

2018.01.30

**7 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for the Environment regarding the development of housing within the area covered by the North of Town Masterplan; [OQ.19/2018]**

Will the Minister inform Members of the breakdown by site of the total number of units of accommodation that it is proposed will be developed by private or social housing providers on the area covered by the North of Town Masterplan, including the area around Millennium Town Park?

**Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin (The Minister for the Environment):**

The North of Town Masterplan was approved by this Assembly in 2011. It seeks to encourage the regeneration of the north of St. Helier through the redevelopment of a number of key sites to provide a significant number of new homes. Since the beginning of 2011 the following sites have secured planning permission in the North of Town Masterplan area for the development of those new homes, some of which are under construction or have been completed and others are yet to commence: Ann Court, 165 units; the former store Ann Street Brewery, 15; former Jersey College for Girls site, 183; former play.com, 169; the East Wing, Hotel de France, 51; the J.S.P.C.A. (Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) site, 12; the site at Gas Place, 241; Robin Hood Junction area, 5; Scope Furnishing, 31; and other small scale conversions and other schemes, 84. This amounts to a total of 956 new homes, although the Jersey Gas site figure may decrease as a result of the recent States decision to reduce the number of new homes to 105 and to extend the Town Park. That would bring the number to 820.

**4.7.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does the Minister not consider that far from being regeneration, whatever that may mean, this looks awfully like packing units of accommodation into town and this is not conducive, particularly to good quality of life for town dwellers? Would he predict where we are likely to see this packing people into St. Helier will develop next?

**The Deputy of St. Martin:**

The North of Town Masterplan was adopted before I became a politician but Deputy Southern voted in favour of it. The sites were identified; there were others on the list which I have not mentioned this morning. It is an excellent document because it not only talks about new units it talks about the public realm, it talks about public spaces, and it talks about creating pedestrian improvement for both use on foot and bicycling. If we are not happy with this plan moving forward we should change it, but certainly thus far it is delivering exactly what it says on the tin. I can only add that by increasing the standards that we build all our new units to, and creating amenity space to go with those units as part of those standards can only make the quality of life better. I appreciate where the Deputy is coming from, this is a large number of units. But we are doing our best to create better ambience in town, certainly it would have been more useful if people had voted more in favour of the infrastructure levy and I would have had more money. But certainly the North of Town Masterplan does envisage greater green areas, greater amenity spaces and children's play areas. I could say only specifically in the area of Ann Street and Ann Court, where the most recent plans have been passed and a new pedestrian park area will be created outside the Art Centre.

**4.7.2 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:**

Given that possibly there could be nearly 1,000 units in this very small area, and even if we just estimate 2 persons living in each unit, can the Minister tell me, the 2,000 people, does he know what they look like, how many children they have, how many discussions he has even had with Education,

Infrastructure? After they have squeezed the 2,000 people in, in the 1,000 units, where are all these lovely elements going to be put, these open spaces, these play areas? Can I see the plan? Where are the discussions with the other Ministers? Please can the Minister assure me this has happened? Where are these children going to school? One answer at least please.

**The Deputy of St. Martin:**

The Deputy asked for one answer; I do not know that I can give it in one answer. The North of Town Masterplan is exactly what it says on the tin. It is developed in conjunction with the rest of the Assembly; certainly Ministers around the Council of Ministers' table are aware. I know there are going to be challenges but regardless of where these people live there will be challenges. If we are creating nearly 1,000 new homes I have to accept there will be 2,000-plus people living in those units. But when it comes to green and amenity space, the Assembly made the decision to extend the Town Park, I have just cited the new amenity area, Ann Court, Phillips Street, but there are also plans in Belmont Gardens, in Nelson Street Car Park, around Springfield. Moving forward we know those areas will improve, and certainly I hope Members will know through the work that I am doing with the Future St. Helier group, it is my intention to make a lot more of the town streets and lanes into much more pedestrian friendly areas. I want the walk to work to be enjoyable, something that people look forward to, and not a challenge fighting your way between the traffic. We can do so much more in our town to make it green, attractive, with play areas, places where people enjoy living. Certainly that is my intention.

**4.7.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

A supplementary, Sir. I said one answer, I will stick to education. Can the Minister assure us that the town schools and St. Saviour schools will not have 3 to 4 form entries in the Parish? Outer-lying Parishes are getting smaller and smaller. Has he spoken to Education? Where will these children go to school?

**The Deputy of St. Martin:**

The education facilities will be provided by the Education Department. If a need is arising I am sure they will respond. I cannot say I have spoken specifically to the Minister for Education on that issue, but it will be clear as these developments take place that more requirement is needed and Education will respond. If necessary we will have to build more.

**4.7.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

In other words a silo mentality is alive and well in the ministerial Government. Can the Minister tell us about population density, what it was in this area before the Town Park was built and what it is likely to be if and after the proposals go through?

**The Deputy of St. Martin:**

I cannot, but I will endeavour to find out and let the Deputy know.

**4.7.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Would the Minister agree to publish to Members the list of all the public space amenities, including the areas for children to play, that are scheduled to be fitted in this particular area in the future so that we can rest assured that what he says will be delivered in terms of town amenity? Particularly, will he now talk to the Minister for Education and seek that information of where these children are going to be taught?

**The Deputy of St. Martin:**

The last request from the Deputy, I can certainly give the guarantee that I will talk to the Minister for Education in the extremely near future about the facilities for children who may or may not live in these units. We cannot expect that every one of them will have children in, but I do accept that there certainly will be an additional number of children that will move into some of these units. As regards the children's amenity space, I can provide the Deputy and Members with sites that currently exist and sites that are planned; but it certainly would be my hope in the future that more sites will become available as monies and funds become available to develop them. As I said, the North of Town Masterplan already accepts that in the Wesley Chapel site, Ann Street, which I have spoken about, Minden Place, Belmont Gardens, Nelson Street Car Park and Springfield will all have amenity spaces developed. But I cannot guarantee that anything is going to happen in the future because these decisions have not been taken. I can only assure Members that I am working towards that and would very much hope to deliver them.