

2.12 Deputy S. Pitman of the Minister for Housing regarding criteria for the identification of States-owned properties for sale:

In view of the fact that one of the priority issues within the Social Housing Property Plan is to increase ownership among States' tenants, what criteria was used to identify which States-owned properties will be sold?

Senator T.J. Le Main: (The Minister for Housing):

Can I just say that I am very, very proud of our highly experienced and professional staff who have an in-depth knowledge of the clients and the estates and everything? As for the criteria for selection of homes to be sold, we could not sell one-beds because we do have a huge issue, as I keep explaining to the Assembly - I hope you are listening - about ageing population and the need to adapt our accommodation for those things, so we cannot sell one-beds. So that left the Housing Department with 2 and 3-beds which we could part-sell. The issue is, Sir, that we need to break up the concentrations of social housing, mixing tenures, and the department officers spend a considerable amount of time on numbers and mix and locations and working with tenants' associations and whatever, and residents, and came up with a definitive list of numbers on specific estates; not particular homes. Now I can just explain, Sir, briefly, and I know Deputy Le Hérissier has been one who has been working very closely with me on this, is the huge density and overpopulation of children at Les Cinq Chênes, for instance. It makes sense, Sir, that we should sell off in that estate, make home owners of tenants in that estate, and create some new homes on the land adjoining this, now a H3 or H4 site and to break up these concentrations of a huge amount of social homes in one go. It also gives us a great opportunity to work with the residents in future by creating home owners in these estates. It also allows the home owners to get involved with residents' associations. We are having difficulty in many of these issues at the moment.

The Bailiff:

Minister, I am sorry, your time has run out.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I could go on for an hour on this one, Sir.

The Bailiff:

I know you could, yes [Laughter] but you are not going to.

2.12.1 Deputy S. Pitman:

Could the Minister confirm that none of the properties that have been identified for sale are not the most difficult properties to maintain by his department?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I did not hear that, I am sorry.

The Bailiff:

Could you repeat it, please, Deputy?

Deputy S. Pitman:

Could the Minister confirm that none of the properties that have been identified for sale are not the most difficult properties to maintain by his department?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I do not understand that question really, but the issue is that you take places like Clos de Roncier, Sir, which is 83 homes sitting in the middle of the countryside with no buses, no buses after 6.00 p.m. We have a concentration of families there; social housing tenants. We have families that have no cars, no transport, there are no shops for the children to go, no community facilities, and it

makes sense that you create some home ownership in these kind of estates where those kind of people that are going to be a homeowner have more opportunity of having a more disposable income to be able to have transport and otherwise. So, it makes commonsense to look at all the issues - the issues about concentration and all that - when determining where we want to sell property. Also, Sir, many tenants are ringing up asking us why their home is not for sale; why they cannot buy from their particular estate. The issue is that at the moment they may be, and the issue is that we rather hope that we are going to give as much opportunity to as many tenants as possible over the next 10 years.

2.12.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am not going to go off the Housing Plan, but twice now the Minister for Housing has mentioned Clos de Roncier stuck out in the middle of nowhere. It may be he has sold it; it may not be, but is it beyond the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Transport to get together and get a bus like the 18 that goes now to Le Squez every 20 minutes to town? Why is this going on? I would like the Minister for Housing to at least undertake this so that the people up there do have a bus and that he is in urgent talks with the Minister for Transport.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

No, I have not spoken to the Minister for Transport, but the issue has been going on for a number of years that we have 83 homes at Clos de Roncier and the issue of laying on buses until 11.00 p.m. or 12.00 p.m. at night for only a few people otherwise is just, patently, absolutely nonsense. The best way out of this, Sir, is to try and create home ownership on that estate which allows those kinds of people to be able to do the things that perhaps some of the lower income families cannot do otherwise.

2.12.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Point of clarification, Sir, could the Minister clarify whether there is a serious social problem on this estate, or is it only a matter of a few people, and does he consider that home owners do not need to take a bus?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

The issue is quite clear: there is not a social issue on that estate. What I have been saying, they do have a very good tenants' association run by a Mrs. Annette Brown up there and the issue is, quite clearly, that there is a lack of facilities. There used to be a youth club alongside, which was demolished and built houses upon, and the Parish of St. Clement are always having issues in relation to minor social issues. But the issues are quite clearly when you are going to create homes for rental, particularly for low income families, you need community facilities, you need the shop alongside where people can go daily to get their pint of milk, their paper, their loaf of bread, and other issues like that, and it needs a regular bus service. It would not pay for the bus service to be running for just 83 homes on that issue.

The Bailiff:

Final supplementary. Deputy Huet.

2.12.4 Deputy J.J. Huet of St. Helier:

Would not the Minister agree that originally when Clos de Roncier was built there were only about 18 houses, so there were no problems then? It is only because of - dare I say - previous planning allowing these extra houses to go up in the countryside, which was not obviously a good idea.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Well, originally, it was built in 3 phases with some flats following. But, generally, many years ago there was quite a regular bus service. There was a shop down the road by the church. As I say, there was a youth club and the church alongside. It had lots of facilities and now it does not have

the facilities, and I have to say that those who are able to afford to buy a home, or a home owner, has more opportunity, through our experience, in being able to ferry their children around than perhaps some of the low income families that do not have that ability to have a car.