

Local Plan Review
The Planning Strategy Team
Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill
Stroud
GL5 4UB

Date: 17 January 2019
Our Ref: MR M15/0715-240

By email only:
local.plan@stroud.gov.uk

RE: STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – EMERGING STRATEGY PAPER

We represent **Rentplus UK Ltd**, an innovative company providing **affordable rent to buy housing** for hard-working people aspiring to home ownership with an accessible route to achieve their dream through the rent - save - own model. Since we last responded to the Council on the emerging Local Plan Review this model has been recognised in the revised NPPF as another affordable route to home ownership, making now an opportune time for the Council to review how it will respond to local needs.

Rentplus tenants rent through a partner Registered Provider at an affordable rent – the RP takes on a full repairing lease, managing and maintaining each property, giving tenants the assurance of renting through a responsible housing provider. Tenants have five-year renewable tenancy agreements at an affordable rent of up to 80% of market rent (or LHA, whichever is the lower, and including any service charge).

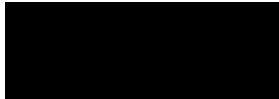
After a tenancy period of five, ten, 15 or 20 years the household is invited to purchase their property, with a gifted deposit of 10% of the market value. Each Rentplus development is sold on a phased basis to enable households to save over time and build credit-worthiness records to support mortgage applications. Those homes not sold after 20 years to the occupier are offered to the housing association which can retain the property as an affordable home, and sold on the open market if not. Rentplus aims to replace the affordable homes as they are sold to maintain the level of affordable homes available to rent in each local authority area and to further diversify local RP housing stock.

Shelter called for the delivery of 3.1 million more affordable homes in their report *Building for our Future: A Vision for Social Housing* (8 January 2019), reporting that a significant shortfall in the delivery of affordable housing, combined with seriously damaging affordability constraints has resulted in chronic need – too many families are unable to access housing that meets their needs. One of the families interviewed by the Commission commented:

“We’d love to save a deposit to buy, but every time we’ve started saving something has happened – my husband’s been made redundant, or we’ve had to move because of a rent increase.

We feel lucky that our children haven’t had to move schools, but they do get anxious about when we will have to move again. Her younger brother is on the autism spectrum and he’s very particular about his belongings so moving is very hard for him too.

I just feel so let down. Sometimes I think ‘what’s the point of life?’ **We’re not getting anywhere. Shared ownership is a lot of money and Help to Buy isn’t targeted at us either. We could save a bit, but it would probably take us 30 years to save the deposit we’d need.** We’re both heading into our late 30s, so that’s going to affect the mortgage we can get soon, too. The whole system is so wrong. Unless you’ve got parents who can lend you the deposit to get on the housing ladder, or are young enough to live at home rent free, what hope have you got? **We need a rent to buy scheme suitable for families.** But until then I will just keep working hard and hope that once I qualify as a teacher next summer, that will help.” (Page 60, emphasis added)



Rentplus developments delivered in partnership across England with housing associations have already delivered significant benefits to those people who could not previously access housing that was affordable to them. Case studies are set out on the Rentplus website (accessible via <http://www.rentplus-uk.com/about/case-studies>), highlighting the difference that a genuine mix of affordable housing tenures can make to communities – and that the delivery of affordable rent to buy can make to people who could not access social or affordable rent, or shared ownership, or were able to free up those homes for others in greater need.

This model enables more people to build community ties and reduce churn by removing the need to move home. At a time when the NPPF has been revised to include rent to buy, and when affordable housing delivery is seriously constrained, it is important to consider additional ways to innovate the supply chain.

In response to **Question 1.0a** the top five issues are well identified. As housing associations are such key parties in the delivery of affordable housing and Rentplus homes are delivered in partnership with housing associations to answer **Question 1.0b** it would be appropriate in the emerging plan to also refer to working with providers of affordable housing to emphasise the Council's proactive approach to maximising the supply of affordable housing in Stroud. The ways in which the Council intends to respond to the significant need for affordable housing are appropriate, but should ensure that the full range of affordable housing tenures (as recognised in Annex 2 of the revised NPPF) are sought where these will meet local housing needs.

With regards to the Local Housing Needs Assessment currently being undertaken, it would be useful for the Council and its consultants to meet with Rentplus to discuss the practical affordability issues of providing affordable rent to buy in Stroud and how this tenure meets local housing needs. In response to **Question 2.3b** the Council should seek to incorporate affordable rent to buy in its new affordable housing and housing mix policies to ensure that those households who aspire to ownership but cannot afford to save for a mortgage deposit in private rented or other affordable tenures can access housing that meets their needs. This is an opportune time to consider optimising delivery and the creation of mixed and balanced communities.

We would like to be notified of further consultations on the **Local Plan Review**. Please notify **Tetlow King Planning** as agents of **Rentplus** by email only to consultation@tetlow-king.co.uk.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name] BSc (Hons.) MSc MRTPI
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
For and On Behalf Of
TETLOW KING PLANNING

consultation@tetlow-king.co.uk