

2.8 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville of the Minister for Housing regarding sheltered housing on re-zoned land:

Following claims of an urgent, desperate need for sheltered housing during the debate to re-zone 60 vergées of countryside in 2008, can the Minister advise what work, if any, he has undertaken with the Connétable to develop a coherent criteria for admittance on to the waiting lists, whether the lists will be held in the Parishes or centrally, and explain how many homes have been built or the building works commenced?

Senator T.J. Le Main (The Minister for Housing):

I met with the Comité des Connétables on 9th March to discuss these issues and we have been able to make some good progress. We are working together to improve our application procedures in order to eliminate any potential duplication in our respective figures on housing need. However, I have long had the view that the allocation of all affordable housing schemes should be via a gateway under a common waiting list with defined criteria. This concept would require anyone wishing to access any form of affordable housing to register and be assessed through the gateway where a master list would be maintained. Not only would this ensure that all our affordable housing is used to its maximum potential, it would of course provide constantly up-to-date and accurate figures in respect of demand. Subject to the approval of the Minister for Planning and Environment, who brought the rezoning proposition to this House, I accept that there will continue to be occasions when the Parishes would wish to deviate from set criteria. Should this be the case then clearly the Parish concerned would need to demonstrate and explain the reason behind their decisions if challenged. For the avoidance of doubt I can confirm that on 1st June my department had 306 applicants on the list for one-bedroom sheltered accommodation. These are real people, all visited and assessed as being in need of such accommodation now regardless of whether or not they appear on any other list. This is a minimum number as opposed to a maximum. In response to the Deputy's final question, my department has been able to complete 18 one-bedroom flats at Les Petits Hinguettes at Le Marais which will soon be fully occupied. In respect of all other developments I will of course continue to work with the Minister for Planning and Environment. I alone cannot build a single unit of accommodation on any rezoned sites or land, that remit is with the Minister for Planning and Environment.

2.8.1 The Deputy of Grouville:

Could the Minister explain how he was able to assess the urgent desperate need before the Gateway system was in place and in his answer he said that the Le Marais flats were completed; could he confirm if they were part of the rezoning of the countryside?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

No, they were not part of the rezoning. But can I say that I came to this House with exactly what I am saying this morning, that there is a minimum number of people on the waiting list currently at the moment, 306, but when this came to the Assembly last year it was a higher figure than that and all these people, regardless of what... are in need and have been assessed as in real need. No questions, no ifs or buts.

2.8.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could the Minister just clarify for me, he may have done this before but I cannot recall, what consultation or research was undertaken in arriving at the age criteria for people trying to get into these schemes, which I think is 55, is that correct?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I am not quite sure what the Deputy is referring to, but the policy of the Housing Department is that it is an age of 60, but if the need is there before for medical or other difficulties then every case will be assessed and decided on its merits.

2.8.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Just to push the point of the question, the Minister says that he has met once with the Connétables and the question the Deputy is asking is when will there be coherent criteria, and when will they also include the Housing Trust because they have not even managed in the last 10 years after millions of pounds of money to get the same criteria for social housing as Housing Trusts, and I know this is urgent on the Minister's list because I heard him banging on about this on the radio about 6 months ago? This is the Gateway scheme he is promising us. It is not in existence and can he put a timescale on when everybody will meet the same criteria for social housing over-55 in all sectors; Parish, Trust and the Housing Department?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Yes, that is a very good question and I am very happy to advise that I have now received at the end of last week the completed Professor Whitehead report on social housing and that is one of its main recommendations. I have to read it, digest it and comment and make any additions or deletions in it and it will, once I have signed it off - hopefully at the end of this week - then it will go out to all Members for consultation and hopefully the debate will take place during this year where all those issues raised by Deputy Martin will be hopefully approved and given support by the Members.

2.8.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Slightly on a tangent, would the Minister announce what progress is being made on what was apparently going to be the major part of these developments, indeed the stock development in the countryside? Would he announce what progress is being made on the St. Saviour's development and would he confirm whether or not there are delays there?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Well there must be delays. As I say, I am the Minister for Housing and certainly my Assistant Minister, Deputy Power, has been working very hard to try to bring together some developments to come online, and all this is in the hands of the Planning Department and I am not aware currently right up-to-date what the difficulties are with the St. Saviour issue. But I have to say that we are very, very desperate to see some of these sites realised.

2.8.5 The Deputy of Grouville:

If I could just say that I am quite disappointed that the first meeting the Minister for Housing had with the Connétables was on 9th March when my proposition to bring this criteria forward was approved on 2nd April last year, so a year before he has a meeting with the Connétables. But on to my question. Could the Minister confirm

that 6 of the 8 rezoned sites are either owned by or will be developed by the same person or his company?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I know that some sites are owned by one developer, I am not sure, I cannot give you any final details on ... I do not involve myself with the applications at Planning. But the Deputy of Grouville is correct, there is one developer that owns several sites.