

Churchill

Retirement Living

7th March 2014

Churchill Retirement Living's response to the final version of the NPPG

Retirement property developer, Churchill Retirement Living, has responded to the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) published this week, welcoming the changes to how the housing needs of older people will be addressed in the future. However, it warns the report does not go far enough to alleviate the wider housing issues affecting our ageing population.

Andrew Burgess, Planning Director at Churchill Retirement Living, comments:

The publication of the Government's final National Planning Practice Guidance is an important milestone in beginning to tackle the growing issue of housing supply for our ageing population.

It recognises that the projected increase in the number of households aged 65+ will account for over half of new households in the future, and requires local authorities to evaluate the needs of older people when planning housing supply, giving due consideration to the size, location and quality of new developments.

While these are welcome changes, we believe the Government must go further to fully address the wider issues.

There is already a significant shortage of specialist retirement housing. The 2013 paper, *Top of the Ladder*, by think tank Demos, highlighted the chronic under supply of suitable accommodation for older people. It identified that up to 3.5 million older people, with more than £400 billion of housing wealth, are interested in buying or renting a retirement property but that there are only 100,000 such properties currently available in the UK.

While changes in the NPPG will assist future development in this area, in an age demographic where affordability is often an issue, the market will need to be stimulated to help get people moving, in much the same way as at the bottom of the ladder.

Along with other specialist retirement developers, we are calling for the 'Help to Buy' scheme to be revised to make it inclusive for older people, and we are lobbying for stamp duty to be abolished for older people who are downsizing to a smaller property. When you consider that

each year a resident postpones moving into care, the states saves on average £28,080 (*Demos, Top of the Ladder, 2013*) it makes good economic sense, if nothing else. And, by having more proactive policies in this area to assist older homebuyers, it could in turn free up to 3.29 million family homes.

Despite the obvious shortfalls, it is encouraging to see the issue of older people's housing beginning to gain momentum in the political arena.

This month, as part of the Campaign for Housing in Later Life, Churchill Retirement Living attended a cross-party parliamentary roundtable discussion held in Westminster. The discussion was chaired by Sarah Newton MP, and attended by members of both Houses.

What was clear was that cross-party support is growing ahead of the next general election. The changes detailed in the NPPG also reflect a step-change. In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government is commissioning research into this area, which can only help further inform the Government's understanding of the issues faced.

As the debate heats up, we will continue to work in partnership with Local Planning Authorities to ensure an appropriate range of housing is offered to older people in a way that satisfies local planning policy as well as the Government's wider planning and housing objectives. Furthermore, we will use the Campaign for Housing in Later Life as a platform to continue to raise the profile of later life housing and encourage national and local government to do more in this sector.

For more information on Churchill Retirement Living, please call 0800 458 1856 or visit www.churchillretirement.co.uk

For more information on the Campaign for Housing in Later Life, www.housinginlaterlife.org.uk

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