

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

105/2009

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The decision of the Government to make arrangements for the re-opening of the multi-storey car park during fair week raises more questions than it answers. Motorists have every right to wonder whether it was necessary for the car park to have closed for the last five months in the first place. They are also perfectly entitled to ask why the Government did not negotiate with the developers to keep it open throughout until shortly before construction works on the site are due to commence.

The Opposition has pressed the Government ever since the multi-storey car park located at the old Naval Ground No 2 closed a few months ago asking that it should be kept open for as long as possible given the parking and traffic chaos that was heightened after its closure. The smaller alternative car park which opened at former Naval Ground No 1 could not cope with the overspill from the closure of its larger neighbour, and in any case a high proportion of the spaces were allocated in advance to pass holders.

It will be recalled that the Naval Grounds site was a former MOD property which was allocated to a company called Commercial Developments Investments Ltd without going out to tender for the construction of the Mid-Town project. This project, which comprised primarily luxury housing, offices and a retail area, has been delayed. It was announced at the launch of Mid-Town that construction would commence in February 2008 and that the first Tower would be completed in April 2010.

Given the lack of activity, a few months ago Shadow Minister for Trade and Industry Dr Joseph Garcia asked Government whether they had received any indication from the developers of the Mid-Town project as to when they expected construction to commence. The Government replied that the developers had indicated to them that they expected construction to commence before the end of this year. There has been no construction work to date.

It was against this background that the Opposition has pressed the Government for the car park to re-open, given that there was not much visible work happening on the site and that the area could still be used as a car park. The decision of the Government to have the car park re-open on a temporary basis during fair week vindicates the arguments put forward by the Opposition that it could have continued to be used over the past five or six months. The Government has shown an uncaring attitude towards the needs of the motoring public in a scenario where it has become increasingly difficult to find a car parking space.

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