

4.11 Deputy J.M. Le Bailly of St. Mary of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the rezoning of the Longueville and Samarès Nurseries sites:

Given the limited availability of suitable building sites for first-time buyer and social rental properties, would the Minister consider bringing to the Assembly a rezoning proposition for the Longueville and Samarès Nursery sites in order to provide this much-needed housing and the creation of much-needed employment for the depressed building industry, and if not, why not?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

The Deputy will be aware from the information contained within the report published by the department last year that over 500 homes are likely to be provided to meet first-time buyer and social rented needs over the next 5 years. It is also my intention to bring forward a proposed amendment to the Island Plan to review policy H3 of the plan in particular, which requires the development industry to contribute to the provision of affordable homes as part of private sector residential developments. In addition to this, planning permission currently exists for approximately 1,400 homes, which could be brought forward at any time by the development industry to assist the construction sector in the Island. The 2011 Island Plan requires the reconsideration of the use of former glasshouse sites such as Samarès and Longueville Nurseries in the event that planning permission for 150 Category A homes on States-owned sites is not in place by the end of June 2013. A planning application for the provision of over 150 Category A homes on the Summerland and Ambulance Station sites is presently being reviewed by my department, and another application, which will include the provision of Category A homes on the former J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) site, is anticipated very soon. In such circumstances, it is my intention to continue to meet the Island's development needs from within the existing built-up area in accordance with the approved spatial strategy of the Island Plan while continuing to monitor the situation with regard to housing supply.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I thank the Minister for the answer. I think that that was quite well-covered, thank you.

4.11.1 Connétable L. Norman of St. Clement:

Is the Minister aware of the regular flooding due to over-development in the Samarès Marsh area causing damage to people's homes and the local infrastructure, and would it not be more appropriate for future large-scale developments to be built on firmer, higher land as they have, for example, in St. Mary. [Laughter]

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

The Minister is aware of the potential and prevalence of flooding problems within the Samarès area. The name "Samarès" does refer to a marshy area, so a lot of water is to be expected. In relation to building homes in St. Mary, I would have thought the Constable of St. Clement might also consider building homes on stilts.

4.11.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Did the Minister say there would be 150 houses on Longueville, which seems to be quite remarkable? Would he indicate why he thinks these sites have now become viable when at the Island Plan debate time, they were not regarded as so? Has he run out of other brownfield sites? Has he already exhausted the sites he is provisioned to investigate? Why is he now playing around with sites that were put on one side?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

The Deputy is showing that his hearing aid is not necessarily working or he is not plugged into the audio loop. I did not say that there were 150 homes that could be built on Samarès or Longueville Nurseries. What I said was that in relation to the question asked of me that the release of those sites would only be contemplated if indeed all other policies for the regeneration

of the town, as agreed by most Members, if not all Members - bar one - of this House agreed in 2011... If those policies fail, then further consideration of the release of not only those sites but other sites will be contemplated. Until we reach that point, part of my answer was that I consider we have not reached that point as yet. The end of June 2013 is the date that is in mind. Until we reach that date, the current policies apply.

4.11.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

At a previous States Assembly, the Minister for Planning and Environment, in answer to a question from Deputy Young, stated that he was bringing a paper to the Council of Ministers, I believe on 20th or 22nd February. This is in relation to policy H3, which the Assembly have been waiting for for over a year now. Can the Minister for Planning and Environment tell us whether he has pulled that paper together and presented it to the Council of Ministers yet?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

As I mentioned to the House on a previous occasion, it was my intention to bring the paper to the attention of the Council of Ministers on 20th, I think it was, February. Unfortunately, because of the amount of work that had to be considered on that date, the date has been put off to the 27th. The presentations have been done, preliminary meetings have been undertaken with other States Members, and indeed the discussions will take place on the 27th. I cannot give the Deputy a time, but if she asks the Chief Minister, maybe he will be able to enlighten her.

4.11.4 Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter:

Last year, the Minister highlighted the point there was 1,400 homes already down with approval to be developed. Also, going back to the previous Minister, Senator Cohen, he made that same assertion. Those applications have been approved for in excess of 2 years. None of them are coming forward, quite clearly because the developers do not believe there is going to be sufficient yield in the current marketplace and also with the coupled problems of getting mortgages. So my question for the Minister would be would he consider time-limiting future applications to ensure that applications that were successful did come forward as developed sites, rather than being banked for the future, when the economic trends improve the yield for the developer?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I think that was something that was considered within the Island Plan, if my memory serves me correctly. I thought we had taken a decision that building applications, particularly the major ones, had to be at least started inside a 3-year period after which they had been given permissions. That is the position I think that we are at at the moment. If it indeed is not what I am saying, then obviously I think that the suggestion from the Constable would be a good one, but as far as I am aware, I think we have already got that situation.

4.11.5 The Deputy of St. Peter:

Does the Minister consider that the number of 150 units that he talks about will come forward by 2013 this year is adequate to solve our current housing supply issue?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

According to the projections, it is not just 150 which are going to be built.

[11:00]

It has been suggested that some 1,000 affordable homes out of the total of 4,400 homes to be built over the 10-year plan period will be affordable. Indeed, in relation to those policies, it was also stated that 500 homes or thereabouts would be likely to be provided over the next 5 years, and the intention of the plan was not to put on to the market 1,000 affordable homes in any one

chunk, and to phase the development over the 10-year period, with the majority of the affordable homes happening in the late part of that period, rather than the earlier.

4.11.6 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

Yes, I think the Minister said he had 2 sites that already had planning applications in. One was the old Girls College and the other was the Summerland site. I think the first site, I would like the Minister to confirm planning permission on the Girls College site, and is the Summerland planning application subject to any outcome of the debate on the police station. Could he say this one way or the other?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I do not think that arises out of the questions.

4.11.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister confirm whether the Council of Ministers have an agreed policy when it comes to the provision of affordable homes?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I do not think we have at the moment. There are very different views and that is the reason of holding the meeting: to see if we can broker the consensus point of view and to move forward in a collective fashion, as the Island would expect.

4.11.8 The Deputy of St. Mary:

With regard to the number of housing that the Minister is putting forward, it is certainly not enough to make an impact at the moment. I would like him to reconsider bringing forward things much sooner than he anticipates in order to help the building industry at this present time and also potential first-time buyers. Would he agree to do that?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I am happy to take that on board but certainly in the context of the existing plans. I must also tell the House that I was told this morning that, of our 40,000-odd homes that we have built on the Island, some 10 per cent (4,300) are up for sale at the moment.