

Sefton Council – Note on Ageing Population and Need to Require Optional Technical Standards

Planning Practice Guidance states that:

‘Local planning authorities have the option to set additional technical requirements exceeding the minimum standards required by Building Regulations in respect of access and water, and an optional nationally described space standard. Local planning authorities will need to gather evidence to determine whether there is a need for additional standards in their area, and justify setting appropriate policies in their Local Plans.’

It also states that:

‘Local planning authorities should consider the impact of using these standards as part of their Local Plan viability assessment.’

Within policy HC2 of the Local Plan, the Council proposes:

‘In developments of 50 or more dwellings, at least 20% of new market properties must be designed to meet Building Regulation Requirement M4(2) ‘accessible and adaptable dwellings’.’

This Optional Standard replaces a requirement for developments to meet the now defunct Lifetime Homes Standard. As per PPG, Keppie Massie studied the impact of introducing the Lifetime Homes Standard within their 2014 Viability Assessment (MI.2). Further work has since been undertaken to consider the impact of the superseding requirement M4 (2) (MI.2a). The assessment concludes:

‘Since our original construction cost assessments were prepared, the mandatory changes to Building Regulations would add approximately £1.10 per sq.m to the original construction cost assessments. In relation to the Optional Building Regulation M4(2) the costs of achieving compliance are similar to those for Lifetime Homes and would not materially alter our base construction cost assessments.’

In regards to PPG, the Council deems there is sufficient evidence to require that a percentage of developments should meet Optional Building Regulation M4(2) and that these houses are accessible and adaptable to the Borough’s significant elderly population.

In 2012 an estimated 21.6% of the population of Sefton’s population was age 65 and over. This is the fifth highest percentage in North West England, behind Wyre, South Lakeland, Eden and Fylde as well as the highest percentage of any metropolitan borough in England. 2012-based ONS projections put the figure of people aged 65 and over in 2030 in Sefton at over 28.8%. This steep and steady increase ascertains the need to provide housing that can be adapted to suit the requirements of a significant elderly population.

Paragraphs 9.6 to 9.20 of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment [HO.5] sets out the ageing population in Sefton and the implications this will have for housing for older people. The Older Person’s Housing Strategy [HO.19] complements this work and sets out a series of recommendations that Sefton should consider in meeting the housing needs for older people, including design standards that allow for future adaptability.