National Planning Policy Framework Update Consultation – Older People's Housing

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Councils will have to redouble their focus on delivering care home, retirement and assisted living development in their areas says a new Government consultation to update national planning policy in England.

The continued substantial emphasis on boosting the supply of specialist elderly accommodation is underscored in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' consultation entitled *Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy*. The detail of the proposals for the sector is set out in paragraphs 5 to 9 of Chapter 5 of the consultation, which can be accessed at this link here.

The key changes proposed for older people's housing in the consultation are:

Changes to the NPPF

The consultation includes draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) by adding an additional specific expectation that local planning authority development plans ensure that the needs of older people are met, and particular regard is given to retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes that can help support England's ageing population. The detailed changes can be seen by clicking this link.

Launching a Sector Taskforce

The Government's aim is to improve the choice of and access to housing options for older people. The task force will how we can improve the choice of and access to housing options for older people, building on Professor Mayhew's 2022 report Future-proofing Retirement Living. You can read a recent article from our Real Estate team on this report here: The Mayhew Review – a Forward Step for Retirement Living Developments

The changes, if confirmed in Spring 2023 follow on from the support for the sector given in 2019's "Housing for older and disabled people" planning guidance. The Government consultation cited a report by the International Longevity Centre indicating that there will be a shortfall of 37% in specialist retirement housing by 2040.

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Changing the Framework

The proposed amendment to Chapter 5 of the NPPF, entitled "Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes", suggests a change to paragraph 63 of the Framework. The italicised text below sets out the additional wording to underscore the requirement for planners to ensure local plans meet the need for development in the sector:

Within this context of *establishing need*, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to: those who require affordable housing; families with children; *older people including for retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes*; students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes).

There is no proposal to change the definition of older people:

"Older people: People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs."

The change is but one aspect of a wide-ranging consultation that sets out a host of forthcoming planning policy changes. Read more in our article New Consultation on Levelling Up Bill and National Planning Policy Framework. It is significant for the sector because it is a further signal of Government support for further innovative development in the retirement housing, housing-with-care and care home sector and which Council planners will continue to encourage.

Deadline for response

Consultation responses may be made until 11.45 pm on Thursday 2 March by responding on the Citizen Space portal or emailing PlanningPolicyConsultation@levellingup.gov.uk.

Need advice?

Lester Aldridge has a strong record acting for clients nationwide in the care home and retirement / assisted living sector. Our Real Estate team contains specialists who truly understand both the sector and the issues and market pressures surrounding property transactions for our clients. Contact the team at online.enquires@LA-law.com.

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