

Media Release

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Planning chief calls for housing rethink



Alderney should prioritise affordable housing to retain young families and attract key workers seeking to relocate to the Island.

That's the view of Kevin Gentle, Chairman of the Building & Development Control Committee (BDCC), speaking at the States of Alderney meeting last week (January 11).

“Sufficient housing is vital if we are to meet our aspiration to grow the population, and housing is required to create and maintain a sustainable and diverse population,” he said.

Housing is a key aspect of the Island Plan which has mandated a housing strategy, policy and practices to make the island attractive to economically active adults and their families while

sustaining those who already live here. This will draw on support and resources through the Guernsey Working Together project and involves engaging with stakeholders to provide appropriate quality housing for a changing demographic.

Referring to reports that lack of accommodation is severely hampering the efforts of Health & Social Care in Guernsey to attract nurses, Mr Gentle asked the States to review practical ways in which Alderney could provide housing support.

“We need to think more broadly about affordable housing because the term itself has inbuilt assumptions,” he said. “Additional housing needs to be built so that we can retain younger families and attract those key workers looking to relocate.”

The Alderney Housing Association (AHA) is the main provider of affordable housing on Alderney and last year opened its doors to the public to see how it endeavours to meet the Island’s housing needs, while a Housing Task Group was set up in 2021.

“We should remember that not everyone is living in a house which meets their needs,” he added. “But in a perfect world, social housing would hopefully be seen as a short-term steppingstone supporting those who can’t afford current market prices. No community wants multi-generational dependence on social housing.”

The Task Group and the AHA are agreed that low-cost but high-quality accommodation such as flats should be the priority. Construction and renovation are key opportunities for improving the Island’s housing stock.

The argument that the States has limited funding should not be used as an excuse to allow the gradual decline of the States’ property portfolio, he told Members.

He also raised the thorny issue of selling States property which has been mooted as a possible solution to fiscal shortfall.

“Raising revenue in this way is a conundrum for the new Economic Development Committee. States property is an asset and must never be sold for the simple reason of covering a short-term shortfall in an annual budget. However, selling and ring-fencing is a totally different thing.”

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Notes to Media

Pictured: Kevin Gentle. For a hi-res image, please contact Alistair Forrest, alistair29110@gmail.com