



Liverpool City Region All Party Parliamentary Group

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Rt Hon Chris Pincher MP
Minister for Housing
Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1

30th October 2020

Dear Chris

As you will be aware the Liverpool City Region APPG met last week to discuss the challenges facing its housing sector. We were disappointed that you were unable to join us on this occasion, but I understand from James Aitken, in your private office, that you would be happy to do so for half an hour before the Christmas recess.

In advance of that I thought it would be helpful if you were aware of the following key issues raised in our discussions:

- There was universal support for a National Housing Conversion Fund as proposed by the Affordable Housing Commission. As you will be aware, a modest fund of £1.3 billion could help deliver more affordable housing, and much needed retrofitting, by converting private rented sector properties to ones at social rent. It was pointed out that similar initiatives had been adopted by previous Governments at times of recession, including the Conservatives in 1988. It was also pointed out that the current bounce in the housing market may lead to a dip next year when such a fund would be of great use for purchasing stalled development sites and from private landlords wishing to exit the PRS.
- Housing associations have worked tirelessly and well during the pandemic, providing practical support and advice to thousands of tenants. They house 300,000 people across the City Region. Not only are they major employers but they also have key roles in the regeneration, training, decarbonisation and supported accommodation agendas. There has also been significant success in helping homeless find secure accommodation. However, the APPG heard concerns that rough sleeping is increasing again and calls on the Government to maintain its commitment to ending homelessness and rough sleeping. The APPG urges in particular the reinstatement of the moratorium on private rented sector evictions.

- There was a very clear request for greater recognition from the Government for the catalytic role decisive action on housing can play in delivering economic growth, a net zero carbon future and social cohesion. It genuinely does represent a win-win-win. If the goal of Building Back Better is to prioritise and secure a green recovery then the housing market – where in the Liverpool City Region too many homes are substandard and in urgent need of retrofitting – should be seen as a major focus for Government intervention and funding.
- There was also support for the Government’s ambition to drive higher design and production quality for housing, coupled with lower carbon and energy use. The APPG heard how the Construction Innovation Hub is helping to transform the sector nationally by accelerating uptake of digital and manufacturing-led construction, with a key focus on government departments and social infrastructure. The Manufacturing Technology Centre, the lead partner in the Hub, in partnership with and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has begun a programme focused on transformation of the construction sector, reducing costs, improving quality and the speed of delivery. This will help deliver Modern Methods of Construction into the housing sector increasing both productivity and capacity at scale, delivering real and sustainable benefit to the region – driving growth, jobs and the provision of high quality housing. Already working successfully with six RSLs, the APPG heard a compelling case for Government support for this project.
- Finally, the APPG heard that currently there is unmet housing need across the Liverpool City Region for genuinely affordable one bedroom properties and, in some areas, for affordable three and four bedroom homes. There were calls for a more devolved approach to housing with statements to the effect that the Local Authorities and the Combined Authority should be empowered and funded to deliver affordable and better quality housing. It was pointed out that the vision and capacity is available and that MHCLG should embrace greater devolution of its affordable housing programme, as it does for London, as this would mean more affordable homes built sooner.

I would be delighted if you were able to give your views on these issues through an address at the APPG meeting in November or December. It would also be appreciated if you would be willing to take questions from the MPs, Peers and stakeholders present for a short while afterwards – half an hour in total.

Please do ask James to contact Steve to discuss any practicalities regarding this meeting including dates that are convenient for yourself.

Best wishes

Ian Byrne MP

MP for Liverpool West Derby and Vice Chair of the APPG for Liverpool City Region

The Liverpool City Region APPG is kindly supported by Liverpool Housing Providers and:

