



Brandon Lewis MP
Minister of State for Communities
& Local Government
2, Marsham Street,
LONDON SW1P 4DF

29th August 2014

Dear Minister,

PROPOSAL TO REMOVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING FROM SITES OF LESS THAN 10 UNITS

I am writing on behalf of the Members of the Rural Services Network (and in particular its Local Authority, Community and Housing Provider Members) to make the strongest possible objections in respect of the proposal to remove affordable housing from sites of less than 10 units.

We have seen the briefing note sent to you by the Rural Housing Review Group and fully support everything which is set out therein.

The 10 home threshold would be nothing short of ruinous for the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. Currently, 66% of affordable homes in rural areas comes through S.106 Agreements. Most developments are small - the vast majority below the ten units threshold (not least because the smaller the scheme, the less the local opposition). Without an obligation to provide any affordable homes this supply will virtually dry up.

33% of new rural affordable homes are being achieved through the Rural Exception Site route. If the ten unit threshold is imposed the "hope value" would increase significantly if all new homes could be sold at full market value. This would make it extremely difficult to persuade owners to part with land on the special terms usually applying to Rural Exception Site.

In the rural context a policy which required Local Planning Authorities not to require an affordable housing contribution from sites of less than 10 units has no rational or purpose – its consequences would be no less than catastrophic. It also would fly in the face of Localism and would seriously undermine the National Planning Policy framework. Such a proposal has clearly not being rurally proofed.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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To meet these very serious concerns we call on you to exempt, at the very least,– all sites in villages of less than 3,000 population - there is clear precedent for such an exemption limit -(and preferably towns and villages of less than 10,000 population) from the removal of an affordable housing requirement.

Yours sincerely

Graham Biggs, MBE, FCIS

Chief Executive

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