

Housing White Paper – *Fixing our broken housing market*

Can we fix it? Yes we can! But only if you let us build more council housing....

Chloe Fletcher – NFA Policy Director



Despite the waiting and the media build-up in the days before it was published I was disappointed with the lack of detail in the Government's Housing White Paper. Whilst I very much welcome the sentiment behind the document and the aims of this administration to tackle the housing crisis and "fix our broken housing market" it does not do much from an ALMO perspective to move the actual policies on from where we were at the end of 2016. Issues like the social rent policy were mentioned but not resolved and significant issues like the HRA debt cap, recent welfare cuts and the roll out of Universal Credit which impact on social landlords' ability to build new homes were not even touched upon.

What is reassuring, however, is that the Government has acknowledged local authorities' role in delivering homes themselves and they have said that "**DCLG will work with local authorities to understand all the options for increasing the supply of affordable housing**". We know that the last time this country was building homes at the level needed to meet demand councils were building significant numbers of new homes and neither the market nor the Housing Association sector has ever managed to fill that gap at any time over the past 30 years.

Analysis by Capital Economics last year for the NFA, ARCH and SHOUT showed that investing in genuinely affordable new homes for rent would reduce the massive bill the taxpayer picks up paying the rents of low-income people in the private sector and that the cost of allowing councils to borrow to invest in new council housing would not fall to the taxpayer but would be paid back through tenant's rents. With the current crisis in the affordability of housing for both aspiring home owners and private renters we believe the government must act now to enable more councils to build the affordable homes to meet that need.

It has been noted that with the new administration following BREXIT there has been a distinct shift in the Government's housing policy and this White Paper underscores that with statements supporting a mixed tenure approach rather than a sole focus on homeownership, an acknowledgement of broader issues such as housing for an older generation and supportive statements about some of the innovative ways in which councils and ALMOs have been building new homes over the past few years. But much more needs to be done to actually get those homes built. In light of this the NFA will continue to engage with Government to explore "**the scope for bespoke housing deals with authorities in high demand areas, which have a genuine ambition to build**" and hope to find a way for ALMOs and councils to build many more of the homes that the country so desperately needs.

The Housing White Paper can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590043/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_housing_white_paper.pdf