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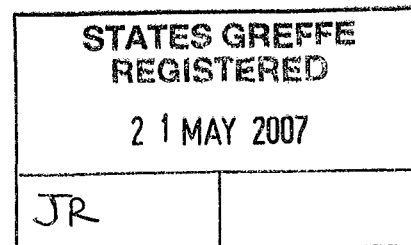
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517/3(3)

Item S12

11<sup>th</sup> May 2007

Deputy Sean Power  
Chairman  
Social Housing Property Plan Sub-Panel  
Scrutiny Office  
States Greffe  
Morier House  
St Helier



Dear Deputy Power

### **Social Housing Property Plan 2007-2016**

Thank you for your letter of 10<sup>th</sup> April and my apologies for the delay in responding but I wanted to consider the matter fully.

My understanding is that Housing wish to sell some of their older, more dated and energy inefficient stock. Refurbishing existing houses provides a saving of at least 40% in energy requirements over replacement with new houses. I understand much of the stock Housing wish to sell is the 'cross beam' form of housing built extensively in Jersey in the 1960's and '70's. These houses are structurally sound but have the thermal efficiency of a paper bag. The proposals made by Housing, therefore, make a great deal of sense. Sell off the older and energy inefficient housing stock which individual home owners can bring up to modern day standards at a fraction of the cost that Housing would expend, help the environment and reward States tenants who have rented these houses for long periods by offering them the opportunity to purchase their freehold at a realistic price.

There has been long standing concern that property ownership in Guernsey is higher than in Jersey as a ratio of ownership versus rental. Making older Housing stock available to purchase at attractive prices would help this imbalance.

Looking at the bullet points in your letter, the selection process for properties proposed for sale clearly should be houses that are at least 30 or 40 years old and in need of major refurbishment. The implications for the residents can only be positive as long as the opportunity to buy is something that they choose and will not be imposed on them. The release of these houses should not be seen as detrimental to the States, but the retention of them would result in the States needing to refurbish these units at a cost much greater than a single individual could achieve for the same property to the same standard if owned privately.

There will be no effect on the wider Housing market because the tenants of these properties would never have been in the position to buy property in the open market in their own right.

The "down side" is that if an estate such as, for example, Le Marais is partly sold off, the States lose the opportunity to redevelop. Although bulldozing vast estates is environmentally disastrous, if such an estate were to be built today, it would be to a much higher density than at present. Clearly there are different views here but my own view is that one of the tragedies of the last 50 years is that we now expect tenants and house owners to live in properties with gardens or outside spaces of such diminutive size. At least in the days when Le Marais was constructed, gardens and open communal areas were large enough to be usable play areas and when you see redeveloped estates, these generous amenities now appear to be consigned to history.

By the grace of God I was bought up in the 50's and 60's when the roads could be our playgrounds and gardens were big enough to provide football pitches of an adequate size for our little feet! Today, all we seem to have are busier roads and smaller gardens so that kids struggling to do what I did in the 50's and 60's are now branded as vandals causing malicious damage because their footballs, in such restricted spaces, are going astray! I may be cynical but I do not see this as progress!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Letto', with a long, sweeping underline.

David Letto