



**STATES OF JERSEY**  
**Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny**  
**Panel**

**THURSDAY, 20th FEBRUARY 2014**

**Panel:**

Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier (Chairman)

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen

**Witnesses:**

The Minister for Housing

Assistant Minister for Housing

Chief Officer

Finance Director

Director of Corporate Policy

[10:27]

**Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier (Chairman):**

Welcome to the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel, the public hearing with the Minister for Housing. We will introduce ourselves for the benefit of the tape. I am Deputy Jackie Hilton.

**Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen:**

Deputy James Reed, panel member.

**Scrutiny Officer:**

Kellie Boydens, Scrutiny Officer.

**Scrutiny Officer:**

Janice Hales, Scrutiny Officer.

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

Constable of St. Peter, John Refault, Assistant Minister for Housing.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Deputy Andrew Green, Minister for Housing.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Paul Bradbury, Director of Corporate Policy.

**Finance Director:**

John Hamon, Finance Director.

**Chief Officer:**

Ian Gallichan, Chief Officer.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Thank you. If I could draw everyone's attention to the code of behaviour for members of the public that is displayed on the wall just behind you, thank you. Also, I would like to offer the apologies for the Deputy of St. Peter, who is currently unwell. I would like to start by asking you a question about the waiting list. Following the move of the housing affordable gateway to the Strategic Housing Unit in the Chief Minister's Department, the publication of the gateway statistics are no longer available on gov.je. It is reported that the new form for reporting will commence in the new

year. Could you advise when these statistics will be available as the most recent ones available are October 2013?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, they will be available shortly. As you say, we have put in a new software package. Part of that was to enable, as per our promise, the housing trust to have direct access to the waiting list so that they could allocate without coming through a third party, i.e. the Strategic Housing Unit or, in the past, the Housing Department. That is now up and running. We have taken a draft report, if you want, off recently. We are just validating that and if we are happy that it works then we will start to publish. Indications are that the waiting lists are very similar to last time that we published: over 700 people in priority need; 700 families actually. Some are individuals, obviously, but some are families.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

When did you last publish?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think Deputy Hilton told us when we last published. We have been changing our system.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So we are talking over a 3-month period, 4-month period?

[10:30]

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not sure.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

October were the last statistics. They were being published mid to late November. We will be publishing January statistics and I am hopeful we will get some out next week. I have the draft stats so we will get them out next week. But as I say, because we have developed a new system we think it is great that the trust can have access to it directly. The reporting module sits on top of that system and that is what is now being finished off.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So are the waiting list figures going to be published like they were on the internet anyway?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

We will recommence that publication.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

That is going to happen ...?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

I have draft stats. We will have the final ones next week, then they will be uploaded.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Okay. So currently you mentioned about 700 still as priority need?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think when we looked at October it was something like 760 and I do not ... that might have changed a little bit but there has not been a significant change, I do not expect.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Okay, so currently around 760 in priority need. Is that priority band 1?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, not all in band 1.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Band 1 and 2?

**The Minister for Housing:**

One, 2, yes.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Just to be clear, 3 and 6 as well.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Since October, have any additional housing units become available?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes. Again, I will go to officers in a minute in case I miss any, but Journeaux Street is one that was 8 or 9 units, so that has come online. I cannot remember where else have come on line.

**Finance Director:**

We have also finished off the refurbishment at La Collette so the tenants have moved back in. Those units were empty, so from memory since October I think there was another 15 units that were not available that are now available and tenants have moved into those.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

That could explain why perhaps you say the waiting list has remained similar?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Because we have a lot going on but they are not ready yet. For example, you would have heard and known about anyway the Lesquende site. We are going to take possession of Langtry Gardens much earlier so together with the Parish of St. Saviour that is 80 homes. The Lesquende site is something like 40 in the first phase and similar in the second phase. The figures might go up or down a little bit there, but it is around 80 as a whole.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

With regard to the 80 homes at Langtry Gardens, which I think are going to be available around January 2015, does that include the 30 homes at the parish?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

That includes those, but the parish will be allocating through the gateway?

**The Minister for Housing:**

The parish not only will be but have already, I believe, allocated through the gateway.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Right, okay. Thank you.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Some of that will help us inasmuch as we have people that I know that the parish have allocated to and we will similarly allocate to similar people that are living in accommodation that is bigger than

they need, over-accommodated. They move into accommodation that is more appropriate and that is going to help with movement on the waiting lists, getting families into more appropriate homes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

When do you see a time that those 760 families who are waiting to be housed will actually be housed? How long do you think that is going to take based on the current development plans that are in process and the ones that you know about that may take place within the next 3 years?

**The Minister for Housing:**

The short-term fix to help with a lot of that rests on the revision of the Island Plan because with the best will in the world it is all very well to say we can develop 150 units at Rouge Bouillon. The police station is not built yet. I know they are going to start in the summer. They have their planning permission, plans are well advanced, but until the police station is built we cannot get on to the Summerland site. So that is a medium-term answer, probably 2 and a half to 3 years away. When you look at the other sites that are available - for example, Ann Court - they are still finishing the sharp end. You do have to work with colleagues to solve other problems. That shaft will solve the flooding of the north of town. Once that is developed, T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) will take over the site and develop a 200-space car park for shoppers short term, plus a car park for residents, and then the residents units, about 200, will be built on top. So that is some time off. That is a huge engineering project.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Can I just stop you there? On the Ann Court site, when would you expect those units to be delivered? What is the timescale that T.T.S. have given you?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not too aware of that. I do not know if officers are at the moment. What I do know is that there is a lot of underground engineering to get this big car park underneath, and that does not come quickly. The quickest way to get on site and get building is rezoning of the land as per the Island Plan and I am hoping that the inspector who held the inquiry in public will come forward with the sites that we have asked for. I am hoping that we will see that report ... I am advised we will see that report either at the end of this week, probably more likely middle of next week. Of course, that is assuming that the inspector says the things we want him to say.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So if the inspector does say the things that you want him to say can you remind us of those?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, the sites we have asked for, Samares, Le Quesne and Longueville, were the sites that we specifically championed, if you like.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Am I correct in saying that those 3 sites the inspector had said at the previous Island Plan review were suitable for housing?

**The Minister for Housing:**

The inspector was stronger than that. The inspector said that these were the best sites for housing development in Jersey. So I am hoping, because it is the same inspector and it is not that long ago, he is going to come out and say the same.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Have you got willing sellers on all those 3 sites?

**The Minister for Housing:**

They are all willing sellers. Whether they are willing sellers to us remains to be seen, but the rezoning will be based on, if they are rezoned, 80 per cent social housing and 20 per cent affordable. So there is a very limited market.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

You mentioned just now that you championed 3 sites, which you have just named. As the Minister in charge of the Strategic Housing Unit, what other involvement have you had apart from just promoting the needs of the Housing Department or the new association?

**The Minister for Housing:**

In what context?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Well, in the provision of housing, which is obviously the main aim and responsibility of the Strategic Housing Unit.

**The Minister for Housing:**

The Strategic Housing Unit will be responsible for developing a strategy across all tenures, but we are still fairly new. I have been working most of the time on social housing provision with the need to increase supply there, and also working on regulation for the social housing but also looking at regulation possibly for the private housing and unqualified sector as well.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So the Strategic Housing Unit has not had any direct involvement or made any major contribution to the Island Plan review?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, that is totally unfair. Not only have we made a direct contribution to it but I have had an officer working with me who I have shared with Planning, working with me all the way through. So that is totally unfair to say that.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Right, so just elaborate on exactly what the Strategic Housing Unit has done so far with regard to the Island Plan review?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

The focus obviously in terms of supply has been on the Island Plan review. The same person who is supporting the Minister for Planning and Environment on the development of the Island Plan review is also supporting us on the Strategic Housing Unit. So our view is if the officer is at P. and E. (Planning and Environment), supporting the Minister for Planning and Environment, and he is here supporting the Minister for Housing, that achieves our aims. The Island Plan review is not being developed just at South Hill by the Minister for Planning and Environment, though. It has been to council on a number of occasions. It has been discussed at the strategic housing advisory group that we set up in December. So we have had a range of meetings where we have input. The Minister for Housing was also at the examination in public, the first day and for other parts of it, and inputting into that process as well.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Has the Strategic Housing Unit made written representations?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Oh, absolutely.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Sorry, just to take that further, yes, we have made written representations into the process. A lot of the statistics that supported the Island Plan process were provided by the Strategic Housing Unit working with the Statistics Unit. So, for example, the split of tenures between the 400 and the 100 was supported by us and the definitions around who could buy the homes on the Island Plan review sites was supported by us.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Thank you.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think it is worth also adding that from the Housing section we have an exclusivity - and I will not name it - agreement with a potential big site in town. In other words, if we can make the site work - I think it is up until September - it can only be sold to us, so we are working on that at the present time. You may have seen recently that a new company in shadow form has advertised to see if we can find more sites in town, so we are not sitting down doing nothing.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Good.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

I will come back to that in a moment. With regard to the 3 glasshouse sites that have been looked at by the planning inspector, have you got any indication of how many units you could deliver on those sites if you are successful in having them rezoned?

**The Minister for Housing:**

We have but I cannot remember that.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

The total supply from the Island Plan is 500 extra homes of which 400 will be social housing.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So 400 social housing and, what, 100 affordable housing, so 500 units?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Yes, so 20/80 per cent.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, and that is the short term, plus what we have coming on at Langtry Gardens, plus what we have coming on at Lesquende, plus we need to get on then and develop the available state-owned sites such as Rouge Bouillon, and 70 now coming on at Jersey College for Girls as well.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that if those 3 sites are rezoned those sites, the ones that are coming on, will address the housing difficulty we have at the moment, but unfortunately that is

going to take 3 to 5 years on those current figures. We always seem to have this thing of stop/start right the way ... 2002 we had a lot of the H2 sites came on board, a lot of social housing provided. Certainly, mid-2000s I think the housing waiting list went right down but, sadly, it has gone back up. There is a direct correlation with the fact that there has been no rezonings. How do we stop this from happening?

**The Minister for Housing:**

By constantly reviewing, not building and saying we have solved the problem and doing nothing for 10 or 15 years, which the States has been very good at. We have to resource the company - which we are doing with the £207 million - with money and with sites and we have to encourage other people to develop appropriate sites. I see appropriate sites becoming available in St. Helier and I believe that people will live in St. Helier if we provide the ... this is not just social housing, but provide good quality homes. But we need a regeneration plan for St. Helier. I have not had an answer yet, but I have requested whether I can join the St. Helier regeneration group.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So at the moment the Strategic Housing Unit are not represented on the regeneration subgroup?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

The discussion is taking place with the Chief Minister, who has indicated an invite will be forthcoming.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Sorry?

**The Minister for Housing:**

An invite is coming.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

An invite will be forthcoming.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Just picking up on the provision of ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

Because that is where most of the sites are going to be in the future, unless we are going to go into green fields.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

With regards to the provision of the total of 500 homes linked to the Island Plan review, is that total based on all the sites identified within that review being deemed suitable by the inspectors and the Minister for Planning?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, that is based on the sites that we have championed, which is the Samares, the Longueville and the Le Quesne. I cannot remember offhand, but there was something like 40 or so other sites that were put forward by other individuals. Now, I do not know what way that is going to go, but assuming the inspectors ... because none of these sites were new, or very few of them. Assuming the inspectors take the same tack as they took last time, I suspect that a lot of those will not be accepted.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

But to be clear, the process was not identify sites and then see how many homes we can get on them. It was from the housing needs survey how many homes do we need, looking at the gateway, and then identifying the sites.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

This confuses me somewhat because we have the Minister for Housing now responsible for the Strategic Housing Unit that should be taking an Island view, not necessarily just focusing on social housing or ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am taking an Island view but you have to accept that the biggest need at the moment is social housing. There is no doubt about that. While we do need to ensure that we have good quality housing across all tenures, and that is unqualified, private rental, private ownership and social housing, without doubt social housing is the biggest issue at the moment.

[10:45]

That is what I am not solely concentrating on but concentrating on a lot. Now, when we increase supply that will have a positive effect on the private sector anyway because it will take the pressure off. That will stabilise prices even further from the prices that we saw yesterday. That will stabilise prices. That will encourage landlords to invest in higher standards, and they may be encouraged by regulation anyway, we will see as we work our way through that. When there is more supply and, therefore, makes it harder to attract tenants, landlords will have to look the quality of their homes and the price that they are charging.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Is it not the case that all land, including the 3 sites that you have been championing, if deemed suitable will provide the same range of accommodation, which means the social housing and affordable housing? Is it not the case that you just do not need to rely or you should not necessarily simply be relying on 3 sites; you should be relying on all of the sites?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Sorry, I will let Paul come back in, but I have picked the sites that were stated or categorised by the inspectors last time as the most suitable in Jersey. I am not advocating wholesale development on green fields. A lot of those sites that people have brought forward are green fields that should remain green fields. I have picked the brown field sites that the inspector said were the best and most suitable.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Have you made that decision and who has made that decision? Is it the Strategic Housing Unit or is that a personal view?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, I have taken advice on that so it has come from within the unit working with the officer that has helped develop the draft Island Plan and worked with me. I have put a written submission in place on that, so it is not just a personal view. But the fact is that those sites were identified last time. The States should have had the courage to rezone them last time, not leave them out.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Well, have you spoken to the Chief Minister about that because he was one of the ones advocating not building on those sites?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I have spoken to the Chief Minister about that.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

What is his view now?

**The Minister for Housing:**

His view is that he sees the need now, but maybe that is because I have made it very clear.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Just to be clear, the Island Plan process came out of the statistics. If the statistics had said that there was not a need for more social housing but there was more a need for open market housing, then it might have been a different process. But the housing needs survey 2012 said there is not a shortfall in demand and supply of open market housing. The shortfall is in social housing, albeit there is a virtuous circle, as the Minister for Housing said. If you build more social, the people on the waiting list move out of private and that offers opportunities, too.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Can I just ask you a question about the development of the Jersey College for Girls? As we are all very well aware, that building stood empty for well over a decade, maybe something like 15 or 20 years, I have lost track. It is basically shovel ready. Are you disappointed that more social housing is not going to be provided on that site because it could be delivered? It is the one site that can deliver units far quicker than all of the rest of them.

**The Minister for Housing:**

You will not be surprised that, of course, I am disappointed, but I also live in the real world. We have got that up from 30-something units to 70 now with some creative work being done around key worker accommodation, which is something that I am very passionate about as well that we need to solve the problem on. Of course I am disappointed that it is not more, but it has doubled from what it was so that is an improvement.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Can you tell us who made the decision about the division?

**The Minister for Housing:**

It comes under Jersey Property Holdings.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Can you just explain to us - you say living in the real world - why you believe that the States should look to make a profit on their sites and yet you seek to rezone sites that belong to private individuals at possibly way below market value?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, we are not going to take rezoned sites at way below market value. That is nonsense. We will be paying the right rate for the appropriate tenure on that site. Of course, if it were open market sites then it would fetch a higher price, but you have to remember at the moment it is a glasshouse site. It has little value. The price we will be paying or social housing providers will be paying will

be a fair price for the type of accommodation that is going on there. Coming back to Jersey College for Girls, whether we like it or not, and this is probably a question that you have to put to Property Holdings rather than me, a significant amount of that building is a listed building and it is going to cost a lot of money to convert in a way that is acceptable to planners. If we could just knock it down and start again, then of course we could get a lot more units on there, but that is not the world we are in.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Is that what is driving the figures?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I believe so, but you will have to ask Property Holdings. I believe that is what is driving it.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Can you just remind us how many units are going to be provided in the old listed building and how many new units will be provided around that property?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I cannot remember how many are in the old bit, but I know that we are going to get ... instead of 30, we are going to get 70 or thereabouts social housing units.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Would I be correct in saying that even the figure that you have quoted is not the total amount of new build that will be on that site?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I do not know.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Maybe one of your officers can confirm?

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is a question you will have to ask Property Holdings, unless one of my officers ...

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I find it really odd that you do not know the amount of units that are going to be provided or you cannot answer the question of the total number of units that are going to be provided on that site, and it includes the new build.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I cannot know the ins and outs of every site in Jersey. What I do know is what we are getting in terms of social housing, which has doubled from what it was.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Maybe the Assistant Minister could answer the question because I know of his involvement with Property Holdings.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Some years ago.

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

Yes, unfortunately that was one term ago, 3 years ago, I was in charge of Property Holdings. Certainly, planning issues were one of the major constraints bearing in mind the original building was a listed building and the façade cannot be changed, which predicates against a volume development inside the original building. Now, unfortunately, I am suffering the same malaise as my Minister here as I cannot remember the numbers exactly now which we are delivering, but most of the new build is on the school side to the back of it and the playgrounds associated with it. The old building will be converted into units. Unfortunately, because of the design of the building as it is, there is a limit to exactly what we can do.

**The Minister for Housing:**

It is not just the external of the building that is listed, there are some aspects of the internal that are listed. If you want detail on that, that is a question you will have to ask Property Holdings.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Well, maybe you could provide that information to us.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I will ask Property Holdings to provide that information to you.

**Finance Director:**

I believe the Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources undertook to provide details of units on States sites that were going to be developed at the last sitting, and I think he mentioned that it was going to be 75 social rented and 103 cat (b) on J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls).

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, so that is more than can be provided in a listed building.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Yes, I think some of the new build will be cat (b) as well in order that the scheme can wash its face.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Okay. You mentioned in a previous answer key worker accommodation. Can you just ...?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, it is something I am keen to work on as part of the S.H.U. (Strategic Housing Unit) and, indeed, we are talking to Health at the moment about that. It is Health that I am going to concentrate on initially because when we got the last report, or it might have been the one before that, the report on house affordability, it was quite clear, just to pick one sector, that nurses could not afford to purchase. There are lots of people in Jersey who cannot afford to purchase, but nurses could not afford to purchase. Also, and I have not seen the detail but I have spoken to the Minister for Health and Social Services - this is the advantage of having the Assistant Minister for Housing and Health - when you look at the exit interviews of some of the very good nurses that have left us unfortunately, the 2 major issues are: "I am at a time of life when I want to buy my own home" and: "I am having difficulty providing nursery care." Those are the 2. I cannot do anything about nursery care, that falls under somebody else, but I do want to bring in some key worker accommodation. Now, that will include some key worker rental and it will include some key worker to buy. We are working on that at the moment.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So have you identified a site where you might be able to achieve that?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Well, possibly half of the ones on the Jersey College for Girls may form part of the key worker experiment, if you like.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

With regard to the health residential units, have they now transferred to housing?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, not yet. We are still having difficulty determining what they have.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

What, you are trying to say that there is not ...

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

There are some subordinate issues there because a lot of these properties have been let for the aged, frail and needy of the Island, which comes under the Health portfolio. So just passing them on is not an option we can do. We have to realise a value back into the trust held by Health to service the aged, the frail and the needy.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

But presumably not all of the Health accommodation is provided for the frail and needy?

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

No, not all of it, no.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Perhaps determining what they have is not quite the right expression. Determining what can transfer over might be the better ...

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So that is still being discussed?

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is still being worked on, but make no bones about it, quite a lot of it needs work and it has to come not just as a gift. It has to come with a budget to do that work. It is no good passing assets on that require expenditure without a proper and robust plan to put that right.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

At a time when we seem to be unable to satisfy the local demand for affordable homes, why are you focusing on key worker accommodation?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not focusing on key worker. It is one of the things I am working on because they are part of the local population. We attract them here. We ask them to work with us. We have a whole raft of work that needs to be done around caring for the elderly in the community. If you want to bring people with the right skills and keep them to do that, then you have to house them.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Equally, we have to house our local people.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I do not know of very many housing associations in the U.K. (United Kingdom) and, in fact, even in Guernsey that do not have a key worker policy.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

But is it not true that Health currently have quite a large number of properties under their responsibility that are used and are currently used to house key workers?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, that will form part of the key worker strategy.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yet you suggest that you are going to use some potentially new build properties that are coming, hopefully quite soon, on the J.C.G. site for this purpose.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, I am, if all the plans stack up. You have a choice. If you are going to have coordinated Government looking after the elderly in the community, as we plan to do, then you have to be able to house those workers.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

But what about the young people, Minister?

**The Minister for Housing:**

If we are not going to house those workers, they are not going to come here and the whole strategy falls apart.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

But what about the young people who are desperate to own their own home?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am working on that as well, but you just said to me just now you thought the Minister for Housing should be working on strategies across all tenures, and now you are telling me I should be concentrating only on social housing.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

The question I am asking you is why are you prioritising now, at this moment in time, when we know that there is a shortage of housing?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Because it is a problem. They are part of the community and it is a part of the problem.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So you are confirming that it is more important to solve ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not saying it is more important.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

... and provide homes for purchase for key workers than local people?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, you are putting words in my mouth. I am saying it is as important to ensure that our essential workers are properly housed to provide care in the community for our local community.

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

I think it is worth just adding to that that you are the same panel that looks after health as well. That may be a question that is worth putting to the Minister for Health and Social Services at one of the next scrutiny hearings because there is a piece of work going on at the moment looking at the extent of outlying properties which are not core to health needs, and we are currently working with Property Holdings on a way to deliver better value and meet the requirements. That is another piece where you might consider doing it as part of this as well.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Before we leave the subject of existing sites, at our last hearing you said that you believed that development would begin on the Le Coin site in the new year. Has anything started there?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not sure where we are ...

**Finance Director:**

Le Coin is under construction, yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

It is?

**Finance Director:**

Yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

That is still with the Housing Department?

**Finance Director:**

Yes, 23 units.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Ann Court is the one that has moved into the Jersey Homes Trust?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Probably, yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Just one last question, Troy Court, are you in negotiations with Les Vaux?

**The Minister for Housing:**

The officers are not. I am kept in touch by the chairman of Les Vaux and they have yet another plan. They are keen to redevelop that. As you know, they have cleared their loan or mortgage on that now and they are keen to redevelop it, but it is coming up with the right scheme. The scheme previously, which I thought was an excellent one and so did the board, required straightening out the boundary on a bit of wasteland with St. Helier, and that was not acceptable to St. Helier. So they have developed another scheme and we are pushing that forward as quickly as we can.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

One last question around provision of potential housing sites, apart from the 3 sites that you personally champion, you did mention that the new housing association were looking at purchasing sites within St. Helier.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Are you expecting that the housing association will be required to pay market value for those sites?

[11:00]

**The Minister for Housing:**

Well, the market value, as I said, depends on what is going on there. If the site is for social housing, then for the whole plan to stack up with the rents that are being paid, the site becomes the value of social housing sites.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So you are expecting a landlord to sell you a site at a reduced price ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

Not a reduced price, at the right price.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

... and at the same time the States make decisions to maximise the value on their own site?

**The Minister for Housing:**

It is not a reduced price. The price of land, if nobody wants to buy it at the higher price ... this is all part of negotiation, as you know. For us our maximum price will be determined by the number of units we can get on there and the rental income. That is sound common sense. Now, if the owner does not want to sell it at that price, that is fine, but that is the price we will be paying, the right price for the number of units and the type of units that are going on there.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

One final question on this: if the States or the States of Jersey Development Company or whoever can have an expectation to build some category (b) sites on a States-owned site, is it wrong to believe that a private individual or private landlord with property at St. Helier should not have that same opportunity?

**The Minister for Housing:**

The private landlord does not have to sell it to me. It is as simple as that.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So you are going to hold the private landlords to ransom ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, I am not.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

... because you are just going to say: "If you want to develop the site, it has to be for social housing full stop."

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, because I am not the Minister for Planning and Environment. I am going out to buy sites. If they do not want to sell it to me, that is fine, I will buy it from somebody else. No, you are being quite unreasonable.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

You are the Minister ... no, but I just want to explore this because it is important.

**The Minister for Housing:**

The value of the site is determined by the units that can go on there. If a private landlord wants to develop it for category (b) and there is no planning reason why it should not be, then they can. If they feel that the market is not right and they want to sell it to myself, for example, or to the company, that is fine. Those prices are determined by the number and type of units that go on there. Nobody is forcing. We are not doing compulsory purchase. We have asked for landlords to come forward voluntarily and offer us their sites if they want to. If they do not want to, that is fine.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Thank you.

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

Just a last little thing, the Planning Department, if they rezone land particularly, they will put a requirement on what shall go on that land. Now, if it is 80 per cent social, 20 per cent first time buyer, that will dictate the value of that land, which will be different if it was all category (b) housing, which would have a far higher land value because they would be selling every single unit. So the planning permission in itself in a way controls the value of the land, and that is where the housing unit can take advantage ...

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

On rezoned land, but the Minister mentioned that he was looking to purchase or at least the housing association was looking to purchase commercial sites.

**The Minister for Housing:**

We put an advert in the paper asking site owners to come forward if they are interested in selling their site. I do not see anything wrong with that. I think that is quite a sensible approach, and then the negotiation takes place on the price. We are not robbing anybody. We are not depriving anyone. If they do not want to sell their site, they will not come forward.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

With hindsight, do you believe that the Housing Department or the States should have retained the sites that they purchased 10 or 12 years ago, like the Sunshine Hotel site and others, for social housing rather than dispose of them for gain?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I bit before my time, but from the little knowledge I have it does seem crazy that we bought a site and then did not develop it.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

We would like to touch on another subject now. It was reported in the media recently the difficulties a family faced to do with condensation in their flat. It should be a fairly well-known fact that if you do washing and you do not ventilate your home you are going to have big problems with condensation. Have you or are you going to give any consideration in new developments, particularly where you have flats rather than houses, to provide laundry facilities on site? If not, what advice can you give people about not encountering these problems?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Starting with the end bit first, we regularly give advice to tenants in our regular newsletters that go out. It is quite interesting, is it not, that in this particular case one flat in a development has an issue. Now, initially you might think, well, maybe there is something wrong with that flat, but there was not anything wrong with the flat. It was entirely one of ventilating and opening windows and keeping on top of the issues if you do dry washing. But you make a sound point about looking at how laundry is managed and it is something that we are taking into account.

**Assistant Minister for Housing:**

Can I just add on to that another experience which I have had with St. Peter housing where we provide heating and laundry facilities? We had one unit exactly the same as the one that we are talking about now in St. Peter where the flat dweller would not open the windows except in the summer to let the heat out and would not use the driers because it costs money and just dried the clothes in the room with heating full on. That is a lifestyle issue and if we know about it we can

deal with it and, like that one, we did not know about it until it came up in the media so we could not deal with it.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

The only reason I ask that is because we all know how difficult it is to do your laundry if you live in a flat and dry it. It seemed to me that if there were laundry facilities supplied in these developments that would go a long way to solving that problem for a lot of people.

**The Minister for Housing:**

It is something we will look at but, of course, we are surmising here that the issue was laundry. We do not know. Well, officers know but it really would be unfair to discuss the particular case.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Could you tell us perhaps in more general terms what actions does the department take if a tenant complains or raises an issue around damp or mould within the property?

**The Minister for Housing:**

You raise a very interesting point. If the tenant complains or mentions or reports that they have a problem, then it is thoroughly investigated. Certainly, I was involved in one where we found that it was not just a lifestyle choice, it was some sort of problem with the damp course and appropriate action was taken. The assisted living staff will also support people a bit more in giving practical advice and even getting them some help, but you cannot make people take that help. That is one of the issues.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

I think at the last meeting it was reported that about 25 per cent of the housing stock did not meet the standard that you would wish it to do. Are you on track with your maintenance work?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, we are on track with that. When you look around, all the refurbishment of Osbourne Court is happening at the moment. The redevelopment of Le Coin we have talked about. Refurbishment of La Collette high rise is now complete. I am just looking at my list here. The development of Le Squez is a redevelopment and that is continuing. We are looking at redeveloping the low rise. We have done Pomme d'Or Farm, which I am particularly proud of because not only does it look good but the tenants tell me that due to this mild winter that we have had some of them have not even needed to turn their heating on. It looks so good and the architect wrote to me congratulating us on maintaining the integrity of the design while improving the facilities to modern standards. So yes, we are on track. It is probably not 25 per cent now, although I do not have a figure. We will

not stop until ... well, you never stop. That has been the problem in the past. I was going to say we will not stop until we have completed it, but you will never complete it. It will always be ongoing and having the right income from the rents now will ensure that we can maintain our properties not only at the standard they are at now but taking into account modern trends as well. So as more information becomes available about how homes should be insulated, heated or whatever it is, we will be able to maintain that into the future.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Due to the wide range of stock that the housing association is now responsible for, is it realistic to believe that we will ever achieve 100 per cent of getting our housing stock to reach the decent home standard?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, I think it is, but it does depend how you define that 100 per cent. In terms of properly insulated, watertight, wind tight, I think we can achieve 100 per cent. I know that some Members have worried about our programme then of renovating kitchens and bathrooms saying that their kitchens and bathrooms last longer. We plan to replace them - plan to replace them, not necessarily do it - every 20 years or so. Of course, if you inspect a property and there has been one person that has been very careful in there and there is nothing wrong with the kitchen or the bathroom, we do not replace them, but our budgets allow for that to be done. So I think it is realistic to say that all our properties can be wind and watertight, properly insulated, and then there will be an ongoing programme, particularly around internal refurbishment.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So, Minister, just to be clear, with regard to the decent home standard or meeting the decent home standard, it would generally include upgrading of kitchens and that type of thing?

**The Minister for Housing:**

It does. Yes, it does.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

So when you talk about 25 per cent ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

Well, no, it ...

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

... not reaching decent home standard, a percentage of that will include simply old kitchens?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, but you do not replace a kitchen because it is old. You replace a kitchen because it is beyond its useful life. That will depend on the usage. A kitchen in a 3-bedroom house is bound to get more of a hammering than a kitchen in a one-bedroom flat with an elderly resident. But it is right that we plan to do that and just as you would at home look at: "Do I need to do this? Yes, I will do it. No, I do not, there is another 3 years' life in there," then that particular kitchen will be replaced at 23 years.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Thank you. At the last hearing you mentioned a Green Paper; you were working with Christine Whitehead on a housing strategy. Can you give us an update on the progress?

**The Minister for Housing:**

So that you get the right update, because we have talked about this, I will ask Paul to mention that.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

We were expecting the report this month. I think it is going to be early next month now. That report is going to be then the foundation for the development of the housing strategy.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Is this a housing strategy across all categories?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Including unqualified building homes?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Yes. So we talked about key workers before. Another bit of that strategy has to be housing our ageing population. Another bit has to be around housing people who have special needs who are not elderly. It will include unqualified, lodging houses, so it is a tremendously big piece of work. So we have commissioned the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning to do us some discussion papers. The one we are waiting for is the final one around affordability and possible policy options. We will then use that basis to develop a strategy that can go out for consultation. I think we have said we will develop a strategy this year for publication next year. It is going to take us most of this year.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

You say you are going to develop a strategy and then go for consultation?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Sorry, we will develop a Green Paper policy option ...

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Outlining, right, okay, thank you.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Then the strategy comes from that in the White Paper.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Thank you.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Do you see public meetings playing a part in the development of the Green Paper or afterwards?

**The Minister for Housing:**

It is not unusual to do that and we have not got that far yet, but it is not unusual to as part of the consultation invite people to come along and listen to us and us, more importantly, listen to them.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Okay. At the current time, are the checks still going on with the lodging houses?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

How many people do you have working in your compliance department with regard to lodging houses?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

We have one lodging house inspector. Sorry, just to be clear, it is not exclusive. We also have 3 people who do compliance, and that compliance could relate to a lodging house. But we have one lodging house inspector, something like 270 units that they inspect, but the lodging house portfolio is a very broad portfolio. Some of the stuff is brand new. It would look like a perfectly serviceable probably high-end flat, and at the other end of the spectrum you get genuine what we think of as

lodgings. What they do is they do not inspect the high end every year. They inspect the low end every year, if not more frequently.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Have you had to close any lodging houses down recently due to the condition of the property?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

What we tend to find is the lodging house keepers are quite responsive because they know that threat is there. So if our inspector says: "Will you paint this wall, there is some damp in that corner" they do it. Our concern when we think about standards is less lodging houses, other than at the bottom end of the market, it is more the smaller units. The lodging houses is only more than 5 people in it, but what about less than 5? What about private rented? I think J.A.S.S. (Jersey Annual Social Survey) said that the problems around standards were as predominant in private rented as they were in the unqualified sector.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So how are those difficulties going to be addressed in the future with regard to the less than 5 because it does not come under the lodging house regulations and private rented ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is part of our regulation review. I think we have to say that the regulations are being reviewed in 2 parts because I am keen that we get on with the regulating of social housing in an appropriate way as advised or suggested by your panel. There will be a whole raft of other things there that you would not necessarily apply to private landlords, such as interface with tenants.

[11:15]

Yes, good landlords would have that interface but you would not necessarily prescribe it in law or in regulation as we will do for the social housing. But I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that we need just one set of standards which would be based on the decent home standard, which would apply to social housing, private rental, unqualified, and it queries then whether you need a lodging house law. But that is work in progress at the moment.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

On 19th March we will be taking a terms of reference to the strategic housing group around a piece of work to improve standards, to do exactly what the Minister for Housing suggests, to say we need to develop mechanisms that cross all tenures. So Health are part of that housing group. Health have signed up, so things like picking up again the public health and safety dwelling or

reviewing it, make sure it fits with the work we are doing around standards, we can share that piece of work with you.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So your lodging house inspector is that one full-time post?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Yes.

**The Minister for Housing:**

But there are other compliance officers.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

Which is more than adequate for 270 properties, many of which are at the high end. Like I say, the bottom end of the lodging house market is a concern, but it is the smaller units of less than 5 in private rental that we need to think hard about.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

But they are completely unregulated in the main?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes.

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

That is the piece of work we need to develop to say what regulatory instruments we need.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Okay. With regard to the regulations, I think we have been expecting them to come forward.

**The Minister for Housing:**

We have a report and proposition almost ready to go.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

To go where? [Laughter]

**The Minister for Housing:**

To you.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Exactly.

**The Minister for Housing:**

It is not a quick fix and you did ask us to look at it again to have something more appropriate for Jersey and we are very grateful for that because we were probably a little bit over the top the first time. We have worked very, very closely with the social housing providers to ensure that ... not that they get their way, but that we get something, as you suggested, that was appropriate to Jersey. It is almost ready to release.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I know you said other social housing providers are now signed up to the proposals that you will be bringing forward?

**The Minister for Housing:**

It is a question you will have to ask them, but yes, I believe they are, yes.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Good.

**The Minister for Housing:**

The meetings have been very positive with them. They form part of the strategic advisory panel that we have as well.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

In P.33 it stated that you are required to sell 15 homes per year to meet the funding or financial constraints that were placed on you. How many have been sold so far in 2014?

**The Minister for Housing:**

You will not like my answer because I am going to say quite a few, but I will ask specifically to give the precise answer.

**Finance Director:**

Three so far.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Three?

**Finance Director:**

Yes.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

What area? Where have these properties been? Is it all on one site or a number of sites?

**Finance Director:**

Grasset Park and Oak Tree Gardens.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

How many are you planning to sell?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Fifteen.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Fifteen?

**The Minister for Housing:**

If I can just say it is partly about making the sums add up in terms of the Business Plan, but it is also part of our exit strategy for people who find themselves having entered social housing because of low income and family, then the family perhaps start to work or the family leave home and the mum and dad get better jobs, so they find themselves in a better position. Of course, now they are in the trap because they are too old to get a traditional mortgage and so they continue to remain in social housing. So this is one of the opportunities for them to come in with a deferred payment scheme, giving us money to redevelop. Because every home we sell more or less funds 2 rebuilds anyway, so coming in with a deferred payment scheme they can under that scheme afford to buy their own home and no longer be subsidised by the state. Now, I accept that we need other schemes and this is all part of the Strategic Housing Unit. For example, I want to see schemes ... and we may well be able to do it on the new sites that come forward. I would like to experiment with schemes like rent to buy. That is for couples that are just below the threshold maybe that could not afford to rent and save but they could afford to pay a slightly higher rent and after a number of years, to be determined - 3, 4, 5 - that becomes a deposit and then they are in a position to get a traditional mortgage. I want to look at all these sorts of things. There is an awful lot of work going on in this very small Strategic Housing Unit.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Can you explain the comment that you just made that selling one home provides 2 new ones?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Well, when you get the capital, providing you already own the land, you can then build new. We have sites where we must increase density and that increasing in density as we have done at Le Squez can be done without people feeling that they are being hemmed in or in any way quality of life being spoiled. In fact, quite the opposite. We doubled on some of the sites in Le Squez the number of tenants that are on there but it feels nice and relaxed and nice and open. That is all down to the design, the green space, and the amenities that you put within the flats themselves, within the apartments.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

At a time when on your own admission the waiting list is high, 760 individuals or families, do you think it is right in the short term at least to sell any homes?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Well, let us be quite clear about this. Very often the person buying it is the person that occupied that house. Not always, but very often. Or they are already occupying another social housing unit. So if you do not have a system to assist people to support themselves they will continue to occupy that house so nobody else is going to get it.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

We have been recently told that the prices of property generally have been reduced and come down by 6 per cent, being the latest figures.

**The Minister for Housing:**

It was not quite 6 per cent. It was 6 per cent over a number of years. It was a 1 per cent drop on last year.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Right, well, 6 per cent but ...

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Six per cent over 4 years.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Accumulative reduction. In that case, surely it would be better to encourage the individuals to move out and purchase property in the public?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Okay, then you have to bring in some sort of special mortgage scheme because they will not get an ordinary mortgage. They are too old. They cannot repay it within the time that they will be working, so they are not going to move. They are going to stay where they are.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

That option has not been explored, is that what you are saying?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No. What is being explored is affordable homes that people can afford to buy maybe later in life as well. That is being explored, but we are not exploring bringing in any sort of state-funded mortgage scheme, no.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

That has just reminded me. The deposit scheme that was introduced last year, how successful was that?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Well, you have the figures but I would like to say it has been very successful. I will let Paul give you the actual figures. We are reviewing this at the moment to see what went well, what would we do differently, for example, was the criteria right, but I met with the estate agents yesterday and without an exception they said - and this is their words, not mine - it was the right intervention at the right level at the right time. If it had any effect on the market at all, it actually brought prices slightly down.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So are there any plans to reintroduce the scheme?

**The Minister for Housing:**

That will be part of our review. I have to say there are not any plans to continue it at this stage. It will be part of our review to see whether we want to bring it back later on, but activity has significantly increased recently so we need to look at whether Government needs to intervene again or not. That is part of the review.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

So was the budget completely expended?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

No.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

How much was ...?

**Director of Corporate Policy:**

We expect to have 51 people complete but we still have 5. We are closed to new applications because the 6-month pilot has expired, but the ones who are advanced we are still continuing with. So there are 5 of those. If they all complete, we would expect to have 51 people go through the scheme, £2.5 million. Most of those have been 3-bed houses. Say at £2.5 million, just over 50 people have been supported. This is about the individuals, though, if they cannot find a property, they might not have their 5 per cent saved yet, so my view is there is benefit in a small hiatus, if that is what it is. Because many people have called the gateway team and said: "We are not ready yet but we are going to save." Now, it might be they save and they enter into a subsequent scheme in time or it might be they save and the private mortgage market is perfectly amenable for them, but if it has encouraged people to save to buy a house that is great.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

To finish off the hearing - we just have a few minutes left - I just wanted to ask you about Andium Homes. I was very heartened to see the advertisement in the paper last week advertising for potential development sites. It was good to see that that was happening and they have taken some positive steps to try and deliver new homes. It is coming into being on 1st July, is that correct?

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is correct, yes.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Is everything going according to plan?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, in a word. I do not believe it will be any different. The shadow board has met twice now and are certainly doing their job. Obviously, at the moment ... well, for ever, I suppose, the Minister for Housing will be accountable, but at the moment any decisions that the board make have to come through the Minister for Housing. But they are doing their job, doing it well, and I am very pleased. There is no reason at this time why we should not achieve all the targets set out in P.33.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Currently, are all the lending arrangements in place for Andium Homes to purchase new sites?

**The Minister for Housing:**

We are on programme in terms of putting all that in place. I am using terms that I am not familiar with, really, but the Treasurer and the team have appointed bookrunners - is that what they call it - who is the person that will secure the bond. I am going on a trip with the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Treasurer to talk to potential lenders in Edinburgh and London at the beginning of April, so we are on target. But if we find sites prior to that money being available I do know that the Minister for Treasury and Resources will be flexible in finding money to lend us in the short term.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

When do you expect the arrangements for the bond to be completed? What is the current timescale that is being discussed?

**The Minister for Housing:**

At the moment, we are working on the road shows in the first week of April and I do not know how long - it is not my area of expertise - it then takes to tie that down. The Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Treasurer tell me we are on target with the programme. John may have more.

**Finance Director:**

I think the money is due to be secured by the end of May.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

End of May? Thank you.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Thank you very much for coming in this morning.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Thank you.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

I will close the meeting.

[11:27]