

evidence@cpa.org.uk

14 November 2014

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: The role of local authorities in preparing for the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society.

McCarthy & Stone welcomes the opportunity to give evidence to your call for evidence on the role for Local Government in respect of an ageing society.

50% of all household growth in the next 20 years will be by those aged 65 and over. **Therefore, meeting the housing needs of our ageing population must be a key part of local authorities preparing for the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society.**

The Department of Communities and Local Government's current planning guidance, recognises that *"The need to provide housing for older people is **critical** given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over"*.

Specialist accommodation for older people of the type that we and others provide can help those in later life to lead **happier, healthier and longer lives**. It can also reduce the dependency of older people on residential care and health services, **helping to reduce demand on public sector resources** through a private rather than public provision of care – **it entails no cost to the public purse**. Importantly, residents in specialist retirement accommodation manage better and **spend fewer nights in hospital** and 60% of residents in specialist retirement accommodation said they found it **easier to return home after a stay in hospital**.

Importantly, suitable retirement housing also provides a **positive way of releasing under-occupied family homes back onto local housing markets**, with vacated homes often refurbished and made more energy efficient by their new owners. It is estimated that by 2026, there will be 10 million empty bedrooms in the homes of the retired. Providing positive options for older people to downsize to, such as retirement housing, is one way to release much-needed large family homes and, we suggest, more effective than the bedroom tax.

Sadly, recent research by the Homes & Communities Agency, which is yet to be published, suggests that as few as 18% of local authorities have any specific planning policies to address the housing needs of older people.

As the UK's largest provider of retirement accommodation for homeowners, we are keen to see local authorities proactively plan to meet the housing needs of older people; to enable them to continue to lead active independent lives within their local communities.

I have enclosed a, more detailed, formal submission in response to your review questions, but if you feel that we could contribute more to your call for evidence, we would be very pleased to meet and discuss the housing needs of our ageing population, in person.

Yours sincerely,

Gary Day
Land and Planning Director

Response to the role of local authorities in preparing for the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society.

Key Points:

- 1. Housing is a key determinant of health in later life.** Specialist accommodation for older people can help those in later life to lead **happier, healthier and longer lives**. It can also reduce the dependency of older people on residential care and health services, **helping to reduce demand on public sector resources** through a private rather than public provision of care – **it entails no cost to the public purse**.
- 2. Most local authorities' Strategic Housing Needs Assessments do not specifically consider the needs of an ageing population** and as a result local development plans fail to plan for any specialist housing for older people, or even **penalise residential development in central locations** through, for example, policies that restrict the redevelopment of commercial sites for this kind of use.
- 3. There are significant opportunities for the re-use of public authority land to deliver specialist retirement housing across all tenures.** According to the 2008 Office of Fair Trading report on the housebuilding industry, **the public sector controls between a quarter and a third of potential housing land** – much of it Brownfield and in central locations, where our typical customer wishes to reside. Nearly all of our 1,000 schemes have been on previously-used sites.
- 4. Lack of capacity in local authorities is delaying delivery of much-needed homes for older people.** At our last review, we were experiencing **delays in starting work on ten consented schemes, totalling 450 homes because of delays by local authorities** related to discharging planning conditions following the resolution to grant consent. This is causing substantial hold-ups to employing construction teams and investing in new housing.

We make the following recommendations for consideration as part of the review:

- A. Ensure that local authorities adequately assess the housing needs of their ageing populations.**
- B. Increase the pace of release of public-authority land banks for housing, including allocating it for retirement housing.**
- C. Encourage local authorities to proactively plan for specialist retirement housing.**
- D. Recognise the social benefit of housing for older people and encourage local authorities to consider policies to increase delivery across all tenures.**
- E. Address capacity issues in local authorities that are delaying the delivery of much-needed schemes.**