

## **General Comments – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

The evidence that more social housing is required is overwhelming, and the solution is simple. Whatever imaginative schemes and plans are devised it comes down to this, we need to build more houses, and the land on which to build them, must be made available. An aerial view of the country clearly shows that there is room for more housing and we need to adapt to meet the current and future needs of the population.

What we must not fail to remember, are the lessons to be learned from the past. Our needs are not just dwellings, but dwellings for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, built to a size and shape for the furniture, equipment and technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the past sub standard dwellings have been considered acceptable for the work force, high rise flats meant more dwellings per acre could be achieved. We failed to remember that it's not only houses that are required but we are building communities, it is about quality of life, and all that we value as a civilised society. If it is cost that is the issue don't let's leave out the full cost of not only building, but also the social welfare cost of maintaining and providing communities fit for purpose and pleasant places to live.

In para 6.1 of Annex 6 the question is 'Why does affordable housing need to be built to a higher standard than open market housing?' The answer is because we want to build for the benefit of residents not developers. We need to return to the modern equivalent of the Parker Morris space standards of the 1960s. In June 2008 Boris Johnson, in a speech at the London Festival of Architecture, said it was shameful that the new buildings in London now have among the smallest rooms in Europe.

We do need to be creative in our thinking, and every scheme that produces homes to meet modern living and standards, are to be welcomed. But let's not fiddle while Rome burns, we need a massive housing programme equal in proportion to the challenge that faced this country following the second World War, which was incidentally achieved when our finances were in a similar state to those we find ourselves in now. It is not the finance that's the problem, it's the will to address the situation head on.

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