

2017.01.17

10 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Housing regarding the stock of housing with more than 3 bedrooms: [1(40)]

Will the Minister advise what, if any, policy decisions she has made in order to ensure that there is sufficient stock of housing with more than 3 bedrooms to meet the current needs of Islanders? Has she communicated this to Andium Homes in order that it desists from selling its stock of housing with more than 3 bedrooms?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Housing):

I am focusing on the delivery of 1,000 new homes by 2020 to meet the demand for affordable housing, be that for rental or for purchase. The Housing Gateway provides evidence of the demand for affordable housing, including the need for any large family homes. Andium and the trusts use evidence to manage their current housing stock and to plan future developments. It is also important to note that supply reflects demand and the largest current demand is for one, 2 and 3-bedroomed homes.

3.10.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Do I take that from the Minister for Housing to be a no? The Minister for Housing is not discussing the shortage of anything over 3 bedrooms and is quite happy that Andium keep on selling their stock. I just need a clear answer. Thank you.

The Deputy of Trinity:

It is down in the Housing strategy, the evidence is there. It is through the Gateway, and it goes through to the Housing Trust with a business plan. It is irrefutable that the most demand is for one, 2 and 3-bedroomed homes. If there is a demand for 4-bedroomed homes, some have been built, but also important to use the existing stock ... better use of the existing stock.

The Bailiff:

Minister, I think you are being asked whether you have communicated with Andium Homes to ask it not to sell its stock of housing with more than 3 bedrooms. That is a straightforward answer, is it not?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Sorry, Sir. They have only sold 4 4-bedroomed properties since 2014. Three of those were sold on the open market because the properties were not suitable for social renting, be that because of location, layout or parking, and the fourth property was a deferred payment scheme and could not release the house elsewhere. Yes, I have many discussions with Andium, as I do with the other social housing trusts.

[12:15]

3.10.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case that 4 sales of such housing is a poor decision? It is 4 too many. Why is the Minister continuing to sell off housing through Andium?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Part of that is that it is affordable to buy. Some of the houses, the one, 2 or 3-bedroomed, can be sold under deferred payment. That is very clear in the Housing strategy, as well as in Andium's business plan. There are not many people waiting for a 4-bedroomed home. I know the incident

that Deputy Martin is talking about and we are trying very, very hard, but the most important thing is to use existing housing stock to encourage people who are in 4 bedrooms, who do not perhaps need them, to downsize.

3.10.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Surely the prime purpose of Andium is as a social rented housing provider? Although it is quite a laudable aspiration to promote affordable purchase housing, that is not the philosophy and the ethos that was envisaged for Andium. Indeed, it was not the case for the old Department for Housing before it was Andium. Does the Minister accept that when we have a waiting list problem in all areas for all categories of housing that we should not be selling off properties? If anything, we should be buying them and buying more than we sell, and we should be selling zero.

The Deputy of Trinity:

Very few homes are being sold. I understand from Andium it is 11. But you raise a very good point: we need supply. I keep thumping on; it is supply, supply, supply. We know that there is a waiting list on the Gateway, and mostly for one, 2 or 3-bedroomed homes, to enable those who are in a 4-bedroomed home have got somewhere to downsize to. There is a plan to put 1,000 new affordable homes up by 2020.

3.10.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

It is disappointing to hear that the Minister is ploughing on to sell these houses. They are short of 4 bedrooms, 5 bedrooms; very short. To compare them to one, 2 and 3 is wrong. My final supplementary is that the Minister talks about: "We are going to supply X amount by 2020." Will she not then look into and speak to Andium about stopping the selling of the larger homes until they have the supply to meet the demand, and people are sitting there with more than 4, 5, 6 children in unsuitable accommodation for maybe a year or 2, because we are selling to the people who do not have the need. They might have one child, and they are allowed to buy a 4-bedroomed house. It is not what Andium was set up for; it is not what social housing is. Will the Minister agree to start talking about this?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I have had many discussions with Andium but the basic fact is that there is mostly a demand for one, 2 and 3-bedroomed houses and there is that demand. I can give the Deputies the who is waiting on the Gateway. There are 140, I think, people waiting in band 1 for one and 2-bedroomed houses; that is where the greatest need is. If we can, by building one and 2 bedrooms, release over the 4-bedroomed homes to downsize, surely that is the biggest priority because people who do not need 4-bedroomed houses should be able to downsize.