



TRANSPORT FOR NEW HOMES

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

6 May 2021

Dear Mr Jenrick

We are writing on behalf of a range of different organisations to ask for a new focus in your forthcoming planning reforms on transport and accessibility. We are concerned that without this, the new housing that you and we all want to see will result in significant increases in road congestion, and wider impacts including increased social exclusion and environmental damage.

Our concern is that at present the provision of transport for and access to new housing developments is considered far too late in the development process, or sometimes hardly at all, and your proposed reforms do not appear to address this. As a result, new housing is being sited in places that are not and, worse, cannot be served well by public transport, are inaccessible on foot or cycle and often have few or no local facilities and amenities. In addition, the design and layout of the developments themselves inhibit walking and cycling and bus service provision; some developments even have no pavements.

This means that (despite visionary statements in masterplans) in practice these developments are car dependent – people have to drive to get to any services, shops or employment because they have no other choice. Those without access to cars find they are excluded from access to opportunities in employment and education and hence fall behind their peers in other areas.

The wider result is of increasing traffic and resulting congestion on surrounding roads, which has negative impacts on local economies. New roads to and around these developments do not solve this, and in some cases can make the problem worse by attracting yet further car-based development. This extra traffic also worsens air quality in some areas and generally adds to carbon emissions, making the Government's climate change goal of reducing emissions by 78% by 2035 harder to achieve.

We recognise that the Government is addressing some of these issues, for example through its proposed design code, but the key issues of the location of new development, the lack of linkage between planning and transport, and the way in which transport

assessments and Government funding tend to favour car-based development have not yet been addressed. Even the draft design code downgrades transport as an issue - movement and access strategies are required only “where appropriate”. The fact, in our view, is that they are always not only appropriate but, if we are to meet our climate change ambitions, indeed, our statutory obligations, they are essential.

This means that your planning reforms risk adding a tide of car traffic to already overcrowded roads and undermining the Government’s wider social, economic and environmental goals.

As a first step we think there is a need for further revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (beyond the changes you are currently consulting on) to give much more weight to developments around public transport and with good local services, and to discourage car-based developments.

More fundamentally, we urge you to follow through on revising the housing targets system so as to locate more development in existing urban areas and where there is already public transport or the realistic prospect of improved services.

Local plans should be integrated with transport strategies and be backed by delivery plans developed with transport authorities and operators. We also want to see Government funding, including through the Housing Infrastructure Fund, be linked to support for sustainable transport for housing, rather than big new roads and junctions.

In parallel, it is, of course, going to be crucial that any new residential development that accommodates car use provides for re-charging of electric vehicles through home-based or conveniently sited public charge points, recognises the potential for shared use through provision for car club cars, and avoids residents parking in ways that obstruct pedestrians, cyclists and bus routes.

Failure to tackle the transport issues from new housing developments will have many negative impacts, including undermining the levelling up agenda and increasing pressure on public sector services such as the NHS.

The good news is that there are examples of better developments, here and in other countries, and we’d urge the Government to show that it has learnt from these and promote new housing that meets the highest standards in zero-emission transport.

We think this is a great opportunity for you and for the Government to show its commitments in action as we head towards COP 26.

We would be happy to discuss these issues with you and your officials.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Raggett, project co-ordinator, Transport for New Homes
Paul Tuohy, chief executive, Campaign for Better Transport
Paul Miner, head of land use and planning, CPRE the countryside charity
Sarah Mitchell, chief executive, Cycling UK
Mary Creagh, chief executive, Living Streets
Leo Murray, director of innovation, Possible
Steve Gooding, director, RAC Foundation

Joanna Clayton, Sustrans legal team (planning)
Chris Todd, director, Transport Action Network
Mark Frost, chair, Transport Planning Society

cc. Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State, Department for Transport