

Minister for Infrastructure

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Connétable M. K. Jackson

Chairman Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Pane

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23rd August 2021

Dear Connétable,

Affordable Housing: Supply and Delivery Scrutiny Review Written Questions

Please see below my response to the Panel's questions asked of me in your letter entitled: Affordable Housing: Supply and Delivery Scrutiny Review Written Questions dated the 2nd August 2021.

The Island Public Estate Strategy

- 1. The Island Public Estate Strategy High Level Action Plan does not include specific actions related to the release of assets to support affordable housing delivery. Minister, please can you explain how affordable housing delivery features as a priority?**

Response: The [Property Strategy](#) is a high-level document that sets the framework for the development of a fit-for-purpose, modern estate; consolidating the management of all our property assets as part of a single Corporate Landlord Model to governance and decision-making.

With regards to how the strategy will prioritise affordable housing delivery, a key strategy action is the development of asset management plans that will then determine how sites are used in the future and which will then identify any potential alternative uses, such as affordable housing.

Furthermore, the Strategy sets out in section 8.2 a clear opportunity that will arise from the actions to review the current portfolio, which states;

“Generating land for affordable family housing and efficiencies of Government operations by consolidating sites with initiatives such as the one government an office proposal which is indicated in the strategic objective.”

- 2. Minister, what are your views on how commercial and community considerations should be balanced?**

Response: It is important to balance the commercial and community considerations when making decisions on how assets are used, and these decisions will be driven by the objectives set out in the Government Plan. The [Property Strategy](#) will support

these objectives and where these are focussed on community needs then this will be reflected in the property decisions made through the agreed Governance structure. Further guidance on how this should be balanced is set out in section 8.3 of the [Property Strategy](#)

3. What assurances can you provide that commercial interests will not override the community considerations?

Response: Although commercial considerations are important to ensure that the property portfolio is affordable and efficiently run, it is just one objective of strategy and as stated above needs to be balanced against community and sustainability objectives, as set out in the Vision and Mission statements of the Strategy.

4. What engagement have you had with stakeholders in developing the Strategy, such as Andium, Jersey Development Company and the parishes?

Response: The pandemic has had an impact upon the communication of the draft Strategy, but significant informal consultation and communication of the Strategy and the objectives have been undertaken with SOJDC and Andium through the business-as-usual channels and from the newly formed Corporate Asset Management Board, which has enabled the messages to be directly transmitted through to the departments and the front-line staff dealing with property matters.

Policy

5. Minister, do you think that Government should purchase sites to enable site assembly, for example, if it this enables land to be released for development?

Response: The acquisition of new sites will need to be evidenced and supported through the CAMB with clear business cases and supported by Treasury before they are then approved by the States as set out in standing order 168 (1) (a). They will then need to be included as capital projects in future Government Plans.

6. Do you think integrating affordable housing into market developments on Government owned sites will aid the delivery of affordable housing – what do you think the barriers to this are?

Response: Mixed developments can aid the delivery of affordable housing on Government owned sites if it is viable to do so and other community benefits, such as public realm or community facilities planned for or to be funded from the private elements can be realised. The mix of housing delivered on Government owned sites by approved affordable housing providers will be informed by the policies set out by the Minister for Housing and Communities.

Delivery

7. What work have you undertaken with the Minister for Housing and Communities, the Minister for the Environment and GoJ officials to ensure that publicly owned sites are developed within the timescales set out in the Draft Bridging Island Plan?

Response: The recently published Housing Action Plan was delivered under the newly for Housing Political Oversight Group, whilst the recently published Bridging Island plan was also developed across several Ministries, including IHE. These

are joined up documents that set out very clearly how affordable housing would be delivered on Government owned sites within the timeframe of the BIP.

- 8. In their response to the Draft Bridging Island Plan, Andium suggested the establishment of a Better Homes Task Force to focus attention on securing and bringing forward sites for new affordable homes. Do you favour this idea, and could it be developed into a dedicated team focused on site assembly and promotion?**

Response: The establishment of the better homes task force has been identified in the Housing Action plan published by the Minister for Housing and Communities. This is a positive action which is welcomed and will consider site assembly and promotion.

- 9. What assurance do you have that States' owned sites that have been identified for affordable housing in the Draft Bridging Island Plan can be delivered in the timeframe?**

Response: A portfolio of sites identified for affordable housing in the BIP are those most likely to come forward over the five-year housing supply period set out in the BIP. A portfolio of sites has been identified and from this a number have been identified as likely to be delivered based upon current needs

- a. What contingency plans for replacement sites do you have should these sites get delayed or become undeliverable in the delivery timeframes?**

Response: The long-term demand and supply of housing is identified in the draft Bridging Island Plan (BIP). The timely delivery of sites to meet the demand will be monitored by the Minister for the Environment through the performance of the BIP. Should some of the Government owned sites be delayed, then these are unlikely to be replaced in the short-term as there are no significant alternative sites that could come forward in the time frame.

- 10. What barriers to progressing the sites identified for affordable housing within the Draft Bridging Island Plan do you foresee?**

Response: Existing services on sites are unable to be rationalised or moved to their new locations in the given timeframes and changing priorities identified by the assembly.

- 11. Are there resourcing issues you have identified, either within your own department, or in other departments, that would hinder progress?**

Response: Delays in delivering major projects, notably the new hospital and one Gov office, could hinder progress on the release of sites. The new TOM in the property department is not yet completed or recruited.

- 12. Minister, how do you propose engaging with Jersey Development Company to enable them to bring forward Government owned sites?**

Response: There is a very positive and open dialogue with SoJDC which is formally managed through the RSG and COM when appropriate to do so. This approach has to date delivered first class developments on Government owned land and with exciting future projects set out in the Southwest St Helier Masterplan and South Hill office site.

13. How do you propose engaging with Andium to enable them to bring forward Government owned sites?

Response: The Government relationship with Andium is primarily through the Treasury Minister and the Minister for Housing and Communities. Discussions with Andium do take place with IHE on property matters on a regular basis on both current projects, such as the Limes and future site discussions, as identified in the BIP.

14. Do you consider there are opportunities for joint ventures between Andium and JDC in developing larger sites that may require involvement of more than one party?

Response: SoJDC is the Government's property development agent with a first-class record in delivering high quality developments and Andium has transformed the affordable housing portfolio to meet the best standards in design and increase supply. There is therefore some logic for a degree of collaboration on site development in the future that can further both company objectives and that more importantly benefit the people of Jersey.

I trust my responses have answered your questions, if I can be of any further assistance to your panel please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Deputy Kevin Lewis
Minister for Infrastructure