

4.14 Deputy R.J. Rondel of the Minister for Housing regarding the development of ‘affordable homes’ due to be completed next to Trinity Parish Hall:

Would the Minister advise the Assembly what the price range of the proposed development of affordable homes to be completed next to Trinity Parish Hall will be?

[11:30]

Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier (The Minister for Housing):

I am a little perplexed about this question because the development in Trinity is being undertaken by the Parish of Trinity and while I am pleased to see that they are doing it, the Housing Department has not contributed to the development of any of the homes or how they are going to be allocated to potential buyers. I understand that the development is for category A homes and must therefore be either first-time buyer or some form of intermediate or shared equity housing but I am not aware of specific arrangements or the value of the homes and I am not sure that the Constable is aware of the value of the homes yet as they have not started building. But having said that, I would have thought if the Deputy wanted that sort of information he would be better off going to the developer, the sponsor of the project, and speaking directly with the Constable of Trinity.

4.14.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Well, I too was a little perplexed because I did intend my question to be for the Constable of Trinity but apparently he was not allowed to, but I am led to believe that the homes could be in the region of a value of around £490,000, taking a reduction for the land to around £330,000. Would the Minister consider this figure, if it is correct, to be affordable for young local couples, especially when the land does have a nil value? Would the Minister also advise whether he may have any intention in using taxpayers’ money in the form of loans for these types of homes and, if so, will he give an undertaking to come back to the Assembly with details?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

Taking the last point first, if any taxpayers’ money is to be loaned to the Parish of Trinity, that is a matter for the Minister for Treasury and Resources. I have no doubt that he will discuss it with me and see that if we are lending money that it fits in with the strategic aims of housing our community. But I cannot answer the Deputy’s question. I have no idea what the cost of the homes is going to be in Trinity. I do know, having spoken to the Constable, the philosophy behind that, that he has tried to help young couples, and the Deputy makes a very good point when he asks the question, what is affordable? Well, it depends what you are earning and that is why we need to have a full study on affordable homes. We need different schemes for different people. We need shared equity or Jersey Homebuy, whatever you want to call it, however you want to dress it up. We need schemes that will make deposits available to families. There is a whole range of things that we need and that is why we need a Strategic Housing Unit so that we have got complete action across all the different tenures.

4.14.2 Deputy J.H. Young:

Will the Minister advise the Assembly whether he agrees that if the homes are, in fact, affordable, that they should be subject to allocations through his housing gateway and that simply, could he advise the Assembly whether these are subject to a planning obligation agreement that homes be affordable?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

I cannot advise the Deputy on whether they are the subject of planning obligation agreements because I know nothing about the scheme. I do however agree with the philosophy that subsidised homes or homes that are made affordable in any way should continue to be within the affordable homes market if possible. It is very easy to say but it is very difficult to implement

because a lot of work needs to be done in that area and again that is why we need the Strategic Housing Unit. We could come up with all well-intentioned things that do not work. We need a proper review. We need proper strategy and that is what I am determined to do.

4.14.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The proposed gateway for affordable housing was supposed to be a single gateway. Does the Minister not regret that he did not include the Parishes? He appears to have 13 single gateways.

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

The gateway is a great improvement on what we had. All the Homes Trusts are using them. Some of the Parishes are using them. In fact, the Parish of Trinity has used it for the allocation of social housing and we will get there slowly but the affordable gateway will eventually be the place through which people will be directed to appropriate schemes. But those of us that are spending the money in providing the scheme should have some influence over what is happening on the site.

4.14.4 Deputy S. Power:

The Minister for Housing and his department had a terrific model in 2009 when his department delivered 46 houses at £250,000 each. Does he think that that model could be used again?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

The quick answer is yes.

4.14.5 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

While the details have got to be worked out, would the Minister congratulate the Parish of Trinity on their work and encourage dialogue with the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for Housing for all Parish schemes that help their young people?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

Yes and I am particularly delighted to see that this land that was rezoned is now going to be used and not sitting there like in some of the other Parishes. I urge the other Constables to get on and do something as well.

4.14.6 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

I too would be the first to congratulate the Parish of Trinity, my own Parish, when I know what price they will be [**Laughter**] and whether they will be affordable or not. I keep asking about affordable housing and I keep getting told the same answer from the Minister for Housing: "We need to review, we need to review." During the Island Plan debate last year, the Assembly agreed that the delivery of affordable homes was extremely urgent and that States-owned land would have to be used to deliver these homes quickly. This was over 12 months ago and we have not seen any planning applications to date let alone a brick being laid. Does the Minister agree that the Assembly, and indeed the public, are becoming increasingly confused as to what price an affordable home should be when we have high figures being bandied around which are far out of reach of young couples on middle incomes, and we have the Minister for Planning and Environment, on the other hand, saying that he can deliver for around £200,000?

Deputy A.K.F. Green:

I think the question really is what is affordable and we have to accept that for some families buying will never be affordable, but my objective is to make affordable housing available to more families than currently. The Deputy made a point about States-owned land and all the rest of it. We have got a lot of work to do and we are working on it. Basically if I get given the sites I will ensure that development takes place. You can believe it.