

2025.02.04

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement of the Minister for Housing regarding a mix of housing types (OQ.23/2025):

Will the Minister advise how he is currently working with private developers and landlords to ensure a mix of housing types are made available in the Island?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South (The Minister for Housing):

The last time that I was the Minister for Housing, I commissioned an Objective Assessment of Housing Need, which provided projections for the types and tenure of housing we would need over subsequent years, and this helped inform the Bridging Island Plan process to ensure that developers have the framework to guide their proposals to ensure it matches what we need. On a number of occasions, I have met with developers as they have been exploring ideas on what kind of housing mix they might apply for permission to build and we have explored with them what kind of demand there is at the moment, what sites might lend themselves well too, within the rules of the Island Plan. In particular, right-sizing was an issue that some developers wanted to explore with me. I also often encourage engagement with officers in my department so that they can make sure that what they are applying to build matches what we know we need. On top of that, I am frequently submitting comments to the Planning Applications Committee as developments are coming forward to be proposed, and I may comment on what the mix of tenure or sizes that they are proposing to say whether that matches what we assess to be what we need based on the data.

4.16.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could the Minister advise us what data sources he has at his disposal which are informing his plans for delivering the range of housing need?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I mentioned the Objective Assessment of Housing Need previously. I think there was an update done on that - I think that was by Statistics Jersey - at some point in the last few years. They go based on everything: census data, population projections - they do their updates on that every year - and, of course, what has been built in the previous years because what we project we may build based on Island Plan projects is not necessarily what does come to pass in those years so they will look at what happened and what tenure mix and size has been delivered on.

4.16.2 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

It was the Future Housing Needs of December 2023, published by Statistics Jersey, but is the Minister aware of any data that catches housing desire or want because there is no point building stuff people need if they would rather live in another jurisdiction because what we are building does not suit their long-term desires or long-term needs?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

That is such a good question and, no, there is nothing that I can certainly recall of what you might attempt to call tangible data about desire out there. I am not sure if there have been questions in the Opinions and Lifestyles Survey. I would have to doublecheck whether that is the case and building to people's expectations is something that, obviously, we have to contend with. Just anecdotally, what I can say is that I know that the shortage of family-sized homes with parking spaces and gardens is something that has been of great concern to Islanders in past years because of their worries that if they want to have a family, that will be a difficult option for them. When I speak to people who make that point to me, I do say that that does not mean that we should not also be building small homes. We do often get feedback that we are building too many flats but the more that you do build and the more supply that you provide, the more affordable you may be able to make them. If you get your foot on the ladder, it is then hopefully easier to get your second step-up on it from that point. There is an interesting dialogue to be had on that and I am not sure that proper data on what public desire is on that is collected.

4.16.3 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Given previous questions that have been used for this data often look at the 2 to 5-year range, will the Minister support any move to collect in future surveys longer-term understanding of what housing desire there is? Would he support those moves?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am sorry, I did not quite understand that question. Could you rephrase it?

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Would the Minister support any questions used in future surveys that understand long-term housing desire, not short-term housing need?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is a good suggestion, and I will mull that over. If that is something that could be included in a future survey, then I am sure that will be of great interest to us.

4.16.4 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I think the Minister may have partially answered the question I was going to ask in his previous answer, but could he state what he believes from his analysis of the data where he does think the greatest areas of housing need are at the moment?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I think the family-sized home is a serious issue that we did not provide a good enough supply on that for multiple years. I am going to be biased towards the affordable sector in that there has been a great provision of one and 2-bed apartments in the affordable sector and that has enabled us to widen criteria for the Affordable Housing Gateway, for example, but it is the case that there are lots of people - lots of children in particular - who are in homes that are not the right size for them and we have not provided that supply. That is why I am very pleased that we are now starting to see planning permissions coming through for some of the Bridging Plan rezone sites and some of that is now underway. I hope with a focus on that we

can alleviate that part of the need that I see, certainly, when I speak to people and people who come to me to tell me about the inadequate situation in their housing.

4.16.5 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could I ask the Minister what specific initiatives he has in place or examples of co-partnerships aimed at delivering a diverse range of housing types and is he minded to do something about the need to ensure choice in the market?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I do not know what constitutes a partnership in that sense. We obviously have a constitutional partnership with Andium Homes and we have one with States of Jersey Development Company, of course. I work particularly closely with both of them but a bit more so with Andium and I am exploring with them options for different pathways that they might be able to provide for people into home ownership. There are different offers or products we can give to people to move in that direction, but Andium is in a position of being able to use some of its stock to innovate. There is one developer in particular that has been innovating with different schemes to get people into home ownership and they have not needed my incentive to do that, but I have told them that I support what they are doing with that. I think they are interesting ways forward. I do not know if that answers the question? Hopefully, it does.