

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 11th DECEMBER 2012**

Question

Is the Minister surprised that the latest Housing Assessment shows that those in social rented accommodation who were planning to move in the next 3 years expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction with the state of repair of their housing than those in the private sector and even those in unqualified housing?

What measures, if any, has the Minister in place to meet the demand for social rented housing (especially houses rather than flats) shown by the Assessment to stand at 420 units over the period 2013 to 2015?

Answer

The fact that a proportion of our social housing stock is not in an acceptable state of repair is no surprise, my Department has been drawing attention to the fact since at least 2007. Our latest condition survey review has established that 76% of the stock does meet the standard which represents an improvement on the position in 2010. A number of significant refurbishment projects are in progress; Clos Gosset, Pomme D'or Farm, Jardin des Carreaux and the La Collette Flats Tower. Completion of these projects will improve standards for many tenants.

There is though still much to do and it is well established and understood that the need to make a significant annual return to the States from the Housing Department's income means that there is insufficient funding to meet the repair and refurbishment needs of the stock in the long term. The Housing Transformation Programme will introduce mechanisms to address that.

In respect of the demand for homes; What you will hear me saying with increasing frequency is Supply, Supply, Supply !

I believe that there is a significant lack of supply and overall the Housing Assessment Report suggests that this is the case; particularly in respect of affordable and social housing.

As we know housing needs are not static and are sensitive to economic conditions. This was one of the main reasons why I sought to establish the Affordable Housing Gateway as the single waiting list for affordable housing so that we had a mechanism for constantly monitoring affordable housing needs.

The identified shortfall in social rented housing is very real and reference to the latest Gateway statistics which are published monthly on the States web site show that the current demand for social housing equates to 815 new homes; that is actual means tested households, in need, today. This is about double the finding contained in the Housing Assessment report.

My Department and I have been drawing attention to the lack of supply for some considerable time and I have been doing all that I can as Housing Minister to develop available sites in my control, specifically:-

- 94 new homes have been delivered in the past 18 months
- Contracts for 113 new homes will be signed in the next month
- Contracts for a further 61 new homes will be entered into in 2013
- As sites are made available to me through the Planning system, another 500 social and affordable homes can be delivered by the social sector

I had hoped to have been developing detailed feasibility proposals for a major regeneration of the La Collette Flats low rise site which we started work on in the Summer; but this important work has been held up whilst the Planning Department prepare a Planning Brief for the site.

More homes are clearly required and finding sources and sites for these is the responsibility of the Planning Minister.

With that in mind, on 1st November 2012, I wrote to the Planning Minister expressing my concerns about supply and making some suggestions to him about how he could stimulate the development of homes on sites already approved and how we might generate some new supply.