

# Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Minister for Housing and Communities

## Public Review Hearing Affordable Housing: Supply and Delivery Review

### Additional Questions

1. In your view, should right-sizing homes provided on sites zoned for affordable housing be sold or rented at prices below market levels, so that those homes can be designated as affordable?

**The detail of right-sizing policy is still being developed. This will include considering where and how the benefits of the policy should lie in relation both to those people vacating their properties and those accessing the vacated property.**

2. The reference to right-sizing homes as a form of affordable housing in the Draft Bridging Island Plan implies they will meet the GoJ definition of affordable housing. Minister, is that your understanding?

**A new policy definition of affordable housing has been developed by the Minister for Housing and Communities and will be published shortly. The definition sets out the minimum criteria required for residential accommodation in Jersey to be defined as 'affordable'. It also articulates criteria that defines the two existing categories of affordable housing - 'social rent' and 'assisted purchase'. The draft Bridging Island Plan has proposed 'right sizing' and 'key worker' as two additional categories of affordable housing. 'Right sizing', in particular, may be linked to re-zoning of sites in Island Parishes for affordable housing. Any expansion in the categories of affordable housing will be captured within an updated version of the definition of affordable housing and will be consistent with the key principles that define what is affordable housing in Jersey.**

3. Minister, what is the planned mechanism for monitoring achievement of the actions set out in the Housing Action Plan?

**There will be a designated lead officer for each action area within the 5 broad categories that comprise the Creating Better Homes Action Plan. Where applicable action milestones will be actively managed through an internal project management tool. A senior officer will have overall responsibility for monitoring progress across all areas of the action plan.**

- a. Does the Better Homes Political Oversight Group have a role in this monitoring?

**Yes. The Political Oversight Group will provide strategic and political oversight of the development and delivery of the Creating Better Homes Action Plan, including progress towards outcomes.**

4. What is the intended size of the new Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team and will its recruitment have to await the arrival of the new interim head of that team in October?

**The design and recruitment of the team is intended to take place under the leadership of the new interim head, starting from early September.**

5. Minister, should the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team assist with the formulation of Development Briefs for affordable housing sites?

**Supplementary planning guidance, including development briefs for affordable housing sites, is produced by the Place and Spatial Planning team in the Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance directorate. This team is responsible for the development of planning policy and guidance.**

**The new Strategic Housing and Regeneration (SHR) team will work alongside the Place and Spatial Planning team (in the same Directorate within the Department for Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance). The SHR team is intended to provide the capacity and expertise to coordinate housing issues and delivery, and in this role, they will assist in the formulation of development briefs for affordable housing sites, and will also work very closely with planners responsible for: the use of public land (Jersey Property Holdings (IHE)) and the determination of planning applications (Land and Regulation (IHE)).**

6. Are there gaps in the resourcing of the new Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team and if so how can they be addressed?

**It is anticipated that the available resource is sufficient to meet the functional requirements of the new team. This will be tested throughout the design and recruitment phases that will be led by the new interim head, starting from early September. This will include discussion with housing delivery partners, and other parts of Government, about the best way to deploy available resources.**

7. Minister, in your view, are there other areas of Government that require resourcing to support the Housing Action Plan delivery ambitions?

**The Creating Better Homes action plan recognises the need to work across a range of government departments, including SPPP, IHE and Treasury & Exchequer. It will be important that all relevant departments are sufficiently able to prioritise delivery of the associated activities in order to deliver on the Housing Minister's priorities.**

8. There are a number of reviews or research exercises intended to complete this year. This includes the reviews of social rent policy and affordable purchase schemes.

- a. Minister, have you allowed for the short-term resourcing demands this work is placing on GoJ?

**The review of social rent policy is well underway and is being coordinated by SPPP. It will be completed during 2021 as set out in the Creating Better Homes Action Plan. There are sufficient resources in place for this work.**

**The Creating Better Homes Action Plan sets out a 'two-phase' approach to the evaluation and implementation of affordable housing products. Phase 1 is to be completed by end 2021 and will review the functioning of the affordable**

**products available. There is sufficient resource in place to complete Phase 1 as set out. Phase 2 is still intended for delivery in 2022.**

9. In their response to the Draft Bridging Island Plan, Andium suggested the establishment of a Better Homes Task Force to focus attention on securing and bringing forward sites for new affordable homes. Do you favour this idea, and could it be developed into a dedicated team focused on site assembly and promotion?

**The Minister for Housing and Communities will establish and Chair a new Strategic Housing Partnership, bringing the full range of housing sector actors together with representatives from key government departments. This will provide the forum for discussion of housing issues, amongst other things, and will provide an opportunity for attention to be focused on the matter of site assembly and delivery.**

**The Minister for Housing and Communities is to be supported by a new Strategic Housing and Regeneration team which will provide the capacity and expertise to coordinate housing issues and delivery; in many respects that team – in working closely with a range of partners – will perform similar function to those of the suggested Task Force.**

10. Minister, should Government be prepared to transfer sites to Andium, or other affordable housing providers, before their current Government use ceases but with time-limited agreements for the current use to come to an end?

**This can only be considered on a case-by-case basis and with detailed advice to support any decision.**

11. Minister, in your view, what role should Jersey Development Company have in meeting your affordable housing aspirations?

**It will be important for all housing partners to understand the challenge of addressing housing affordability in Jersey, including the need to deliver the planned expansion of affordable homes over the coming years.**

**Affordable Homes need to be developed as part of planned and sustainable communities – which in return also require investment in areas such as improved public realm, transport connectivity and other community infrastructure.**

**The States of Jersey Development Company has a key role to play across this agenda.**

12. Does Government have any specific programmes or plans to support skills development and capacity in the construction sector?

**This is an issue we will seek to work closely with construction industry partners on as part of the new Strategic Housing Partnership. Currently government supports skills development through relevant further education provision.**

13. Could Government intervene more directly to support construction capacity and might this include specific initiatives in relation to modern methods of construction?

**The government already supports significant delivery through the programmes of Andium Homes and SOJDC. The role of government in promoting modern methods of construction (MMC) is currently being considered by a political working group that is expected to report next year.**

14. Are you aware of Andium's proposed pilot projects in connection with Passivhaus and improved energy efficiency standards and its use of modern methods of construction?

**Yes, this has been discussed in recent briefings the Minister for Housing has held with Andium Homes.**

a. Are you planning further initiatives of your own in connection with design standards and modern methods of construction?

b. If so, please can you outline in further detail these plans?

**The Minister for Housing and Communities has convened a working group to review opportunities and challenges associated with implementing modern methods of construction in Jersey. The working group met for the first time on 7 July 2021.**

**The purpose of the working group is to ensure the States Assembly debate on the draft Island Plan is informed by a politically led review into the opportunities and challenges for MMC in Jersey.**

**Initiatives around design standards (energy efficiency/Passivhaus) have been set out in the draft Bridging Island Plan by the Minister for the Environment. It is expected that draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on these matters will be set out shortly, and that these can be discussed at a future Political Oversight Group.**

15. Minister, when you consider updating the definition of housing affordability, will you examine the extent to which social housing tenants receiving income support to meet their rents are restricted from working because of the way the benefit system operates in relation to rent levels?

**The basis of this question is not clear. Income support claimants are not restricted from working and the benefits system is designed to support claimants to increase their own income through employment.**

16. In your view, Minister, could a form of deferred purchase tenure, effectively rent-to-buy, be an attractive proposition for key workers?

**The Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team will coordinate work on key worker policy. By necessity this will need input from a range of stakeholders, including Housing, Health and HR. It is important that key workers feel that they have a stake in the future of Jersey, which will help with their recruitment and retention. They should have the opportunity to own their own home and in due course consideration will be given to identifying a suitable affordable purchase product for key workers. The design of such a product is not yet known. But a deferred purchase tenure option could certainly be one of the options considered.**

17. Minister, there are a number of amendments proposed to remove proposed re-zoned

affordable housing sites from the Draft Island Plan. Does the prospect of a reduction in the number of available sites concern you?

a. What are your views on how this risk can be mitigated?

**Given the importance of developing affordable homes, as a key means of improving housing affordability overall, and reduction in the available land supply is a concern.**

**At this stage, it is for the Minister for the Environment to address the issue of future land supply through the Island Plan Review. As part of this work, it is expected that the Minister for Environment will consider this issue in responding to the recent consultation on the draft bridging Island Plan.**

**Options obviously include identifying additional sites for development of Affordable Homes, prioritising the use of public land for Affordable Homes or enabling the development of taller buildings where they accommodate a substantial proportion of Affordable Homes.**

18. In submissions made to the Panel, views have been expressed suggesting parishes could make a more significant contribution to housing supply. In your view, how might they assist, especially with provision of affordable homes?

**Parishes have traditionally played an important role in housing supply and continue to do so. The Minister for Housing is aware that Parishes have been involved in each stage of the Island Plan Review, and indeed the Minister has himself met recently with Parish representatives to understand their views.**

**The Minister is keen to encourage Parishes to play a range of roles, which might include coordinating or sponsoring development of affordable homes; using Parish resources and networks to acquire or promote land for development; facilitating the input of local residents through surveys, Parish Assemblies and other mechanisms; and providing strategic local input to policy development and plan making.**

19. In terms of the delivery for housing options for older people, Action 5d of the Housing Action Plan states you intend to work with the Minister for Health and Social Services and GoJ officials to ensure the contribution of better homes is considered as part of the delivery of the Jersey Care Model.

- a. Do you foresee any challenges or barriers to achieving this?  
b. What options for older peoples' housing do you envisage, or hope to see?

**The full implementation of the Jersey Care Model will take some time to achieve and there will be many challenges to be overcome. However, working towards a social care system that delivers effective and comprehensive care based within the community to support individuals living in their own home with care needs is a key aim. This work is at an early stage and specific housing options have not yet been developed. Advances in technology provide many opportunities to support independent living and these will be investigated in detail as possible this project.**