

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT BY DEPUTY
G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 15th JULY 2008

Question

Will the Minister inform members what number of (under 55) one-bed flats are under construction or have planning permission for 2008 and 2009, given that this was an area identified as over-supplied in the most recent Housing Needs Survey?

Answer

Unfortunately, at this time, the requested information on 1-bedroom units either under construction or with planning permission is not readily available and the provision of accurate figures would require recourse to original source material. This would involve considerable time and resources. The required figures will, however, be made available to States Members as soon as possible.

The 2007 Housing Needs Survey, and the resulting assessment of needs, states that there is predicated to be, in five years time, a potential surplus (supply over demand) of 1-bedroom units, in most qualification and tenure categories, based on a nil net migration scenario and the current 12-year housing qualification rule. It estimates that this overall potential surplus of 1-bedroom units will be above 1,300 units and that some 65% of these (890 units) will be in the qualified private rental sector, with most of the remainder being in the non-qualified sector.

It is important to note that the 2007 Survey does not say that there is at present over-supply of 1-bed flats.

The potential surplus is based on predications, that might or might not actually materialise. It is driven in large part by potential supply from existing private rental units in the qualified and non-qualified sectors, which would be released by occupiers wanting to move into the owner-occupied sector, or moving to larger homes in the rental sector. This reflects the aspirations of some 2,270 such households at the time of the 2007 Housing Needs Survey. These aspirations represent a snapshot in time and may well change in response to changing economic and social circumstances over the next few years. Furthermore, the potential surplus of 1-bedroom units is dependent on the complementary availability of larger accommodation so that the households in question can move in.

As Minister for Planning and Environment, and primarily through the Island Plan Review process, I will seek to ensure that an adequate supply of suitably located land is available to meet the requirements of Island residents over the next 5 years and beyond. This will include providing opportunities to allow for addressing identified potential shortfalls in 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom owner-occupied dwellings.

I am, of course, able to directly influence the number, type and size of housing units to be developed on States' owned land and sites specifically zoned for Category A housing purposes. However, the largest proportion of new housing units come forward (and will continue to come forward) on private 'windfall' sites, as part of the normal planning application process. In such circumstances, the size of the units proposed is essentially dictated by the private market. As Members know, we are considering, within the Island Plan Review process, ways in which the Minister can ensure there is a better 'fit', by type and tenure, between housing demand and the supply of homes.

Clearly, if we are to ensure that the Island's housing needs are being met, we must continue to carefully monitor and review the housing situation at regular intervals and respond to changes in circumstances as necessary. The present 'Planning for Homes' process, overseen jointly by the Minister for Housing and myself, has been established to help achieve these ends. It is presently anticipated that the next 'Planning for Homes' document will be released in the first quarter of next year.

