

5.10 Deputy J.H. Young of the Minister for Housing regarding the local need for sheltered housing:

Does the Minister concur with the Planning Inspector's conclusions in the report published in August 2013 in respect of the refused application for sheltered housing in St. Ouen that there is no evidence of local need for sheltered housing available and if not, what action will he take to provide that information to the current Island Plan Review in respect of all Parish housing needs?

Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier (The Minister for Housing):

I am not in a position to dispute the Inspector's findings in relation to the need for sheltered housing in St. Ouen but having read his report, what is clear to me is that there is some confusion around the term sheltered housing. There is, without a doubt, a need for full sheltered housing but many applicants on Parish lists need what I would call more appropriate housing; housing with wet rooms, housing with easy access and housing close to the amenities rather than full sheltered housing. Having said that, I must stress that there is clear and strong evidence of the need for more social housing in our Island as a whole, based on the evidence that the statistics unit have provided and my own gateway. For example, we have over 763 households waiting to be housed in the top priority bands of the housing gateway.

[11:00]

In particular we have a need for more one and 2-bedroom units for the elderly and for younger families and these are needed urgently. Younger families and the elderly are clearly struggling to source suitable affordable accommodation. This will include people in need of sheltered or more appropriate housing. This is why the Council of Ministers have been working with the Minister for Planning and Environment on the Island Plan Review to ensure that we have plans in place to ensure that these needs are met. In doing this, it is vital in my mind that we support the Parishes as they seek to provide for their parishioners. As such I will work with any Parish and the Planning and Environment Minister on producing statistics for sheltered homes and appropriate homes for over 55s specifically. However, I will not allow the Inspector's report to detract from the clear compelling overall evidence of need for homes across all tenures in this Island.

5.10.1 Deputy J.H. Young:

I thank the Minister for his very full answer and his commitment particularly to ensure that the Island Plan Review has that essential information, but could he confirm his own view, whether he is in favour of sheltered housing being provided for people within the local communities in which they spent their working lives?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

Yes, I am in favour of both sheltered housing and, to be perfectly frank, we easily use the term sheltered housing but we have very little sheltered housing in Jersey. We have appropriate housing for the over 55s, accessible housing. Sheltered housing, to my mind, is more than just a gathering of 18, 19 units with elderly folk in it, but is a unit that provides food, other facilities, not nursing but laundry and that. I am totally in favour of sheltered housing and I am also in favour of appropriate housing for the elderly as well as the rest of our community.

5.10.2 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am grateful for the response of the Minister but would the Minister confirm whether he would be prepared to work with a Parish to address some of the issues raised regarding the demand of housing as included in the Inspector's report?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

Yes, I will. That was another area of confusion. St. Ouen seemed to have a higher demand according to the Inspector, 72 people on the waiting list, as opposed to, for the rest of the Island,

217 people on the so-called sheltered housing waiting list. I think it is this confusion around the term “sheltered housing” that is the problem. But I will work with the Parish. It is essential that elderly folk that have worked and lived in Parish communities remain in Parish communities with the networks that support them as they become older.

5.10.3 The Deputy of Grouville:

Would the Minister share my view that an improved and consistent criteria would be better so that as we have, at the moment, in certain Parishes, the age to qualify for sheltered housing is 55 and yet in others it is 75, which adds to the confusion of who is eligible for sheltered housing and in which Parishes they can apply?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

Yes, I do share the Deputy’s view and this is something that we need to work on but I would say that it is not only sometimes the elderly that need sheltered housing. We have younger disabled people that need sheltered housing and this is an issue that needs to be resolved and I am working on it.

5.10.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I was under the impression, probably mistakenly, that we were moving towards a single unified waiting list, the gateway for social housing and yet I am hearing today about a waiting list for sheltered housing. What is happening in the Housing Department and elsewhere?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

The Deputy is under the right impression. We have a single gateway waiting list now for all the Housing Trusts and the Housing Department which will become the Housing Company later on. We have that but the Parishes are separate to that. Some have chosen to use the gateway to allocate their homes and I am quite comfortable with the arrangements we have with the Parish. There is some confusion, though, around the term sheltered housing.

5.10.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The list for sheltered housing specifically, that you keep referring to, is that separate or is that included?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

There is no true list for sheltered housing. There is a list of housing required in the Parishes.

5.10.6 Deputy J.H. Young:

I am very grateful for the Minister’s full explanation but can he give a commitment that in view of the importance of this subject that he will produce consolidated information for this special housing need, including the elderly groups and the other categories he has mentioned to the Island Plan Review, that he will make it available to all Members and ensure that that information is available for all Parishes so we have a co-ordinated response? Will he give that undertaking?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

That is a very big undertaking. I have given an undertaking to work with the Constables, the Minister for Planning and Environment, the Minister for Health and Social Services, to see what we can do to improve the available housing for people, particularly the elderly, maybe sheltered housing as well.