

Right to Buy Team  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
3rd Floor, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

15 January 2025

Dear Right to Buy Team,

SEC is the voice of most local authorities across the South East of England. As a representative body of 44 member councils, we are a cross-party association that campaigns on behalf of the South East.

The South East is one of the most expensive regions buy or rent a home. The current undersupply of affordable housing in the South East gives rise to a host of impacts on communities and businesses.

An infrastructure-first approach to housing-delivery taken in partnership with local government can deliver where the private sector alone is insufficient.

### **The South East 1,000 Regional Monitor**

In our South East 1,000 Regional Monitor, produced annually with Savanta ComRes, affordable housing has been a top two choice for all respondents since its inception in 2020. Our most recent edition found that 74% of respondents (and 92% of Councillors) believed that their local area should have more power over providing affordable housing and a majority supported housebuilding in their local area.

### **Findings of the South East APPG**

The report of the inquiry run by the South East APPG: *“Financing the Future – What does Levelling Up mean for South East England?”* – heard that the housing crisis presents a major challenge to the region.

The decline of direct Government funding for councils combined with political instability in recent years and excessive budget strain has made it more difficult for councils to support the provision of more affordable housing as well as funding and planning the linked infrastructure.

The APPG report recommended that the ultimate issue of local government finance be addressed, emphasising certainty and flexibility, in order to best support service delivery. This includes supporting the delivery of accessible homes.

### **Securing a Greater South East**

Our Securing a Greater South East (SAGSE) agenda aims to ensure our region is an even better place to live, work and do business. It reflects a cross-party and multi-tier effort amongst our membership to work together for communities across the South East.

As published in SAGSE, in order to ensure our region can grow sustainably South East Councils believes that RTB legislation should be reformed to ensure that councils have the ability to viably replenish or even grow their housing stock.



## **A sustainable Right to Buy**

Members who informed us of their views for this consultation agreed that someone should be required to be a secure tenant for at least ten years or more before qualifying for RTB.

Some members stated that someone should be prevented from exercising the RTB if they have already benefited from it or if they already own another property to maximise the number of people who are able to benefit from the scheme.

In terms of what the minimum and maximum level of the percentage discount for an eligible tenant should be, answers ranged from 5-20%. This reflects a sense of fairness that tenants deserve some level of discount to reflect the fact that they have paid rent, balanced with the need for RTB to be sustainable.

Other views put forward to make RTB more sustainable included a need to end the practice of properties acquired through RTB immediately being flipped into the private rental sector at much higher costs to new tenants with less regulation to protect tenants – and to tighten up requirements so that tenants being included in the RTB should live in the property as their “only or main home” rather than only one tenant as in current rules.

The recurring point of significance heard amongst our members is that steps should be taken so that RTB covers the cost of at least replenishing existing stock.

A final point in light of recent political developments is that the ongoing process of devolution and local government reorganisation also presents an opportunity to build new structures to support sustainable approaches to RTB in newly devolved areas. For example, localities could be empowered to set their own rules around RTB to align with local need.

Yours faithfully,

**Cllr Philip North**  
Chair, South East Councils  
Leader of Test Valley Borough Council  
Conservative Party

**Cllr Liz Terry**  
Deputy Chair, South East Councils  
Leader of Reading Borough Council  
Labour Party

**Cllr Keith House**  
Deputy Chair, South East Councils  
Leader of Eastleigh Borough Council  
Liberal Democrats

**Cllr Hannah Dalton**  
Deputy Chair, South East Councils  
Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council  
Independent Group