Dear Mr Doris,

Consideration of Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs)

I refer to your letter dated 31 May regarding the above and am pleased to provide further information on the two points detailed in your letter, namely how the Council decides on the number of specific house types, sizes and tenures that will be delivered in the local area and how the Council monitors and evaluates whether the SHIP, and the projects finally delivered, meets the requirements and needs of the local area and also contributes to the Scottish Government’s target of 50,000 affordable homes by 2021.

Decisions on the number of specific house types, sizes and tenures that will be delivered in the local area are informed by a comprehensive assessment of housing need and demand. This process involves profiling the local housing stock by type, size, tenure, condition, occupancy, turnover and location to identify any under-supply or surplus of certain types of housing. It also identifies any gaps in specialist provision and considers what kinds of new social housing stock (type, size and location) could be provided to reduce pressure and meet housing need.

Stirling’s Housing Need and Demand Assessment was submitted to the Scottish Government’s Centre for Housing Market Analysis and approved as ‘robust and credible’ in July 2011. Work is underway on a new Housing Need and Demand Assessment and this will be finalised following the adoption of the Proposed Local Development Plan which has been submitted to the Scottish Government’s Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals for the purposes of an Examination.

For each locality in which a project is subsequently proposed, an in depth analysis of the Council’s waiting list is undertaken prior to developing detailed designs in order to determine the proportion of applicants requiring a particular house size/type. This analysis also takes account of applicants with a particular housing need and the type of specialist provision that they require. On occasion, this information is supplemented by a local housing needs survey, particularly in some rural areas where the lack of social rented housing and low turnover rates mean many people do not consider it worthwhile registering themselves on the Council’s waiting list.

This detailed analysis is then fed into the design process which is required to take account of a range of other site-specific factors such as the site capacity, topography and proximity to local services. As part of the process of developing detailed designs for a project, local community groups and tenant representatives are also given an opportunity to comment on the proposals prior to the submission of a planning application.
The evaluation of individual projects takes the form of a post-completion tenant satisfaction survey which covers various aspects of the build process including the design and layout of the property, the standard of finishes, the quality of external areas and the defects/repairs service. This helps the Council to identify any issues with the design of the properties and take any necessary steps to resolve these. In 2014/2015, the Stirling Tenants Project carried out a tenant-led review of the Council’s New Build Policy and Procedures. Inspectors noted a high level of satisfaction with the new homes provided by the Council and made a number of recommendations which have now been taken on board.

The progress of all of the projects identified in the SHIP is monitored quarterly by the Council’s SHIP Review Group. The Group is chaired by the Council’s Housing Portfolio Holder and is attended by Senior Council Officers, the Directors of local Registered Social Landlords and representatives of Raploch URC and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority.

Stirling’s SHIP 2017/18 to 2021/22 was submitted to the Scottish Government’s More Home Division in November 2016 and was considered to be a robust and credible response to the challenge of producing more affordable homes in Stirling. The SHIP identifies a requirement for over £23.7million of Scottish Government grant funding to deliver 429 new affordable homes. Stirling Council is committed to delivering all of the projects identified in the SHIP to a design which reflects local circumstances and to a programme agreed with the Scottish Government’s More Homes Division in order to ensure that they meet the requirements and needs of the local area and also contribute to the Scottish Government’s target of 50,000 affordable homes by 2021.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should require any further information regarding the above.

Yours faithfully,

Stewart Carruth
Chief Executive