

FINANCE COMMITTEE

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND AGEING POPULATION INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM HOMES FOR SCOTLAND

1. Homes for Scotland is the representative body of the Scottish home building industry, with over 200 full and associate members. Our member companies construct around 95% of all new homes built for sale each year, as well as a significant proportion of Scotland's affordable housing output. Homes for Scotland makes submissions to central and local government on planning and sustainable development related policy issues affecting the industry, and its views are endorsed by our relevant Board Sub-committees and local committees set up to represent the territorial interests of our member companies.

2. I have considered the questions set by the Committee and would wish to make some observations around the matter of the main pressures on new build private housing stock arising from demographic change, particularly with regard to an ageing population.

3. The Scottish Home Building Industry is required to design self-contained houses and flats to comply with the 2010 Scottish Building Standards.

4. These Standards recognise that all occupiers of houses have different needs and abilities and require housing to be designed to ensure they are barrier free for every occupier including people with temporary or permanent impaired mobility, whatever the cause of that impairment; people who require the use of mobility aids such as wheelchairs; people who have difficulty negotiating steps, bending or reaching; people with limited dexterity and people with impaired sight or hearing.

5. Building standards require houses to incorporate features which ensure that people with impaired mobility, limited dexterity or restricted sight can reach the entrance to the home from a road or parking area, move around the home between rooms and access rooms, including bathrooms and kitchens without the assistance of a third party.

6. In essence all new homes must be designed and constructed to suit all ages without the need for adaptation. In practise this means they are fitted with ramps at entrances, bathroom accommodation is designed to accommodate wheel chairs and is provided on both floors in 2 storey properties, circulation space within the property and doorways are designed to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility aids. In addition fittings and equipment is located and designed to be used by people with restricted dexterity.

7. Homes for Scotland works closely with Scottish Government officials responsible for Building Standards and housing policy as these policy areas are continually evolving and we will be vigilant around the need to ensure that all homes built in Scotland by the private sector remain barrier free and are capable of supporting the life style of an ageing population.

8. In that regard the Industry pays particular attention to issues of customer care and consumer preferences and feedback from end users and policy makers is constantly assessed by the industry to allow product development to match customer expectation.

9. Homes for Scotland is aware that an ageing population will be assisted by the initiatives being undertaken by the industry to reduce the carbon footprint of new homes and, in the process, reduce the energy consumption requirements of occupiers of those homes.

10. I welcome the opportunity to submit these comments and Homes for Scotland is willing to engage further with this Inquiry should the Finance Committee consider that its task would be assisted by additional comment or advice.