Here are the **key points** from the Green Paper published today (14 August):-

1. It is intended to offer the opportunity for major reform and a rebalance of the landlord-tenant relationship – a “new deal” for social housing residents.

2. Resident views already submitted to Government have resulted in five core principles being identified by MHCLG as the basis for improvements to social housing. These are:
   i. Expanding supply and ownership
   ii. Ensuring safe and decent homes
   iii. Effective complaint resolution
   iv. Empowerment of residents and the Regulator
   v. Ending stigma

3. Consultation on the Green Paper proposals and “the future of social housing” will run until 6 November

So what are the **underlying proposals**?

The Government has invited views on the following:-

- Enhancing borrowing capacity for Councils and shelving the mandatory sale of higher value Council stock (this is in a separate consultation being launched simultaneously)
- Providing longer-term funding certainty to ‘some’ RPs to generate increased development
- Expanding shared ownership by enabling residents to purchase just 1% of their property each year
- Reviewing the Decent Homes Standard
- Reforming the complaints process to make it quicker and easier, and with support and advice available to residents
- Requiring RoSH to prepare and publish performance indicators and league tables for RPs and/or publish a Consumer rating, alongside Governance and Financial Viability ratings
• Linking Government funding, for example through the Affordable Homes Programme, to performance indicators
• Strengthening RoSH so that it has more focus on, and power over, the issues which matter most to tenants
• ‘Professionalisation’ of housing management
• Promoting good design ideas in newly-built social housing as a means of tackling the stigma of social housing

And here are Devonshires’ initial thoughts:

1. Any review is welcome if it pushes social housing up the political agenda (insofar as anything non-Brexit related can move up the agenda)

2. The Grenfell Tower tragedy has had an obvious and understandable impact on the content and tenor of the Green Paper and the views which fed into it.

3. The proposals to tackle stigma appear flimsy. Recognition of the need for good quality well-designed homes is welcome but funding street parties as a way of rewarding neighbourhoods is hardly the stuff of macro-housing policy. The Green Paper praises the community and financial inclusion work that some RPs undertake, but this sort of activity has been significantly impacted by the Government’s rent reduction policy.

4. There is a separate call for evidence on the fitness for purpose of the Regulatory Framework as a whole, but the combined outcome will likely be a recalibration of the Regulatory Standards with the Consumer Standards taking a more prominent role and requiring pro-active regulation by the RoSH. It will almost certainly mean the end of the “serious detriment” threshold.

5. Improvements to existing complaints processes should be welcomed but with the caveat that we need an effective means of dealing with vexatious complainants. References to residents being able to use complaints processes to improve living standards suggest that complaints may well go beyond maladministration in the future.

6. We can expect the review of the Regulatory Framework to emphasise the need for RPs to ensure the safety of their residents and we also have a commitment here to review the Decent Homes Standard, presumably with a view to making it focus more on fire safety and health and safety issues generally.

7. The proposal to extend shared ownership to allow residents to buy very small equity shares in their homes continues the political theme of ownership over renting. Questions remain over the Government’s commitment to social rent.

8. And of course, the big one – SUPPLY: there is no commitment on numbers of new social housing and the proposals to create new borrowing capacity for Councils and “considering” the benefits of providing funding certainty to “some housing associations” are unlikely to persuade the public or the sector that the Government is genuinely committed to affordable housing.

We’ll be publishing some more in-depth commentary on the Green Paper’s proposals over the coming days as we reflect on what changes might actually come from what the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has called a “landmark opportunity…to improve fairness, quality and safety for residents living in social housing”.

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