

3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Housing regarding the mismatch between the projections contained within the Reform of Social Housing (P.33/2013) and population projections produced in 2012 following the 2011 Census results:

Given that the scenario described in the 3 policy bullet points included on page 11 of the full business case associated with the Reform of Social Housing, P.33 of 2013, fails to match up with any of the population projections produced in 2012, following the 2011 census results, will the Minister state whether, in drafting the proposition, he sought input from the Statistics Unit and if not, why not?

Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter (Assistant Minister for Housing - rapporteur):

The increase in the overall population of the Island does not necessarily translate into an increased need for affordable housing. The need for affordable homes is a much more complex issue and one which is sensitive to economic fluctuations. For this reason, the Statistics Unit, the Planning Department and the Housing Department, jointly run the Housing Needs Surveys which aim to ascertain what the population's housing needs and aspirations are. The outputs from these surveys are validated against the Statistics Unit's population model, and they are reviewed annually and set out in the Planning Department's review of residential land availability on an annual basis. This document monitors the delivery of homes, including those on sites approved in the Island Plan and identifies the impact that insufficient or slow to emerge supply has on housing needs. Shortages in supply are dealt with in the Island Plan and in 2011, it was agreed that schemes on States land be brought forward as a means of meeting the level of need identified in the most recent Housing Needs Survey. It is these sites which form the basis of the growth in the new housing company's business case. I fully acknowledge, that even without widening eligibility criteria to include groups such as key workers, couples and singles under 50 without children, further sites are required to meet the growing demand, and I am working with the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for Planning and Environment to identify appropriate sites. The important thing about my reform proposals is that they will put in place the structure necessary to respond to the changing housing requirements of the Island. The housing company will have ...

The Bailiff:

I think, Assistant Minister, that is rather long for a concise answer.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Thank you, Sir. I look forward to hearing the Deputy's questions.

3.2.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Within that extremely long answer, the Assistant Minister failed to address the question. Did the Assistant Minister seek to include the Statistics Unit in his debate of future demand or not? How much input was there from the Statistics Unit? There appears to have been none apart from these 4 paragraphs on housing numbers.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I can go back to paragraph 2. Would you like me to read it again? I am sure you would not. I did state there that the Statistics Unit, Planning Department and Housing Department jointly and together, run the Housing Needs Surveys and those report back to us annually to determine the ongoing need.

3.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it the case that the Housing Needs Survey last completed, showed a demand for 400-plus of social rented units and the Assistant Minister's own waiting list indicates 800-plus social rented units and no reference is made to this in the entire 120 pages of the full business case contained in R.15?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

We do reflect the needed growth. The business plan shows an increasing 434 units of housing as part of the business plan for the new Housing Unit. The current level of actual need actively in the housing gateway stands at 1,304 from all different ranges from one-bedroom to 5-bedroom needs.

3.2.3 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would just like to ask the Assistant Minister, he speaks about the Housing Needs Survey, would he confirm whether the Housing Needs Survey measures current demand or future demand?

[10:00]

The Connétable of St. Peter:

The Housing Needs Survey does not measure future demand, it measures known requirements and the very limited trend from that. To project further forward without the proper data would be the wrong thing to do to come forward as part of the S.H.U. (Strategic Housing Unit).

3.2.4 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Is that not the point that I think Deputy Southern is trying to make, and the question is whether or not the Statistics Unit have been involved in considering future requirements beyond those that we know currently?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

As I said before, the Statistics Unit are embedded with us and Planning to develop the ongoing need as they see it evolving.

3.2.5 Deputy R.J. Rondel of St. Helier:

The Assistant Minister mentioned that they are woefully short of sites, and that they are in discussions to bring further sites forward. When does he anticipate that this may happen?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I would hope to see that happening sometime this year, but we are in the hands of the Minister for Planning and Environment and maybe a question later on could be addressed to him on that matter.

3.2.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Assistant Minister consider that it is appropriate to bring forward his Housing Transformation Plan without any reference, apart from 4 short paragraphs, to the population for which he is supposed to be catering, given that he is bringing a 30-year plan? Has he ever seen a housing plan previously which did not talk in depth about the population that it was catering for?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I wish life was that simple. As we already know, the population model is being developed by the Chief Minister's Department. That will have an impact on the ongoing growth or not of the population. If we were to work simply on a straight line graph on the current explosion of population, then we would be looking at something considerably larger than the reality will be in 30 years' time, which makes it very difficult to use existing trends to develop a future profile.

3.2.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may, a final supplementary developing that answer. The reality is that the population model has been around for the last 6 months. Why is there no mention of any of the projections predicted by the Statistics Unit anywhere in this documentation? That surely is a failure of information which means that his plan is inadequate and incomplete?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I am getting in danger of repeating myself again. If we go back to paragraph 2 of my original answer, the Statistics Unit are involved and have helped to deliver the Housing Needs Survey and will continue to do so.