

**2.16 The Deputy of St. Mary of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding potential sites for concentrating new States' offices within the town centre:**

Following his written reply on 21st September 2009, can the Minister explain why the former Jersey College for Girls was ruled out as a possible site for concentrating new States offices; in particular, why he thought that the road infrastructure in the area was a key factor and what progress has been made with identifying and evaluating other potential sites for concentrating new States offices within the town centre?

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):**

As I explained in my written answer on 21st September, the site was investigated as a possible single office site for the States of Jersey. However, there were a number of challenges in doing so. The site sits outside the area zoned for office accommodation. In addition, the cost of converting an S.S.I. (site of special interest) into a modern office block was prohibitive. In relation to the road infrastructure, initial overview of the site identified that the volume of traffic generated would significantly increase the concentration of vehicles on an already busy section of the ring road, and I would point out to the Deputy that we would be dealing with up to 1,500 employees. The site itself is located within a residential area and is some distance, of course, from public car parking. The access to the site is limited with poor sight lines. My view is that offices specifically on this scale should be located within the designated town centre. I consider that the resources should be spent better in considering more appropriate options. The project to consolidate office accommodation into one or more sites is now being integrated into the ongoing comprehensive spending review and organisational development reviews.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Is there a supplementary?

**2.16.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:**

Yes, a couple, if I may. One is the volume of traffic I find a very strange consideration. Has the Senator not heard of buses; in particular, the hopper bus which could obviously provide a link for members of the public as well as employees? The second part is what progress has the Minister made in identifying other potential sites and was it not all along the desire to rent some of the Harcourt development on the Esplanade Quarter?

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

The traffic is one issue, but the Island Plan approved by this Assembly designates the town centre as the preferred location for office facilities. I think it would be a completely curious decision to put an office block housing up to 1,500 people within a residential area quite in addition to the chaos that would ensue in getting up to 1,500 people in and out of a constrained site. There is the town centre for office development and the town centre is the most appropriate place for all sorts of reasons. In relation to progress, I can say that we do have a short list of sites. I do wish to pursue a single office centre for the States of Jersey. There will be all sorts of attendant benefits to the Island finances in doing so in terms of efficiency across the public sector. There is a short list. There is a possibility, but I would say only a remote possibility, of the Esplanade being part of that.

**2.16.2 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

Bearing in mind the Minister's answer to this question and the fact that he has mentioned traffic chaos if there were a number of people there, i.e. 1,500 employees, therefore, when the States debate the use of this property, will the Minister be objecting to intensive housing there as well? The same issues will arise with traffic.

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

The same issues do not arise in relation to residential as opposed to office centre. In consulting the Minister for Planning and Environment, his view is that this site is absolutely suitable for residential accommodation. It is within a residential area and, indeed, the Minister has given advice or his department has given advice in relation to an exciting residential scheme that will preserve the important aspects of the S.S.I. and provide much needed, valuable, quality town centre residential accommodation.

**Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

Sorry, Sir, the Minister has not really answered my question. My question really is what is the difference between domestic traffic or office traffic.

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

The concentration of office traffic compared to domestic is enormous. With an office which is going to be operating in standard office hours, there is a huge influx and egress of traffic going in in the morning and the afternoon in a site that simply is not capable of taking the scale of parking and other arrangements which inevitably are required for a proportion of the people who cannot take the bus or the public transportation. It seems evident to me that the central office location is in the town centre, not on the periphery of the ring road.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Final supplementary, Deputy.

**2.16.3 The Deputy of St. Mary:**

I find the answers about traffic quite simply extraordinary. I asked the question because I saw the concept drawings for the offices at the J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) and they were very, very attractive. I believe that plan really does have merit. I suppose I would like the Minister to assure us that he really is not going to go for the Esplanade Quarter solution.

**Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

I am afraid the Deputy and I will not agree in relation to the suitability of J.C.G. as an office site and the decision has been made. In relation to an alternative site, we will look at value for money in relation to procuring a single site for the States of Jersey. The Esplanade I said is a remote possibility and remains a possibility if the financial arrangements could be made to stack-up.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Very well, the 2 hours and an additional 2 minutes have now expired, so that brings an end to Question Time.