

2.7 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Housing regarding new social housing units constructed during the past 5 years:

Given that in 2005 the Planning for Homes survey conducted by the Housing and Environment and Public Services Committees concluded that just under 2,000 additional homes would be needed in the Island over the next 5 years, how many new social housing units have been constructed during the past 5 years?

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

Since 2002 our planning policies have seen the development of 702 social rented homes and 758 first-time buyer homes. Planning records show that a total of 1,090 homes were under construction at the end of 2009 and a further 750 homes had outstanding planning and building permits. The Draft Island Plan concentrates on addressing the requirements for new homes in the qualified sector. In doing so it makes provision for the supply of 2,550 new homes over the 5-year period 2009-2013 comprising 550 category (a) and 2,000 category (b) homes. The provision is made from a range of sources and relies heavily on opportunities presented by the Waterfront, town regeneration and private windfall developments, elsewhere and in built-up areas. I am not in a position where I alone can deliver new homes which we need. New homes, particularly new affordable homes, require land to be rezoned for residential purposes. But saying that, Housing have some exciting plans in the pipeline over the next 5 years to increase affordable homes off existing housing sites, but not if sites like Ann Court are taken away from us. The sites to be rezoned is the responsibility, as I have said often, of the Minister for Planning and it is a very difficult, complex task. He knows and the Planning Department know that they will always have my support in achieving the aims of having affordable homes.

2.7.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I appreciate the Minister for Housing has a difficult job and he does it to the best of his abilities. However, his answer to my question, although informative, did not really address what it was I was looking for. In the *Jersey Evening Post* on 23rd February 2005 - exactly 5 years ago to the day - it identifies just under 2,000 homes needed. It was from a survey that the Housing Department and the Planning and Environment Department conducted, based upon a survey that was sent out to one in 6 homes. I am unable to determine from the answer that the Minister has given what the answer is to the question. I am unable to understand other than that there are problems. The question is will he please tell us over the last 5 years how many houses he has developed or how many houses have been delivered rather than all of the different information he has given in his first answer?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

That is a question that should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Environment. I am the Minister for Housing and the Deputy is asking how many homes have been delivered. I have not got those actual figures apart from the information that has been given to me this morning in response to the Deputy, but I can assure the Deputy that if he wants to put it in writing any information that I can assist him with through Planning or otherwise I will do so.

2.7.2 Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

A simple question: the Senator has talked about exciting plans. Well, I am trying to assist a resident of Le Squez Estate. It is quite clear that the completion of that

development is way overdue. Could the Minister advise when those “exciting plans” for the Le Squez development are likely to be finished?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Yes, phase 2 of Le Squez is in 2 parts which will produce 76 new homes and the plans have been approved for part 1. We are going to do that in 2 stages. Part 1 is out for tender now and we are rather hoping that stage 1 of the boarded-up area at Le Squez will start in April some time.

2.7.3 Deputy S. Pitman:

Could I push the Minister to say when does he hope they will be finished because I think that is the key issue for a lot of people; when will the development be finished?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

It is considered it will be over a 2-year period.

2.7.4 The Connétable of St. John:

The question relates to social housing; I wonder if the Minister, if he cannot do it now, could advise the Assembly how many social housing units have been sold?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Just over 100.

2.7.5 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

The Minister has failed to answer the question that the Deputy has asked. He has, bearing in mind the survey that was conducted, identified that around 2,000 additional homes would be needed over the next 5 years when, in fact, we have been told 1,410 roughly have been delivered. Can the Minister inform the House why the achievements have not been reached and what his department will do to endeavour that social housing is sufficiently met by the department for the Island?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I do not think some of the Members quite understand the role of the Minister for Housing. The Minister for Housing is consistently pressing the Planning Department and the Minister for Planning and Environment, and this Assembly, to rezone land for affordable social housing including first-time buyers, and all I can do is continue to press and work and press and work to achieve that aim. I ask Members, such as the Deputy, who are all concerned about the current situation, please lend their support so we can get some land up in the next Island Plan to provide affordable homes not only for first-time buyers, but for the long waiting lists that are accruing now for lifetime homes for people who have got physical disabilities over retirement age. Please assist us by writing to the Minister for Planning and Environment showing your support.

2.7.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Since the Minister mentioned the future development of the Ann Court site, could he confirm that despite the need for public parking in that area to facilitate the development of the town park he has made a decision to lease that site temporarily for private parking?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

That is correct. I have a public duty to maintain and look after the public finances under my control at Housing and I have agreed this week with a contractual agreement for the Ann Court car park. It will be leased out for 9 months awaiting a decision of the States Assembly on what is going to happen. There is a 9-month agreement to lease it out. We are losing something like £500,000 a year on the rental we are not getting. This will bring an income in of around £180,000.

2.7.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not realise that this seriously puts a “spanner” in any plans to develop the town park within a reasonable timescale?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

No, it does not. It is quite clear that there is an agreement within the contractual agreement that would allow the States when they make up their mind that we could withdraw at a month’s notice, but the issue is I have a public duty to maintain and not see it being prevaricated upon and sit there doing nothing while States are making up their minds what they want to do.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Can I say to Members that it is a courtesy when putting a question to a Minister or to a Scrutiny Panel Chairman or the P.P.C. Chairman that the Member remains in the Assembly for the answer. [Approbation]

2.7.8 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister mentioned lifetime homes for the elderly. He says he has a large waiting list. Could he give us the numbers on that waiting list, please?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Yes, there are currently around 320 at the moment, comprising the elderly wanting apartments. We cannot cope with the demand... and in particular for homes that need special adaptations. In 2009, it cost over double the amount of money spent in other years in adapting homes for elderly people.

2.7.9 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Minister has just told us that he was safeguarding public finances by leasing the Ann Court site. Did he try to maximise the benefit to the public by advertising and putting out to tender the site, or has he just taken the first thing that has come along?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

No, as it is a short-term temporary arrangement: it did not go out to tender. It went out with an agreement of what the basis of income would be, advised to us by T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services).

The Deputy Bailiff:

Final supplementary, Deputy Le Claire.

2.7.10 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Can I ask the Minister for Housing to undertake to give Members a briefing so that Members can understand what the role of the Minister for Housing is because I asked him today what the results were of a survey that his department conducted in 2005 and he was unable to give me the answer and he does not know how many homes

have been delivered. So, I am at a loss to understand what the Minister does for a job. Can he please arrange for a meeting for States Members so he can inform us that are ignorant as to what happened to those 2,000 homes that were needed?

[11:00]

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Well, I would be absolutely delighted. I have been asking this of Members for months and years. Even the consultation on the Whitehead report has not provided one response from any Member of this Assembly in writing to my department.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think, Minister, the question is what do you do? **[Laughter]**

Senator T.J. Le Main:

The Deputy will very well know that I have consistently invited all Members to come and talk to us. I will even provide sandwiches on a lunch-time at no cost. **[Laughter]**