

22.09.20

5 Deputy L.V. Feltham of the Minister for Housing and Communities regarding social rented housing (O.Q.86/2022)

Will the Minister outline what analysis he has undertaken to ensure that homes currently in construction, or planned for construction, by Andium Homes and other social housing providers will meet the needs of families requiring social rented housing?

Deputy D. Warr of St. Helier South (The Minister for Housing and Communities):

I thank the Deputy for her question and apologise, for it is not a simple answer. Different assessments take place for this. In terms of demand, Affordable Housing Gateway statistics are published monthly. These set out how many and what types of homes are needed by those waiting for social rented homes. This is the analysis of our current unmet demand relative to the Gateway. In considering future requirements beyond the current list, we consider the anticipated effects of changes we expect to impact demand. This includes the effects of future changes in the Gateway criteria that I hope to make. In terms of supply, the availability of land to meet social housing requirements was considered in the development of the bridging Island Plan. The planning inspectors agreed that the identified supply of more than 1,400 affordable homes, which includes social rent and assisted purchases, was adequate to meet anticipated demand. The bridging Island Plan provides the framework for homes to be built but it is not until planning applications are approved and homes are built that the actual number and type of new social rented homes becomes known. This data is captured and monitored in the planning process. In the case of Andium Homes, I play a role in influencing and approving their developments. My role is, in a large part, to ensure that the homes coming forward by Andium represent the homes that we need. In the case of other rental social housing providers, I sadly have less ability to know what their plans are as they are not States-owned. I do, however, hope to build an open and constructive relationship with these providers with greater visibility and collaboration going forward.

9.5.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Has the Minister considered what effect the sale of family homes in estates such as Clos du Roncier and Les Cinq Chenes will have on the availability of homes suitable for families requiring social rented housing?

Deputy D. Warr:

As the Deputy knows, we are currently building more homes to replace those that are sold with better quality and better builds. So, in terms of what the consequences are, I suggest there is very little consequence as there are so many more new homes currently under construction.

9.5.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Minister referred to the number of new homes which are under construction. Could he remind the Assembly how many applications there currently are for affordable housing on the Gateway and which of those 2 numbers is the higher one?

Deputy D. Warr:

I am going to have to come back to the Deputy on that matter. I will let him know when I have that information available.

9.5.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I can help him out at least to the extent that the amount of homes that are currently in construction is significantly less than the number of applications there are on the Gateway, which means there is an inadequate amount of supply being planned. On that basis then, would the Minister confirm to having some form of discussion with Andium, with the S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) and whatever other relevant government agencies there are to see what can be done to increase the amount of affordable housing provided on government-owned sites rather than the appalling legacy that was left behind from the previous Government of allowing government-owned land to be used for homes that are unaffordable?

Deputy D. Warr:

Thank you, Deputy, for that point. We are currently working with the S.o.J.D.C. and Andium in identifying sites that they can construct more homes on. That land has to become available from the States-owned land bank and we are currently in discussion with them as to how best to release that land.

9.5.4 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister tell Members what criteria Andium use to establish whether their housing should be sold to the general market or not?

Deputy D. Warr:

Thank you, Connétable, for the question. The simple answer is I do not know, so I think I am going to have to refer back to Andium and ask that question, and then come back to you at a later date.

9.5.5 Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Given the Minister has quite rightly identified the urgent need for housing, and especially affordable homes, do you therefore support the cessation or the pause in the housing development in Kensington Place?

Deputy D. Warr:

Thank you, Deputy, for that question. It saddens me that we have to suspend that application and that build. I would prefer it to be carried on; however, I am confident in the knowledge that we are currently constructing a suitable number of houses to meet the demand that is coming up. Now, obviously one thing which we have released are the 169 homes in the northern quarter, so that has been an addition since that suspension.

9.5.6 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

Will the Minister confirm whether a review has been taking place on the properties of South Hill and the Waterfront to reassess the number of affordable homes that will be provided in these developments?

Deputy D. Warr:

Thank you, Deputy, for your question. I am trying to understand exactly what you mean by that. There is obviously a percentage of homes which have been allocated under those developments as affordable or social housing. I am aware that the S.O.J.D.C. are currently adjusting that accordingly,

depending on the viability of the scheme. But unless the Deputy has more to his question, I will happily take a further question.

9.5.7 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Can the Minister confirm if this is an upward percentage increase or whether it is looking to maintain the status quo?

Deputy D. Warr:

It may maintain the status quo but it may well be an increase; it will certainly not be a decrease.

9.5.8 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

During the Minister's answers, he referred to building houses and my question was around homes for families. So, specifically I would like to ask the Minister what he considers to be the type of basic standard of accommodation that he would like to be providing for families, maybe a family with 2 adults and 2 children, who require social rented housing.

Deputy D. Warr:

Obviously I would prefer to use the language of "homes" as opposed to "houses". One thing which is quite interesting was that in the bridging Island Plan, I noticed that her party voted extensively against, on the bridging Island Plan, many of the sites which were suggested for building family homes. I would like to be reassured that they did not do that but from what I understand from the voting record, it appears to be that that consideration was not one of the thoughts of the Reform Party. But in terms of the mix of homes, obviously that comes from the Gateway and obviously Andium are developing homes as well as flats ... well, homes in all sorts of varieties that they need which are appropriate to the current demand.