

Built Environment Committee
House of Lords
Westminster
London
SW1A 0PW

please reply to:
Roger Blake
70 Dynevor Road
Stoke Newington
London
N16 0DX

builtenvironment@parliament.uk

roger.blake@raillfuture.org.uk

2021-09-10

Dear Committee,

Meeting the UK's housing demand

Raillfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passengers, and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

We offer the following in response to your Call for Evidence for the inquiry into housing demand in the UK and how barriers to meeting this demand can be overcome, and in doing so confine ourselves to the few questions where we have any experience or competence on which to base a contribution.

The inquiry

The Committee seeks evidence on the following questions in particular:

2. What social and demographic factors shape housing demand in the UK? What are the expected future trends in housing demand?

The long-term trend of generally-increasing life expectancy contributes to ongoing housing demand in overall terms and more specifically for housing of types and in locations which cater for the particular needs of older people. At the lower end of the age range the cost of housing in some areas may well be actually suppressing the expressed demand for housing with an increase in multi-generational homes concealing a latent housing demand.

5. What can be done to ensure there is a good balance of new homes where they are needed across the UK?

From our perspective integrated land use and transport planning, spatial planning, place-making, at appropriately strategic / regional scale is key to ensuring a good balance of housing growth in locations which are or can be 'sustainable' and which, given the need for modal shift to rail to secure a palette of environmental objectives, must mean accessibility to existing and if necessary new rail stations on existing and new lines.

www.raillfuture.org.uk www.raillfuturescotland.org.uk www.raillfuturewales.org.uk
www.raillwatch.org.uk

7. The Government has published its proposals for reform of the planning system. How can the planning system be shaped to meet housing demand?

- What role should permitted development rights play in this?
- How might changes to Section 106 agreements shape the provision of social housing?
- How should communities be engaged in the planning process?

We offer for the Committee's consideration our response on 29 October 2020 to the MHCLG's consultation "Planning for the future": <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2493> which can also be found in our website within 'Consultation responses' under MHCLG.

10. How does the Government interact with Local Authorities to deliver more homes? How can this relationship be improved?

In our albeit limited experience, and in the specific context of our earlier reference in Q.5 to the primacy, as we see it, of the need for joined-up policy-making between what can too easily be the different silos of development and transport planning, the challenges faced by local authorities can be exacerbated in two-tier structures where the development planning and management takes place in the lower tier while responsibility for transport planning is vested in the upper tier. While an important and valuable level of regional oversight and direction, the sub-national transport bodies of which so much is rightly expected also face the same challenges.

11. What are the main opportunities and areas of innovation for meeting the UK's housing demand?

We have just two particular thoughts.

The first is that the garden communities model is one which we would wish to see taken in the direction of a more explicit correlation with opportunities to be served by sustainable transport in the shape of existing or new rail.

The second is that, pioneered by E-Rail with the Northumberland Line and initially researched for potential application to the new Windrush Line and the Cowley branch line in Oxfordshire, the Land Value Capture model offers an innovative method for funding new rail infrastructure and considerably reduce the call on national Exchequer resources.

We trust that the foregoing will prove to be assistance to the Committee in its Inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Director for Infrastructure & Networks
Vice-Chairman, London & South East regional branch