

Highbury Group on Housing Delivery

Key points on Housing and Planning in relation to Levelling Up

Planning and policy making

1. Delivery of Levelling Up objectives and reduction of inter-regional spatial inequities requires a **National Spatial Plan**, which relates to a national Land Use Strategy and the National Infrastructure Strategy. This would then set the framework for integrated regional and sub-regional strategic plans.

2. **Sub-regional strategic plans** need to balance sub-regional housing demand and sub-regional housing development capacity based on sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. Sub-regional housing market areas should cover all local authority areas of England with joint strategic planning being a mandatory requirement on all local planning authorities.

3. **Local plans** should be required to fully meet assessed housing requirements and identify sufficient capacity to deliver this objective, where appropriate in collaboration with other authorities within the housing market area. Local Plans should set new housing targets by tenure/affordability/dwelling type and size as well as in total unit numbers. All targets should be monitored. Planning applications should not be approved where priority housing requirements are not met, unless there are exceptional circumstances applying. Any modifications to the current system of neighbourhood planning or new procedures in relation to design codes should not obstruct the delivery of sound local plans approved by local authorities following Examinations in Public.

4. The Government should issue clear guidance on criteria for **identification of sites for development** of new housing which meet sustainability standards in environmental, economic and social terms. Criteria should include affordable public transport, access to employment opportunities and social facilities. Minimum internal and external space standards should be mandatory. There should be a specific requirement to allocate suitable sites in town centres and amenity hubs for development specifically for older persons housing. Such provision will release existing properties/chains and make better use of existing dwellings while achieving the various social and health benefits for the rapidly increasing elderly population

Housing Assessments and policy

5. DLUHC should undertake a comprehensive assessment of **housing requirements** at a national and regional level which identifies the need for additional supply in terms of building type and size, tenure and affordability, reflecting demographic changes. This should include an assessment of the impact of different economic, environmental and demographic scenarios. and different scenarios. The assessment would be subject to review by an appropriate independent body.

6. DLUHC should develop policies which will lead to the more **effective use of existing housing stock**, included policies which will minimise vacancy and reduce second home ownership.

7. **National minimum standards** for new homes should be mandatory and include space and accessible homes standards.

Local Authority Powers

8. Local authorities should have the **power to acquire** any site identified in local plans as suitable for housing at a cost which excludes hope value, on a compulsory basis if necessary. Compulsory purchase powers should be clarified and, if necessary, strengthened. Local Authorities should have the power to buy back ex-Right to Buy properties at current value less the discounted proportion.

Housing investment

9. **Housing investment grant** should be allocated by central government to local authorities, for either direct development or funding of other providers, on the basis of the relative assessed requirement for sub-market housing, with sufficient grant being allocated to support the provision of social rented homes as a priority. The government and local authorities should not provide direct or indirect subsidy to home ownership, including shared ownership, or to developers or owners of privately rented provision.

10. The Government should introduce a **system of equity-based loans**, with repayment on disposal, to bring privately owned housing including privately rented housing up to the required minimum standard, subject to a set of conditions being met.

The new Infrastructure Levy

11. The proposed **Infrastructure Levy** needs to be designed to support both the provision of affordable housing and the transport, utilities and social infrastructure required to support new residential development.

The Private Rented Sector

12. We welcome the proposals to increase renters' rights. The powers of local authorities to enforce **physical and management standards** needed to be strengthened, including the power to take over the management of properties which fail to meet the required standards. However local authorities need increased resources, including expert staff, to enforce renters' rights.

Regulation

13. We welcome the proposals in the Social Housing Bill. We agree that regulation of **standards in the social housing sector** need to be strengthened. However, social landlords need to be adequately resourced to meet the required standards.

Taxation

14. Council tax should be replaced by a **progressive value- based land and residential property tax**. Stamp duty should be replaced by a **capital gains tax** on residential property sales.