

2.5 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier of the Minister for Housing regarding the future of the Ann Court site:

Given that R.17/2008 concerning the States rental waiting list contains a statement that the greatest demand by far remains for ground-floor or lift-served one-bedroom units, will the Minister justify why he is prepared to lose Ann Court, which meets all the criteria for lifelong homes or sheltered housing, due to its location, close to all amenities, and could be easily refurbished?

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

Ann Court currently provides a mix of bedsits, one, 2 and 3-bedroom units with no lift access; 21 of these units are one-bedroom. The estate was due for major refurbishment and, in some parts, demolition due to structural problems. The nature of the work necessitated decanting the estate in any event. The decision to bring forward in the refurbishment plan was in order to allow this Assembly to make decisions regarding the town park, *et cetera*. It is for this House to make those decisions. If the States decide that Ann Court should be used for a car park, then the units lost at Ann Court will most definitely be replaced by 2 sites, namely the Sunshine and Salisbury Crescent. I am not prepared to lose this number of homes from the States rental stock and I will not. I reiterate therefore that Ann Court has merely been moved forward in the refurbishment programme in order to allow you, States Members, to make a decision regarding the town park. That is a corporate approach and seems sensible to me. We just have to wait and see what decision this Assembly makes.

2.5.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, Sir, I am surprised to hear that the Minister says it is going to be a States decision. From what I can understand, it is being decided at a Ministerial level and because of the agreement with the Housing Minister. My question, though, Sir, is in the waiting list figures, going back to September the Minister states in a letter to States Members that there is an increased need for one-bedroom accommodation. This can be explained by the added numbers of those having to move from Ann Court who largely require one and 2-bedroom flats. It also says that the Sunshine site would take care of some of these people, for sheltered housing. When the Sunshine was up for debate, Sir, I begged the Housing Minister to reconsider it for States rental housing for sheltered and the elderly. In hindsight, Sir, at least 3 times the Minister has told me it is not suitable. So, can he answer those 2 questions?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

In regard to the Sunshine Hotel site, at that time, Sir, to build on that site was not feasible. Since then, this House very wisely approved the Property Plan. So the Salisbury Crescent site and, in particular, the Sunshine Hotel site can now have some development on where we are able to alleviate some of the costs by doing some sell-offs to first time buyers on part of the site. So, it is a win-win situation now, with the Property Plan in place and I am confident that the 67 units or 70 units lost at Ann Court... if the States decide - the Assembly will decide. If you do not want a car park on Ann Court, then I am very happy to proceed on developing it for sheltered housing, as outlined by the Deputy.

2.5.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am again pleased to hear that it will be our decision because the Minister and his department have approached all the tenants at Ann Court and told them that Ann Court is not an option to be moving back, Sir, they are demolishing it for a car park. So I am glad to hear that we will get a decision on this. Unfortunately, the tenants do not know. My question, Sir, is it not the fact that we have an ideal site, before we go out to the town and greenside country zone, persuading the Parishes, and I am all for other Parishes participating, but we have a site here, ready by the end of the year, for fantastic sheltered housing in States ownership and the Housing Minister has just rolled over again, as usual, Sir, with the rest of the Council of Ministers and is not coming back to the House.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

The Housing Minister does not roll over for the Council of Ministers. He does not roll over for anyone, by the way. **[Laughter]** Let me just say I might have done years ago but not now. **[Laughter]** Let me just say, Sir, that 16,000 people supported a petition wanting, as a desperate need in the eastern part of St. Helier, a town park. What I am doing is playing my part, corporately, with my department, in decanting early, the residents of that estate, so that the House can then make a decision what they want to do with that site. It is crucial, I am being advised, to the production of the town park. 16,000 people supported it and I thought that the Deputy of St. Helier No. 1, would have supported that as well because everybody else that I speak to in this Assembly are in 100 per cent support of providing a town park. What I am doing is laying the foundations for a site that the House decides they can utilise. We have now been able, because of our property plan, to relocate some of the development on Salisbury Crescent and on the Sunshine. If the States do not decide to use it as a car park, I will welcome its retention for housing.

2.5.3 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:

When the Minister brings it back to the States, I wonder if he would also include the propositions that were not brought to the House but proposed, where the private sector in the Le Mausurier Group and also in C.I. Traders with the old Ann Street brewery factory, where the proposals, among others, were that they were going to seek planning permission for change of use for public parking to replace that on the new proposed town park? I gather things are changing but I would ask if that could be included? Thank you, Sir.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Let us make it quite clear, the Housing Minister will not be coming back to the States Assembly with plans for the Ann Court site. The Housing Minister is vacating the site. It will be the T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) Minister or whoever is bringing forward the final town park plans that we will offer to this Assembly that site as it lays empty at the time. So the Housing Minister has no involvement in the production of the town park. All I am doing is playing corporately in producing a site where it has been identified by the T.T.S. and others as it would make an ideal site for car parking to allow the town park to take place.

2.5.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, thank you, Sir, I am glad the Minister really takes notice of 19,000 signatures, or was it 16,000? I know which way he voted on the signatures on G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax). My question is, Sir, the Minister says it is not going to be his job, as usual, to come back and say: "I do not want this property." Can he tell me how many meetings he has had with the Island Plan Review Group and the Town Regeneration Working Party on this development, losing it for housing to a 1,000 place car park?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I have had no meetings with those groups because it has been delegated to my Assistant Minister who has been leading some discussions on the matter and leading the group. I have certainly - personally - delegated that area, the housing part of it and I know that the Council of Ministers did delegate Deputy Hilton to take charge of bringing that to fruition.

2.5.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, Sir, could I just comment? Does the Minister not find that there is some conflict? That the Assistant Minister for Housing is also the Project Manager for the new town park?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I just cannot understand where the Deputy is coming from. I hope she goes back and tells her 16,000 people that she is opposing a town park, a much needed facility in the Island.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am opposing a car park, Sir.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Because it seems to me, on the advice given to me, that it is crucial that Ann Court is used as a car park.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think, Minister, you have given your answer.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Yes, Sir, you usually give me 15 minutes anyway, so thank you. [Laughter]

The Deputy Bailiff:

That, for you, is the last question. [Laughter]