

## **PE1554/AA**

East Dunbartonshire Council Email of 1 June 2015

Dear Sigrid,

Consideration of petition PE 1554

I refer to your letter dated 1 April 2015 regarding the above and I apologise for the late response. I hope you are able to consider East Dunbartonshire Council's late response which is as follows:

- What are your local authority's views on the petition seeks?

East Dunbartonshire Council has a growing older population that will necessitate an on going requirement to identify housing and support options to enable and maintain independence. The demographic trends strongly supports the Council's enhanced investment in housing aids and adaption and assistive technology over the years including making grants available to owners needing disabled adaptations. Demand for adaptations to our existing stock is increasing year on year. The cost to adapt both a relatively new build and/or existing stock is expensive and building a full wheelchair accessible homes is significantly greater than mainstream. It also takes up a larger footprint which can reduce the overall number of units on site and this can impact on viability. The level of grant funding available to RSLs and Council's for new build, although it has increased, is unlikely to be sufficient to support enhanced standards for future adaptations or to enable them to be built to wheelchair housing standards from the outset; thereby additional grant from the Scottish Government should be provided to support the development of wheelchair accessible housing.

One of the key outcomes of the Council's Local Housing Strategy include "more people with particular needs access suitable housing options which promote independent living". Having good housing information that provides the evidence base for strategic planning is crucial if investment is to be targeted to those in greatest need. This requires Housing and Social Work to work better to record and share information to support a range of housing options and tenures for those with disabilities, to then be more able to plan effectively and efficiently for future housing needs here. In addition, the private sector has a role to play in building properties that are accessible. Although the new building regulations goes some way to address accessibility issues, developers in East Dunbartonshire tend to build larger 4 and 5 bedroom detached housing rather than smaller bungalow or lower ground properties that could suit people with mobility issues. The house prices in East Dunbartonshire are high which can price those in lower incomes or on benefits out of the market, forcing people to move outwith the area and away from friends and

family. More needs to be done to encourage private house builders to build homes that meet a range of housing needs.

- What percentage of new build homes within your local authority area are adapted to full wheelchair accessibility standards?

The development of any new rented homes in East Dunbartonshire is built to comply with the applicable Building Regulations and will include all the 'Housing for Varying Needs Standards' (HfVN) essential features as set out by the Scottish Government's guidance. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) sets a 10% quota for all new build to be built to suit the housing needs of those with particular needs. As a minimum, the amenity standard of the HfVN is applied to those properties which can be accessible to many wheelchair users and easily adapted should their condition deteriorate. The Council will build a bespoke full wheelchair accessible house, if demand is evident at that time and adaptation is not possible in their current accommodation or within any existing properties the Council owns.

- How many people within your local authority area are: (i) on a waiting list for disabled friendly housing; and (ii) accommodated with disabled friendly housing?

There are 93 applicants on the Council list that require accommodation that is accessible for those with mobility issues including wheelchair. Unfortunately, the Council's is unable to provide figures of those accommodated in disabled friendly housing as we currently do not record this for both Council housing and the private sector. However, there were 2 properties specially adapted for wheelchair users recently and a number of wet floor showers have been installed for people with mobility issues although this does not necessarily make the property disabled friendly depending on the location and accessibility of the property.

Karen Shaw  
Development Adviser  
East Dunbartonshire Council