

2019.04.30

3 Senator K.L. Moore of the Minister for the Environment regarding his response to the need for housing identified in the report, 'Jersey's Future Housing Needs': (OQ.94/2019)

What action, if any, will the Minister take to respond to the urgent need for housing that has been identified in the report, *Jersey's Future Housing Needs*, which was published on 28th March 2019?

Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade (The Minister for the Environment):

I thank the Senator for the question following on from the previous one. *Jersey's Future Housing Needs 2019-2021*, a report produced by our Statistics Unit, sets out the Island's potential housing requirements for this year and the next 2 years. But this is confined to within the existing dwelling stock. It does not take account of new dwellings that will be approved, or completed, during that time. So, to address the question: to help meet the needs identified in this particular report, I will continue to work to ensure that the planning system continues to enable the delivery of new homes in accordance with the current Island Plan policies; work with colleagues in the Housing Policy Development Board to identify, develop and implement new policies, which help us make more efficient use of the Island's housing stock and make housing more accessible and affordable. To make those things happen, I have initiated work on the new Island Plan, details of which it is proposed will be published, then a presentation to States Members in the week commencing 13th May. That is subject to a prior discussion with the Council of Ministers. Of course, that is the mechanism for which new policies can be considered by the Assembly.

4.3.1 Senator K.L. Moore:

I had imagined that the Minister would make greater play of the new Policy Development Board to look at housing. It appears that the Minister is making a suggestion of a lot of information gathering, as the Policy Development Board does, and very little action. What action and timeline will the Minister be imposing on this process?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I understand the difference. Obviously, in planning horizons, one has to differentiate what can be done under current policies and what is in the pipeline and what changes in the future. With the current Island Plan, it is projected that 1,350 homes will be delivered. That is under the existing plan; 750 affordable homes and 600 open market homes. The delivery of those homes will help meet the need in the report that the Senator referred to. In particular, the following sites have planning permission and are under construction. I have to say I am sorry, I do not yet know the target dates, but I will list the sites that I have been given information on. They are La Collette low rise; Ann Court; Troy Court; Scope Furnishing; Boiler House. Also, the rezoned sites: Samarès Nursery, St. Clement; Field 402 St. Martin has already been mentioned in the previous question; and, of course, the States' site at Summerland. We know that Andium have, in fact, acquired the former Jersey Gas site, Ann Street Boiler House site, Ann Street Brewery site and they propose to deliver 1,000 first-time buyers and 1,000 rental units by 2025. Of course, those are, if you like, States-related activities. They do not take account of open market homes. There are a number of sites in the private sector that have planning permission and are under construction for open market homes: Horizon, the St. Helier Waterfront, 280 flats; Metropole, 179 flats; and the BOA Warehouse, 169 dwelling units. So, I think there is plenty of work in progress. I apologise that I do not have the exact delivery dates of that. Once upon a time, the Minister for Housing used to bring supply reports and I think that is necessary. That is, in other words, where we match the Island Plan policies and

the numbers against the sites and we provide that detail. I think that is something I would like to see us restore. It has kind of lapsed in the last few years and I have asked for that to be put right. But, of course, we are aiming at a moving target. There is no question that the Island Plan review will enable the States Members to address new policies to help us make up that gap in the future and do better.

4.3.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

In the addressing of housing needs, will there be a creation of a register of unoccupied homes and empty homes, so that they can be brought back into the fold, before we increase the need to build on quite precious land of the Island?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I am pleased to have been appointed by the Chief Minister to a member of the Housing Policy Development Board and I was very encouraged by its first meeting. There is no question that included on the list are about 8 different bullet points of policy ideas, which will come into the processes I have described, including reducing the number of existent vacant homes to bring them back into use. I think the numbers I have been given are 3,000 vacant homes identified in 2011. I think what tools we have got to do that, the planning system has got some power, but I think the States would need to look at fiscal measures and other measures and I am hopeful that our new joined-up Government can link up the Island Plan policies with policies to provide some levers to deal with some of these issues. There are plenty of others, of policy ideas, for example, enabling downsizing to free up under-occupied family homes where, at the moment, people are financially disadvantaged. Not only is there no incentive, but there are disincentives, which are the things we have got to deal with.

4.3.3 Senator K.L. Moore:

I am grateful to the Minister for his answers and particularly interested to follow up on his suggestion that dealing with and meeting housing need in the Island is somewhat keeping up with a moving target. It is good to hear that the Minister has called for the residential land availability report, which used to be an annual document, to be reinstated. That has not been published since 2013. In light of that and in light of the fact that the Island Plan is a 10-year document, does the Minister agree that it is necessary to maintain a closer monitoring of the performance of the Island Plan as time progresses during that 10-year period?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Absolutely. I think the Senator is spot on. There is no question, I think. I do not know why it has been allowed to lapse, but in past years it was always a crucial document that States Members wanted to see - how we are doing, what progress - so that if there were needs for adjustments and interim reviews they could be done. But, anyway, I give a commitment that as far as I am concerned that principle will be followed.