

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
MHCLG
Marsham Street, London
SW1P 4DF

3 pages Also by email to: PSRobertJenrick@communities.gov.uk

14 July 2020

Dear Mr Jenrick,

On 30 June the Government confirmed that a planning policy paper will be published in July that will deliver a comprehensive reform of England's seven-decade old planning system.

As a group of stakeholders with a common purpose – we want to keep older people independent for longer, and safe and well at home – we are writing to you to request that these reforms include measures to deliver more and better housing options for those in later life.

The UK's population is ageing rapidly but its housing stock is not adequate to meet this change. Currently less than 3% is built specifically for those in retirement and the Local Government Association predicts a shortfall of 400,000 dwellings of this type by 2030.

This means older people typically live in properties that are too large and unsuitable for their needs. This creates a bottleneck; it makes it more difficult for young families to move up the housing ladder to meet their growing needs, and limits supply for first time buyers. It also increases older people's reliance on the NHS and social care system, with inappropriate housing and social isolation being key factors in health deterioration.

The forthcoming planning reforms could address these challenges in four ways:

- 1. Create a co-ordinated approach between local planning and adult social care departments.** Currently there is no clear understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits provided by the various forms of specialist housing for older people and the advantages they bring, with the majority of local planning authorities' Local Plans lacking specified policies for the delivery of any of these forms of housing. It is therefore essential that social care departments work closely with their planning colleagues to help plan local housing policies.
- 2. Set a clear allocation for specialist housing for older people in Local Plans.** The current system is not working despite previous attempts to address it in national planning guidance through a requirement placed on local authorities to assess need for specialist housing for older people. The Government should require local authorities to set a robustly assessed local target for a proportion of all new housing to be specifically for older people. It should also ensure that suitable sites are allocated in Local Plans, informed by a national policy objective for 10% of new housing to be for older people in order to help meet the estimated annual demand for this form of housing of 30,000 dwellings a year.

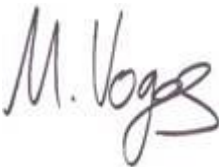
- 3. **Recognise the health and social care benefits of specialist housing for older people.** The social and economic gains that specialist housing for older people delivers to the NHS and social care system, and its significantly more challenging viability model, should be specifically addressed in the viability assessment of Local Plans and should be clearly addressed in S106 contributions and CIL charging rates.
- 4. **Recognise the geographic requirements of specialist housing for older people.** Whether or not the planning system remains based on the principles of “localism” or a zonal planning system is to be introduced, the requirement for this form of housing should be considered separately to general needs housing. Specialist housing for older people has specific geographic criteria and development control considerations – for example, its notional density, car parking, amenity space requirements and need for proximity to local services, are significantly different to the factors applicable to normal residential development.

These reforms would deliver more and better specialist housing for older people, improve lives, free up existing housing stock, and reduce pressure on NHS and social care services, while at the same time delivering significant savings to the public purse; the latter recognised in the Health and Housing Memorandum of Understanding which your department is a signatory to, along with the Department of Health and Care Services, NHS England and Public Health England.

We therefore commend our recommended reforms to you and request that they are included in the forthcoming planning policy paper.

We would be pleased to discuss these proposals with you in more detail.

Yours, the undersigned.




Michael Voges, Executive Director Associated Retirement Community Operators




Sam Gibson, Chair, Association of Retirement Housing Managers




Richard Morton, Chair, Retirement Housing Group UK

John Slaughter, Chair, Retirement Housebuilders Group within the HBF



Jeremy Porteous Director Housing LIN



Gavin Smart, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Housing



David Sinclair, Director, International Longevity Centre-UK



Lisa Ray, General Secretary, Civil Servants Pensioners' Alliance



Steve Edwards, Chief Executive, National Association of Retired Police Officers



Eamonn Donaghy, CEO, National Federation of Occupational Pensioners



