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Friday, 04 July 2008

Ms. Elaine Melrose
 Executive Director of Housing
 West Dunbartonshire Council
 Council Offices
 Garshake Road
 Dumbarton
 G82 3PU

Dear Ms Melrose

SURPLUS COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK

You are aware of Link Group's expression of interest in the above stock as per your letter of 27 March 2008 to Brenda Higgins Link's Director of Development and Regeneration and the local Forum of Housing Associations (WDVHF) in an attempt to find ways forward on this issue.

At last week's meeting Brenda, along with other members of the Forum, had expressed concerns that there was still no master plan relative to the properties for disposal and such a lack of essential information did not give confidence for a proper and sound regeneration of the areas concerned. Link has a long experience of regeneration across Scotland and is quite clear that a holistic approach is vital if there is to be long lasting and sound improvements in any community. The communities themselves will rightly be expecting such an approach and will have more confidence in engaging in the process if it has a clear strategy and an all-embracing dimension to it.

As things stand at present the Council appears to be primarily interested in the piecemeal disposal of properties that have been void for a number of years. But what about the areas generally in which they are situated? In our view, it is impossible to forget the bigger picture - hence the need for a master plan allied to a holistic approach. At a time when the Scottish government is expecting RSL's to obtain even greater value for money it is all the more important that there is clarity on how such investment will benefit communities and leave them with a long term legacy. For all of these reasons Link cannot make a detailed submission to you at this time and its interest can only remain a general one until the Council addresses the critical issues we have raised.

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Jeff Stobo is aware of Link's position following last week's meeting but nevertheless we wished to write to the Council setting out our stance regarding this stock. Perhaps a meeting with you and your team could help better understand why we see difficulties and find possible ways forward to address the concerns the Council has in the areas for disposal. Link remains committed to working with the Council and other partners in the area. As you know, we have committed significant resources to the redevelopment of our housing stock in Dalmuir.

I hope that such commitment can be put to the advantage of the communities affected by the proposed disposals.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

CRAIG SANDERSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE