

Thank you for contacting us regarding the Consultation process on the Wales Housing Bill.

The Commission responded to the Homes for Wales White Paper on 17 August 2012.

The draft Bill includes provision for quality requirements and we refer the committee to our earlier comments and the need for good urban design for neighbourhoods and for individual dwellings in order to deliver good quality for homes in Wales. In defining quality requirements, the Welsh Government to work closely with the Design Commission for Wales and to draw on our expertise. We refer the Committee to an extract from our earlier White Paper submission which is included below and ask it to be noted that we have made submissions of greater detail to the consultation and evidence gathering exercises preceding the preparation of the Draft Wales Planning Bill. We will be comment further through that route and during the consultation period for that Draft Bill.

EXTRACT: Email submission of 17 August 2012

Additional comments

Particularly in relation to para 4.101 – 4.104:

It is important that in the effort to boost the quantity of housing available, we do not overlook the design quality of the buildings and places we are creating for the future. Design is a problem solving process leading to innovation – it is not a subjective or indeterminate consideration. Residential layout, access and dwelling treatments, if of poor quality, as we have inherited, lead to poor quality of life, inadequate amenity and lost value. Wales has in recent times experienced less innovation in housing design and quality than any other UK country and DCFW continues to work to address this in all its programmes, identifying and addressing barriers where possible and aiming to develop capacity and confidence in local decision making, so that Wales can achieve both numbers and high quality provision. We would welcome further engagement on these areas, with Welsh Government.

While the Welsh Housing Quality Standard provides a useful framework for social housing, we think there should be an assessment of all significant private residential scheme applications coming forward, in terms of a good contextual response, layout and high quality public realm and amenity, as advocated in TAN 12:Design. In cases where the local authority does not have sufficient in-house experience of architectural or urban design, they should be encouraged to consult DCFW as part of pre-application discussions. DCFW is referred to in the Welsh Government Pre-Application Guidance, in Planning Policy Wales and its Technical Advice Note 12: Design (and others) and in other national and local guidance. The comments of the Commission are Material Considerations in the Planning process and recognised as authoritative by the Planning Inspectorate. The Commission's input is best drawn upon at the earliest stages when our expertise, client support and review processes can add most value in raising standards in new homes.

Best wishes

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