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11 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour of the Minister for the Environment regarding the consideration to be given to Parish Assembly votes during the development of the Island Plan: (OQ.6/2020)

In relation to the development of the new Island Plan, will the Minister advise what status he will give to Parish Assembly votes; will he only propose land for rezoning that has been approved by a Parish Assembly and, if not, why not?

Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade (The Minister for the Environment):

As the Deputy will be aware, it is a matter for the States Assembly to decide to approve the Island Plan and the Island Plan will include both spatial information onsite and indeed policies and any proposals to re-zone land. It falls to me as Minister, as my task as set out in the Planning Law to bring forward a comprehensive and sustainable draft development plan which meets the requirements in law, best serves the interest of the community where that community represents the Island at large. So to do that I need to have regard to the planning of the whole Island and not just at a parochial level. Both I and all Members however will need, and I am sure we all are aware that any plan approved by Assembly should be capable of both meeting the Island's need and also being implemented. A degree of support or otherwise for specific proposals in the plan, whether we know that through individual representations or collective expressions of views by Parish Assemblies, clearly will be one of the factors that I and all Members will have regard in considering various aspects of the draft plan when it finally comes before this Assembly for approval.

2.11.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I thank the Minister for his answer. He will appreciate that previous Ministers have tackled this in different ways, some giving more weight into a Parish Assembly or not. From what I interpret from what the Minister said, it sounds like a Parish Assembly will be given minimal waiting. It is just a factor and is the Minister cognisant that in previous Island Plan debates that when other Members have brought amendments to the Island Plan, because the Minister brings the document but of course other Members can bring forward other things, that Parish Assemblies have had much firmer waiting among Members of this Assembly? So is my interpretation what the Minister said initially correct and is he cognisant that the Parish Assembly votes do have a greater weighting in this Assembly if amendments are brought forward?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Obviously this is the first time I have had the role of Minister and the first plan I have brought forward. I am aware it is probably one of the biggest challenges for any Minister to make decisions on whether or not such matters, such sites that have come forward through the various processes and Parish Assemblies, not only just one, are included in the draft plan and put forward. I would say at the moment it is too early to say. I think at the moment my response would be is that any votes in Parishes are possibly no less or no more weight than any other factors. What I need to do as Minister, when the draft plan is published, is to make sure that both the emerging plan and the sites and the zonings that are within it are consistent. So that plan has to be consistent and because we are doing this project in parallel I am not prepared to prejudge that by giving one weight or another. I think it is no more or no less. But nonetheless, the views of... It is important that people set their views out and Parish Assemblies is just but one consultative process and of course the result is in the draft plan. In the end, of course, there are many other steps, including a planning inquiry. There will be lots of opportunities for sites that are included that people do not want to see, or sites that are

not included that they want to see, to be taken into account in the inquiry. So there are plenty of steps on route. It is a complex project. I am sorry about that but at the moment equal weight, I think.

2.11.2 Senator K.L. Moore:

I would be grateful if the Minister would explain what weight he feels a Parish Assembly does hold then and perhaps offer some alternatives as to the other groups of people that he might consider to have an equal weight because the Parish Assembly has long-term standing in the Island and is of great coalface democracy in action.

Deputy J.H. Young:

It obviously has huge weight in the local community but the point is, this is a whole Island Plan and the plan needs to be consistent with the policies for the whole Island. One can imagine all sorts of permutations. You might have Parish proposals that completely contradict and completely fly in the face of draft proposals and therefore not, but equally it is very likely there will be a number of consistencies. I am content that the work that is going on in Parishes is good, it has been properly informed by officers, the issues are coming out and I think rather than prejudice at this moment we should wait and see what comes forward. There is plenty of opportunity. Later on in the day I think you will hear from the Chairman of P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) that I am planning to have an in-committee debate on this fairly soon and I think there will be plenty of opportunities for Members to raise those issues. But at the moment, the key point is this is a whole Island Plan and the policies and the zonings need to be consistent and rational. Until we know what comes out of those processes I think equal weight has to stay, as far as I am concerned.

2.11.3 Senator K.L. Moore:

The Minister, one would assume, would be grateful for some local views on particular sites and their suitability as to the needs of that Parish in particular and the feelings of the community that live around it. Does this also mean that the work of the Parish planning committees that have been considering the Island Plan and putting forward proposals to the Assembly and preparing to put forward proposals to the Assembly, is that going to be disregarded or given little weight also?

Deputy J.H. Young:

No, I think this is where, what I would call, village plans come in. I have certainly made it plain that I think one of the expectations that I have in the Island Plan is it will need to address the sustainability of village communities and therefore I think there is ... one of the current rules even under the current policies are we need to have village development plans. Village development plans, if there are to be re-zonings under the current policies. Projects have fallen because there has not been a properly prepared village plan or a plan did not have the support of the local community. So clearly I am not reneging on that commitment. That remains. Village plans are important. But what I am saying to you is that I am being asked here to prejudice during what is effectively a 2-year process as what weight various factors are going to have on the final plan. At the moment I am unwilling to say any more than ... the commitments of the work going on in Parishes is important, it certainly will have weight. Whether that is any more or any less than anything, at the moment I am not prepared to go that far. But I am certainly prepared to give further consideration to that once we know a bit more information of what is coming out of that Parish process. At the moment I have no information from that at all. I know a number of Parishes are working on those but equally I know there are a number of Parishes that are not. But this is a whole Island Plan.

2.11.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Given the Minister's comments just now, could he explain why he is willing on the Island's biggest planning matter, that of the Future Hospital, willing to give greater weight to a suitably constituted citizens' assembly as opposed to the publicly constituted and forming an important part of the constitution of the Island, Parish Assemblies?

Deputy J.H. Young:

That is an interesting question. I have had no role whatsoever in the guidance or the processes being adopted for the selection of the hospital site. I think there is an answer in a written question that I have put in - I think it is Deputy Pamplin today - about what guidance I can provide. And what I have agreed... Also I have had correspondence from the hospital group that asked me to produce supplementary planning guidance on that. I am being asked to indicate what weight I am going to give to things. In that written answer I have said I cannot ... to give weight when I do not know what site it is and what factors I am being asked to give weight to frankly is not possible now. But nonetheless there will be a supplementary planning policy on that. That is a complicating factor and I think the Deputy perhaps has misunderstood what the role of that is. It is not a planning process. One final comment, the Island Plan process is prescribed in law. The citizens' assembly and the process of the hospital is completely nothing to do with the Island Plan process.

2.11.5 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I appreciate the rock and the hard place the Minister is in with regard to this particular aspect. He has been quite right to remain neutral. I raise this not only for the Minister to appreciate the process he is trying to go through in order to tease out all these issues but also to make him aware of the *realpolitik* when it comes to constituency matters when they arrive in this Assembly and, therefore, I wonder what in which case then: will the Minister indicate when he will be in a position to advise the Assembly on the weightings when it comes to the Island Plan?

Deputy J.H. Young:

There are some factors that I am looking to be in place before I am able to give a clearer answer on that. Firstly, I want to have the in-committee debate which, subject to the Chairman of P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) and your discussion, will potentially be during March. I am also looking forward to once we know what the population policy is and what the target of housing required is because that is going to set the entire parameters for this piece of work. The Chief Minister has been advised and I am told that the Chief Minister is going to have a report from the migration group at the end of this month. I am looking for a commitment from the Council of Ministers pretty soon after that to tell me what numbers we are looking at in the Island Plan, so I want that. Also I want a report from my officers on the work that is going on in the Parishes, so I am hoping all that comes together in the spring and in fact it has to because the draft Plan is pretty well scheduled for publication in quarter 2 of next year, so I am sure we will be discussing this matter again.

[11:45]