
Corporate Partnership and Policy Team

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Paul Watling
Scrutiny Manager
Housing Committee
London Assembly

Via email: paul.watling@london.gov.uk

Dear Paul Watling

Homes for older Londoners: Building healthy homes for a comfortable and independent retirement – Officer Response from London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Thank you for the opportunity for Richmond upon Thames to respond to the Housing Committee Report '**Homes for Older Londoners, Building healthy homes for a comfortable and independent retirement**'. This is an officer level response.

Richmond upon Thames Council welcomes and is supportive of much of the report including many of the proposed recommendations. We recognized the importance of Extra Care housing provision in our Older Peoples Supported Accommodation Review (2008) and our more recent Housing Strategy (2014) included a chapter on the connectivity of housing to health and wellbeing. It is good to see these themes also reflected in the London Assembly report.

With regard to the report generally we would like to highlight;

More provision of extra care housing is welcomed so that older people have more housing choices open to them. The Council does not agree however that there is a need locally for additional sheltered housing schemes as suggested London wide at 2.10

Whilst the report is focused on specialist provision it should perhaps better recognize (beyond information provided at 2.8) that many older people wish to maintain independence in their long term family home with care and support being provided to them. The importance of remaining within their existing home near to family, neighbours and community networks and remaining in a home that has fond family memories built up over a life-time may be of equal importance to older people when making housing decisions. The important element to stress is that new specialist supply will allow older people an improved choice between staying where they are, specialist housing or residential care, this is to be welcomed.

With regard to specific comment on Recommendations 4, 5, and 6.

Recommendation 4. *Social housing providers must continue to give older people high priority on their registers to encourage downsizing, provide attractive incentives to move, ensure that better quality homes are available and regularly review effectiveness of the policy.*

The Council is supportive of measures that assist older people residing in housing association homes to downsize, on the strict understanding that this is only on the basis that they wish to do

so. Our [Sponsored Moves Scheme](#) already provides both a financial incentive and gives high priority on the Housing Register to those wishing to move.

Recommendation 5. *Boroughs must ensure that residents of specialist housing are fully involved in any reviews of provision, and that their rights and preferences are respected while ensuring that genuinely unsuitable accommodation is upgraded or redeveloped.*

The Council is supportive of measures that ensure existing residents are fully involved in any accommodation reviews whilst also recognising the need for genuinely unsuitable accommodation to be re-developed by the Landlord.

Recommendation 6. *The Mayor should start work now on identifying how new supply of both affordable and market homes for older people can be stimulated after his current Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund ends in 2017/18. The Mayor should ensure his Housing Covenant with older Londoners is reflected in the next version of the housing strategy and develop policies to ensure the supply of homes is adequate to meet projected demand.*

The Council welcomes any additional funding sources for extra care provision.

The Council would also like to comment with regard to;

Recommendation 8 - *The Mayor should lobby Government for changes to Planning Use Classes that will remove retirement housing from being treated in the same way as conventional housing in terms of liability for CIL and section 106. This might involve considering changes that would incentivise low- to mid-value market retirement homes – for example by exempting the communal floor area from a range of planning obligations.*

The Council is concerned, particularly with regard to Recommendation 8, that such priority to housing for older people should be sought through changes to the planning system. The Council's view is that any blanket exemption from CIL and section 106 is unnecessary. The Council's local research and evidence suggests that retirement housing can support such charges and remains viable in competition against other land uses, some of which may be a higher priority to address local needs. It is important that local viability and priorities can be taken into account. This would be vital in mitigating the impact that CIL and section 106 is designed to address, particularly in securing affordable housing and contributions such as for health infrastructure.

Should you have any further questions about any of the issues raised here, please contact either: Dan Butler, Housing Policy & Research Manager on 020 8831 6017 or dan.butler@richmond.gov.uk, or Nicky Simpson, Planning and Policy Manager (Housing and Well Being) on 020 8831 6221 or n.simpson@richmond.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

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