

# A Long-term Plan for Social Housing in Guernsey

## What it means for you



### Introduction

This month the Housing Department is taking a major report to the States about developing a long-term plan for social housing. Social housing includes the rental housing provided either by the Housing Department or by the Guernsey Housing Association.

The report makes a number of recommendations which, if they are accepted by the States, will mean:

- **some** tenants of the **Housing Department** will be personally affected by the proposals;
- **in the short-term, the majority of tenants will not be affected, but some could be in the future as the plan develops.**

This booklet has, therefore, been produced to outline the report and to explain the impact on tenants if the States approve the proposals.

It does **not** give a detailed explanation of the report, but this can be seen in full:

- online at the [www.gov.gg](http://www.gov.gg) website; or
- in the Billet d'Etat for October 2005 (available from the Greffe).

### What is the background to the report?

A large part of the report focuses on the funding of social housing given dwindling States' finances. The Department therefore sets out for the States the funding requirements:

- for the Housing Department to continue its programme to maintain and upgrade the States' housing stock;
- for new social housing to be built to meet the needs of existing and future tenants of the Housing Department and the Guernsey Housing Association.

Against this financial background, the Housing Department has taken a look at its existing stock and how it is occupied.

### What are the key points made in the report?

The report shows that overall the States' housing stock does not have the right mix of different types of properties.

Specifically:

- there is a very high level of 2 and 3 bedroom properties being under-occupied, mainly by single, older tenants;
- there is an acute shortage of 1 bedroom properties, particularly properties suitable for the needs of those older tenants who are currently under-occupying the 2 and 3 bedroom properties.

The report also shows that there are a considerable number of States' houses that have either reached or are reaching the end of their useful life, and which it is not cost-effective to maintain or refurbish.

### What action is being proposed?

The report shows that:

- by dealing with the problem of under-occupation, the size of the States' housing stock can be reduced by around 300 properties (from about 2,100 to 1,800 dwellings). Most of this reduction will be in 2 or 3 bedroom houses which it is not cost-effective for the Housing Department to maintain and refurbish.
- this reduction will need to be compensated for by a building programme to increase the number of 1 bedroomed properties. It is likely to be more cost-effective for the majority of these new houses to be built and managed by the Guernsey Housing Association.

The Housing Department is therefore asking that the States give it permission:

- to sell off the surplus and unsuitable properties, mostly 2 and 3 bedroom properties;
- to use the proceeds from those sales to fund the new build programme of 1-bed properties.

### What if the States does not accept the report?

The report warns that if the States does not approve this plan, the Housing Department:

- will have to keep properties that are not suitable to meet current and future housing needs;
- will incur high costs in maintaining those houses; and, as a consequence
- will have less money to spend on the building of smaller properties required to free up the 2 and 3 bedroomed houses and less money to spend on upgrading those States' houses that justify it.

### What if the States approves the report?

If the States approves the report, the Housing Department will draw up a detailed timetable and action plan that will include:

- identifying which properties will eventually become surplus to requirements;
- agreeing a development programme with the Guernsey Housing Association to provide new 1-bed properties that can be used to overcome the under-occupation of States' houses;
- focusing the estate refurbishment programme on modernising and improving the properties that will be retained.

## What short-term action is proposed for the States' housing stock?

Ahead of the preparation of this detailed action plan, the Housing Department is putting forward some short-term proposals that accord with this plan; namely:

- 14 **single units of accommodation**, are **to be sold**. The sale of these properties has already been approved and does not need further approval by the States.
- subject to the approval of the States, two estates – **Baubigny Cottages** (6 houses) and the **Petit Bouet** (30 houses) – which it is uneconomic to refurbish and upgrade, **will be sold**, either in their entirety or as individual properties.

The Housing Department has also decided that:

- subject to States approval, the **Victoria Avenue estate** (54 flats and houses) should be demolished and re-developed. **A development proposal for this estate is currently being drawn up.**

**Tenants living in all the above properties have been sent a letter making them aware of the Department's plans.**

In addition, it has also been decided that over the next few years:

- proposals need to be drawn up for the long-term re-development of the **Grand Bouet estate** (201 houses and flats). It is estimated that with normal repairs and maintenance these properties can be occupied for a further 5 years after which they should be progressively **demolished and the estate redeveloped.**

## Who will be affected in the short-term?

The tenants who will be directly affected in the short-term are those living:

- **in the 14 single units of accommodation to be sold;**
- **at Baubigny Cottages;**
- **in the Petit Bouet estate; and**
- **on the Victoria Avenue estate.**

The Housing Department has written to each of these tenants individually and they will be invited to presentations which explain in greater detail:

- why such far reaching proposals have been put forward affecting their homes; and
- what their future housing options will be.

The Housing Department is also liaising with the States Tenants Advisory Group (STAG) over the arrangements.

The Housing Department is not intending to meet with tenants of the **Grand Bouet estate** until more planning has gone into its redevelopment.

## How will other tenants be affected?

In addition to the re-location of the 100 households referred to above, some other Housing Department tenants living elsewhere will also be affected, as the Department has a duty to ensure that best use is made of the States' housing stock.

The Housing Department will therefore intensify its **policy of reviewing tenancies** on the basis of:

- tenants having an ongoing need for social rental housing; or
- providing tenants with accommodation suitable to their current requirements.

This means that the Department will look at whether tenants still meet the eligibility criteria for accommodation by the States. It will also look at those houses which are currently being under-occupied and ask those tenants to move to smaller accommodation suitable to their needs, as these become available.

### **What if a tenant is unhappy about the outcome of a tenancy review?**

In carrying out these tenancy reviews, the Housing Department:

- recognises that many tenants will remain in 'housing need' for the remainder of their lives and will continue to meet their needs;
- will exercise judgement, discretion and compassion based on the merits of each individual case; and
- will normally discuss the situation and the options with the tenant concerned before a final decision is reached.

In certain circumstances, there will be a right of appeal to the Housing Appeals Tribunal, which is independent of the Housing Department. The Tribunal will examine the circumstances of a case and decide whether the decision was fair and reasonable.

### **How can I get more information?**

If you have any queries concerning your letter or this leaflet, please call one of the numbers on the back page. If the line is busy, please leave a message.

### **If you have any questions, either:**

- Come in and see us at Sir Charles Frossard House.
- Call the helpline numbers on **717360 or 717226**
- Visit us online at: **[www.gov.gg/housing](http://www.gov.gg/housing)**

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