

Scottish Government submission of 7 August 2023

PE1956/E: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

I refer to your correspondence of 4 July seeking the Scottish Government's view on the following areas:-

- whether the Scottish Government will review its wheelchair accessible housing target guidance
- whether it will also consider national planning obligations on house builders and private developers for a minimum proportion of wheelchair accessible homes, and
- whether it accepts the case for a national definition of wheelchair accessible home.

Reviewing the Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target Guidance

We are continuing to engage with local authorities through Scotland Housing Network's Local Housing Strategy Group on the implementation of wheelchair accessible housing targets. Good progress has been made by local authorities in not only setting wheelchair accessible housing targets but in delivering more wheelchair accessible homes. There are therefore no plans to review the guidance at this time. Information on the number of wheelchair accessible affordable homes delivered through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme is published in the Affordable Housing Supply Programme Out-turn report. The 2020-21 Out-turn report stated that 716 accessible homes were delivered for older people and disabled people, with 198 of these being wheelchair accessible homes. The 2021-22 Out-turn report demonstrates strong progress being made with 1,315 accessible homes being delivered for older people and disabled people, with 359 of these being wheelchair accessible homes.

National Planning Obligations

The fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) was adopted and published by Scottish Ministers in February 2023 following

comprehensive public engagement and Parliamentary scrutiny. For the first time, it is part of the 'development plan' alongside Local Development Plans (LDPs), so influences planning decisions across Scotland.

Policy 16, Quality Homes, supports proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice by being adaptable to changing and diverse needs, and which address identified gaps in provision. It identifies that this could include, accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes, and homes for older people, including supported accommodation, care homes and sheltered housing.

NPF4 outlines the importance of the close alignment of planning and housing delivery at the local level, through LDPs and Local Housing Strategies. This will support the development of homes that meet the needs of people living in Scotland, in particular older people and disabled people, and help to deliver the right type and mix of homes in the right locations.

Guidance on Ministers expectations for preparing new style LDPs was published in May 2023. It notes that it is a statutory requirement to have regard to an LHS when preparing an LDP and that LDPs should aim to diversify the range and type of homes that are built to meet people's needs and provide more choice for all. It refers that LDPs should address identified gaps in housing provision, informed by the Evidence Report and the LHS, and that this can be as part of wider proposals or through allocation of sites for specific housing types.

National Definition for Wheelchair Accessible Housing

The wheelchair accessible housing target guidance states that the provision of targets to support the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures means that homes should be suitable for wheelchair users to live in. The guidance also states that these homes should – as a minimum – comply with the design criteria indicated as a 'basic' requirement for wheelchair users, as outlined in the Housing for Varying Needs design guide. The design criteria indicated as 'desirable' are also strongly encouraged wherever possible. Where a local authority seeks to apply a higher standard than that specified within Housing for Varying Needs for wheelchair users, it would be expected to make clear its approach and to provide specific guidance on any additional aspects

required. Any approach would also be expected to demonstrate value for money and deliverability.

In June, the Scottish Government published a [consultation](#) on proposed changes to Part 1 of the [Housing for Varying Needs](#) design guide. The consultation also introduces the principles which we consider underpin the all-tenure Scottish Accessible Homes Standard – as well as setting out our proposals for updates to building standards and guidance which will apply to all new build homes and homes delivered through the conversion of non-residential buildings into housing.

While the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard will further improve the accessibility, adaptability and usability of new homes for a wide range of users, including wheelchair users, the consultation paper highlights that the update to Part 1 of the Housing for Varying Needs design guide will continue to provide design criteria for housing designed specifically for wheelchair users. Although these criteria will not be directly transposed into building standards, the Building Standards Technical Handbooks will signpost use of these design criteria where a home is being designed specifically for wheelchair users. Where such dwellings are to be included within a residential building, it will also be expected that all common areas are designed to meet the relevant ‘as standard’ requirements set out within the updated Housing for Varying Needs design guide.

The Scottish Government has provided additional information below in relation to the written submissions from both the Association for Local Authority Chief Housing Officers and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

It is the responsibility of local authorities through their Development Plans and Local Housing Strategy to determine the appropriate housing required in their area, based on the findings of their Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). The HNDA evidence base informs a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) that set out the local authority’s priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and housing related services. A local authority should consider the number, location, type, size and tenure of housing required to address the need in their communities. Where an LHS identifies a strategic requirement for a particular type of home, including wheelchair accessible housing, projects to support delivery of these homes are expected to be included in the local authority’s Strategic Housing Investment Plan for delivery through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

Scotland has led the UK in providing affordable housing, with recently published quarterly statistics showing that since April 2007, we have delivered 122,201 affordable homes, over 86,000 of which were for social rent, including 22,370 council homes.

We remain committed to delivering our target of 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% will be in our remote, rural and island communities. A total of 11,570 homes have now been delivered towards the 110,000 affordable homes target, of which 9,121 (79%) are homes for social rent and of these 3,595 (39%) are council rent. In 2022-23 we delivered the highest number of affordable homes since records began in 2000. And we are making £3.5 billion available in this Parliamentary term towards the delivery of more affordable and social homes.

We are aware of the global issues affecting construction which are impacting the pace of housing delivery and are working closely with the construction industry and housing partners to mitigate this where possible.

Through our Affordable Housing Supply Programme, we have flexible grant funding arrangements which ensure that specialist housing provision, which is identified by local authorities as a priority, can be supported. Therefore, when applying for grant assistance at tender stage to deliver affordable homes for wheelchair users, local authorities should be requesting the minimum level of grant required for a project to be financially viable for their organisation whilst ensuring rent affordability.

We are taking forward a review of the current housing adaptations system and will make recommendations on how best to improve and streamline the system. The Scottish Government also published updated practical guidance on the delivery of adaptations and equipment services in January of this year. This guidance will contribute to the housing adaptations review. We anticipate that the review will be concluded later this year, with any changes that Ministers agree being implemented thereafter.

With respect to the Dying in the Margins project policy briefing, Scottish Government officials have discussed with Marie Curie and we will

consider the housing related recommendations contained within the policy briefing.