

#### **4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Housing**

##### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

We now come to part 3 of Question Time. The first question period is for the Minister for Housing, you will be able to continue there, and to start the questions is Deputy Southern.

##### **4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is the Minister aware that policy in place for the Housing Gateway for access to the waiting list for Andium Homes states that applicants who are pregnant have to wait until the seventh month of their pregnancy to join the list? Does he not consider this is discriminatory against this particular group and, further, will the Minister publish a set of policies under which Andium Homes is currently operating?

##### **Deputy A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Housing):**

I think the Deputy has quite accidentally got hold of the wrong end of the stick here. First of all, the Gateway is not for Andium Homes, the Gateway is for all social housing providers. The second point is that if a lady who is less than 7 months pregnant is happy to move into a one-bedroom flat, we will allocate based on need. However, it seems a little bit silly to allocate a one-bedroom flat when once a pregnancy is definitely confirmed a 2-bedroom flat would be more appropriate.

##### **4.1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is he happy that this is not discriminatory and disadvantages those who are pregnant? Does he accept that 7 months is the appropriate date at which to make this decision and, thirdly, given today's medical provision and the reduction in losses of such pregnancies, will he produce a set of policies under which Andium Homes, in particular, is operated?

##### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I am happy to review the 7 months in the light of the Deputy's question but, I reiterate again, whatever we use as our guideline in the Gateway it will apply to all trusts. But I am happy to review the 7 months.

##### **4.2 Deputy S. Pinel of St. Clement:**

With reference to the redevelopment of Le Squez Housing Estate in St. Clement, the completion of phase 2 is imminent; I was taken around the new-build last week and both buildings and landscaping were very impressive. Can the Minister inform the Assembly as to when phase 3 will start and what are the procedures being undertaken to ensure that there is no additional delay as some of the tenants are living in what they describe as very unsatisfactory conditions?

##### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

Yes. This estate is one of the things that I am both proud of and ashamed of at the same time. I am proud of the work that has gone on there and the new houses that have gone up that are much better for our tenants - even increases the density - and much more fuel efficient. But I do regret that for some young people particularly, they would have lived in nothing but a building site for the whole of their childhood and that is regrettable but there is little I can do to undo that. To answer the Deputy's specific question, the final phase - which will give us 147 new homes plus a 5-bed unit for a group home for Social Services - will start in October 2015 and be completed by October 2017.

##### **4.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Just to follow up on that question, could the Minister for Housing confirm what communal facilities are going to be planned into this - as you just said - much higher density housing estate because we do not want to repeat the old Le Squez?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

How right the Deputy is. While I do not have the detail in front of me, we do take proper advice in the way that we lay out the flats, what they overlook, green areas, and I think she would agree that the work we have done so far has been first class and we intend to continue that with proper facilities for our tenants.

**4.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is it not the case that in Le Squez and Le Marais we have got people living in substandard homes now at the moment as they have decanted out of town or elsewhere in order to be able to house the numbers we are housing and to keep the waiting list down to a mere 700?

[15:45]

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

It is not massaging the figures, as the Deputy is suggesting, it is done out of necessity. I would accept that we are putting people temporarily into homes that we would rather not be using. But the department has gone through a massive amount of development; we have developed La Collette Flats, we have developed several different units, Le Coin, De Quetteville Court we are developing at the moment. Those people in those flats were not able to stay there so in addition to housing those who are in great need out in our community at the moment, we also had to find homes for our existing tenants to allow that work to go on. It is not easy and some of our tenants have been inconvenienced and some of the properties, less so these days, I am not proud of. But that is all about what Andium Homes is about; that is what the £207 million directly allocated to Andium Homes is about and £5 million of that was allocated this week.

**4.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

What steps, if any, will the Minister take, or is he taking, to inform any of his tenants who are living in substandard accommodation that they may, under the law, not be obliged to pay full rent or any rent to his department while the properties are uninhabitable?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

There is a difference between substandard and uninhabitable. We do not have, as far as I am aware, any uninhabitable properties but we do have properties that would be best better insulated, could have better heating systems and so on, and that is exactly what we are doing. There are no tenants, as far as I am aware, in Andium Homes, or in the current Housing Department - Andium takes over tomorrow - and what a milestone that will be in improving social housing.

**4.5.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Of course the Minister would say that, though, but under the law it is not for the Minister or the landlord in the private sector to decide what determines “uninhabitable”, it is simply for the tenant, if he or she feels that the property is uninhabitable, to stop paying their rent and then if the landlord disagrees it can go to arbitration through the Petty Debts Court. Does the Minister confirm that understanding to be correct?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

Technically, the Deputy is right but I would advise tenants to engage with their landlords and resolve the problem, not just withhold rent.

#### **4.6 Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade:**

What is the Minister doing to ensure that the delays that blighted the first phase at the Belle Vue development are not the same ones that may blight the second?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

That is a good question. We have already brought forward Lesquende 2, which is what I think the Constable is asking about, and we are fully aware of the breeding season of slow worms now. As soon as phase 1 ... in fact, before phase 1 is finished I hope that we will be starting phase 2. I have not got a date there. So 44 more homes on Lesquende but we have already put it on rocket boosters to get it moving. I want it out there in the marketplace, not just because we need the homes but I want to get it out there at the best price before the construction industry is working flat out.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

I would say to those Members who are outside that we are on the borderline of becoming inqurate. I invite some of them to return so that those who need to leave the Chamber can do so. Deputy Martin.

#### **4.7 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Earlier on in Questions the Minister for Housing stated the entrance to all social housing is through the Gateway. We have discussed this before and can he confirm that the exit from social housing is different under trusts and new Andium and how is the work progressing to make then the same because we cannot have them being under-occupied?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

The Deputy is right, this is one area that does concern me and this is work ongoing, both in terms of regulation and the social housing charter that we are working on at the moment.

#### **4.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

What targets does Andium Homes have for long-term net housing gain during the 30-year tenure of the £250 million bond?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I should know that figure by heart, it is in our report when we debated P.33 16th May. But I do not have it and I will provide it for the Deputy.

#### **4.8.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Can the Minister confirm that it is around 100 net units of accommodation as a gain?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

No, it is higher than that. Also, the only limiting factor now is, in terms of sites, because now that the rent levels are at the right level and now that people are getting the support that they need via Social Security rather than us not doing the maintenance, and now that we have the £207 million bond in place the only thing we require is suitable sites. We have a number to be getting on with but we need more.

#### **4.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does the Minister agree that the table on page 42 of the *Reform of Social Housing* accepts that there is a net gain of less than 100 when you take into consideration the number being demolished?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

Where we had about 40 homes at Le Squez we plan to replace them with 140. He is quoting those figures out of context and I am quite happy to sit down with the Deputy and go through them properly. But, as I say, the limiting factor now will be sites and we hope to put that right with the Island Plan.

**4.9 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Notwithstanding the excellent work carried out by the Minister for Housing, has he any regrets or unfulfilled projects now the good ship Andium is taking over a lot of his work?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

My one regret is that we still do not have sufficient housing out there yet to lower the waiting lists to a level I would like to see and also I would like to widen the criteria, but I cannot do that until I increase the availability of homes. By “criteria” I mean criteria for accessing social housing.

**4.10 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does the Minister find it somewhat ironic that if you put Andium into a search machine you get, first of all, his housing association for affordable housing and then next stop Andium H.V.R. (high value residency) high net worth individual immigration into Jersey? Does he not accept the irony?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I can see where the Deputy is coming from but I am not responsible for what other companies decide to call themselves.