

## News Release

### HOUSEBUILDERS QUESTION PLANS FOR AGE-PROOF HOMES

The House Builders Association – part of the National Federation of Builders – has questioned plans unveiled by Government today designed to ensure all new homes are ‘age-proof’.

Under the proposals – which form part of the Government’s ‘Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods’ strategy - every new home built in England will have to be designed to suit an ageing population, complying with a list of 16 features such as staircases that are wide enough for stairlifts and downstairs bathrooms.

The features could become law by 2013 if the industry fails to demonstrate its adoption of the standards.

Roger Humber, spokesperson for the House Builders Association – which represents around 800 small and medium sized firms – said: “There has been inadequate consultation with the industry on this latest policy initiative and we are asking Ministers for urgent discussions to try to understand how they think it will work, what the value will be for the majority of homebuyers and what they believe the benefits to be.

“Most new and second hand houses are bought by people between 25-50 and, depending on their lifestyle, their principal concerns will be location, price and the availability of education, transport and jobs. They will not be thinking about their housing needs when they are 70.”

He added: “The much smaller number of elderly people who do move may not find Life Time Homes appropriate to their needs either. For them, there is an urgent need to provide more choice rather than a one-size-fits-all solution. This includes more sheltered housing, which comes with a package of care rather than being simply a bricks-and-mortar solution. The universal provision of Life Time Homes may lead local authorities to conclude that there is no need to provide specialist housing solutions, such as sheltered housing, which is an essential part of the range of options for elderly people.”

“Until and unless Government clarifies fully what it has in mind, we are concerned that this is yet another potentially costly policy initiative, in addition to the Code for Sustainable Homes,

renewable energy requirements, higher densities and more social housing, which could make it impossible to deliver the thousands of additional houses that Gordon Brown says he wants in order to improve housing affordability.”

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