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Concerns are growing over the illegal occupation of a grass field located on the corner of Ladies Mile and Spaanschemat River Road. PHOTO: NETTALIE VILJOEN



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The concern has been raised that if the illegal occupation of a piece of government-owned land adjacent to the Constantia Emporium is allowed to continue it might lead to a valuable asset being lost and a further drain on City of Cape Town's resources.

On Friday 19 May, the newly appointed DA shadow minister for this portfolio, Sello Seithlolo, visited the overgrown grass field located on the corner of Ladies Mile and Spaanschemat River Road.

It was his third stop on a tour of four sites located in Ward 62

that are owned by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

Emile Langenhoven, councillor for Ward 62, who had organised the site visits, told Seithlolo, and the members of the press gathered there, that the area had been identified as a crime hot spot.

"There have been people caught in this area with stolen goods from the areas in the surrounding Constantia," said Langenhoven.

Langenhoven said the erf was logged as national government property in the municipality's database.

"The City cannot apply for an eviction order for a property that does not belong to it. I have inquired whether the City has spoken to the national government about this property and await the response. At this point, that

"Mushrooming on DPWI land"

- Sello Seithlolo

property is considered the 'private property of national government' and, therefore, we cannot provide any services to it or apply for an eviction," he said.

According to Langenhoven, people started erecting illegal shelters on the field in late 2019 – close to the end date of construction of the shopping centre.

"People didn't actually know how far it (the shopping centre) would extend. So once this was done, an opportunity was seen over here and then people started moving in. We could see one shack over there

and then another, and then it just mushroomed out. So now we've got maybe 10 to 15."

Commenting on the occupied land, and similar ones in other parts of the province, Seithlolo said you couldn't have a situation where informal settlements were allowed to mushroom.

"And in their mushrooming on DPWI land, when people go to court and say, 'But we don't have services', the Human Rights Commission will say the municipality must provide services."

As is the case now, he said, in Knoflokskraal (in Grabouw), with the Theewaterskloof local municipality where 3 000 people had occupied land that had been earmarked by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the

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