 125 children over capacity of what the schools in the area can take. I am also aware - and obviously he is as being the Minister for Education - of the 2 large developments in St. Clement, with Le Squez being redeveloped and the 95 houses of 3 and 4 bedroom on the LeMarais site.

The Bailiff:

No speeches, please.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Could the Minister undertake a complete audit of all the new houses and the amount of children and can he reassure us in the next few months that we do have capacity in all our schools, whether they may have to move out of a different catchment area?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Already done, Sir, and we do have enough overall capacity. The difficulty is the developments are not always matching up to where the school capacity is. We have recently updated those figures and provided them to Planning so they are aware of the capacity issues in the areas concerned.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, Sir, my question was could he undertake and make sure that all States members know. So, if it is already done, could we please have the figures?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Certainly, Sir, I have got them here and I will get them distributed to all States members.

3.5.4 Deputy J.J. Huet of St. Helier:

The Minister said that First Tower School was full or just about full. Is he saying that for the estate that is going up at the top of Mont à l'Abbé with 120-odd houses there will be no places for our children at the school?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

No, Sir. There will be places at schools for children. There are a number of schools in that area. For example, there is a new D'Auverne School. There has been planning capacity in the D'Auverne School for a number of developments.