

2024.04.30

### **3.1 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South of the Minister for the Environment regarding minimum residential space standards (OQ.84/2024)**

Further to the adoption of paragraph (a) of P.87/2023, will the Minister advise what progress, if any, is being made in increasing the minimum residential space standards for one-bedroom apartments?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce (The Minister for the Environment):**

The approval of part (a) of P.87/2023 requires me, as Minister for the Environment, to review the residential space standards and consider making the minimum standard of a one-bedroom, 2-person apartment; the minimum standard for all one-bedroom apartments. I am well aware of the need to do this work, and I have been provided with an initial briefing by officers. Site visits are currently being arranged so that I can see and understand the realities of different residential standards in new developments. I believe these visits to be essential before I can make an informed decision about how best to move forward and, once I have done this, I commit to providing an update to the Assembly.

#### **3.1.1 Deputy T.A. Coles:**

Does the Minister accept that the will of the Assembly was to see them become standard to suit 2 residents rather than just a single occupancy?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

I believe that to be the case but, as I said before, I think it is important to take a practical view of these things. I really welcome the opportunity to look at the differences in these 2 types of units. I did abstain on the original proposition as a vice-chairman of the Planning Committee, and I am not going to express a view one way or the other here now. But I will say to the Deputy that I am absolutely aware of the need for proper space in any units - and usable space at that - as tight corners do not always ... they may add up to square footage, but they do not ever always come to a usable space.

#### **3.1.2 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:**

Is the Minister of the view that increasing minimum size standards will have an impact on prices of one-bedroom units?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

Absolutely. Any increase in minimum standards will allow for less units to be built on a specific site, regardless of how small the increase might be. So we do have to take that into account. But I do think it is absolutely right that the population of Jersey should be entitled to the right amount of space in a unit, and we need to realise that minimum standards will be the size that developers will build to. It is very nice to say: "Here are the minimum standards, but of course they will do a little bit more than minimum." In reality, that will not happen. So we need to be very conscious of the fact that where we set the minimum standards will be what is built out.

[9:45]

As I said previously, I think it is important to make sure that those minimum sizes take out tight corners that are completely unusable. That is why I say it is important to look at the variations.

#### **3.1.3 Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Does the Minister respect the consultation that was completed by the previous Minister for the Environment, and does he indeed respect the findings of that consultation as well?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

Absolutely. I am sure if I issued the same consultation I would probably get the same result. So why would I not take notice of it? I will take everything into account if I decide further down the line that changes need to be made.

### **3.1.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:**

Will the Minister indicate what kind of timeline this work will come to fruition, and is it on his priorities pile?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

It was not on my priority list, but I do not see this as a big piece of work. I just need officers to arrange visits to 2 suitable units, ideally next door to each other, so that the comparison is easily made. I can then go away, look at the paperwork that I need to compare the previous consultation, and come to a conclusion.

### **3.1.5 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

Just to confirm with the Minister that he believes that before the end of this year, we will be seeing the standards coming to us?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

Absolutely. I am very happy to commit to before the end of this year.

### **3.1.6 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:**

Is it the intention of the Minister to bring any proposition to the Assembly in relation to this matter, or will he simply be producing guidance?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

I am happy to tell the Deputy that I will come back to the Assembly with it. Whether that is a statement to say this is what I intend to do or whether it is a proposition, which asks for the Assembly's agreement, I am not sure at this stage.

### **3.1.7 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Would the Minister consider, given the need to achieve some kind of consensus in the Assembly on this, arranging visits to suitable apartments for States Members in order to perhaps help Members understand some of the issues involved?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

Certainly. I think if the work that I am going to do in the next few months ends up with a proposition to the Assembly, it would be only right that States Members could themselves go and view the 2 differences to reach their own personal conclusion.

### **3.1.8 Deputy A. Curtis of St. Clement:**

In response to Deputy Andrews' supplementary, the Minister said we should expect ... "We would wish to see developments exceed the minimum, but it is only likely to expect we will see them only meet it." Does the Minister not agree it is well within the department's gift to assess sites on a case-by-case basis, and refuse applications that fail to deliver the correct housing stock for that given site?

#### **Deputy S.G. Luce:**

The demand for units, whether that is one-bed, 2-bed, 3-bed changes week by week, month by month, and certain developers are certainly very good at changing developments mid-flow and coming up with the sort of units which are in demand at the time, and may not be the units they had the original permission for. I go back to my original answer to the Deputy about minimum sizes. Whatever minimum sizes we set is what we will get. I think we need to bear that in mind. But certainly, when it comes to the different sizes of units, whether that is one-bed, 2-bed, 3-bed, the situation changes all the time. But I think it is right that we target the ones in most demand.

### **3.1.9 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:**

The Minister indicates that he is likely to be fairly fluid on these standards. I remind him that these are standards set by the States and should be enforced and not at the whim of developers.

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, that was not a question, Deputy. Is there a question? No, there is not a question, is there?

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

No. Too early in the morning for me.

**The Bailiff:**

Members only have a right to speak if they are asking questions or supplementary questions during this course of the matter. So Members will please adhere to that. Final supplementary, Deputy Coles. Very well.