17th October 2016

**The Housing and Planning Act**

The Housing and Planning Act may be well intended, but desperately needs re-thinking; as currently conceived it is a piece of damaging, divisive and unworkable legislation, which far from improving things is actually set to make the housing crisis worse.

Warnings about unintended consequences are being sounded by well-respected organisations like the Chartered Institute of Housing, Shelter, and the Local Government Association. Housing is fundamental to our dignity and identity as human beings, and a fair and transparent housing policy underpins the flourishing of all communities; yet the current policy threatens to undermine our attempts to create a socially-cohesive society where the needs of the most economically vulnerable are afforded a special place.

We have many concerns about the legislation, but these 3 in particular need to be addressed:

1. Under the current Act it is almost certain that Council and Housing Association tenants will suffer massive rent rises, a form of “tenants’ tax” which will penalise those on moderate incomes and price long-standing local families out of their own neighbourhoods

2. Introducing greater flexibility in to the social housing market may be a laudable aim, but reducing security of tenure is a questionable way of achieving it

3. It is essential to build more homes, but the drive to home ownership is driven by political philosophy rather than the best interests of residents. The Act effectively transfers community assets out of social housing in to so-called “starter homes”, costing up to £450,000, but these will be unaffordable to many people who will now have little option other than to expose themselves to the private rented sector

We need a Housing Act that meets the needs of millions, not only the few, and offers a genuinely sustainable alternative to the endemic uncertainty of the housing market. The Prime Minister has said she is committed to leading a government for the many, not the few. The Housing Act stands in contradiction to this and we urge the Government to think again.

**Rt Revd Adrian Newman, Bishop of Stepney**

**Rabbi Herschel Gluck, OBE, Chairman of the Arab-Jewish Forum**

**Sanjay Jagatia, Director/Secretary General, Hindu Council UK**

**Most Revd Peter Smith, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark**

**Revd Michaela Youngson, London District Chair, Methodist Church**

**Harun Rashid Khan, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain**

**Revd Dr Andrew Prasad, Moderator, United Reformed Church Thames North Synod**

**Sayed Yousif Al-Khoei, OBE, Director, Al-Khoei Foundation**

**Rt Revd Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden**

**Rt Revd Jonathan Clark, Bishop of Croydon**

**Rt Revd Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston**

**Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark**

**Malcolm M Deboo, President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe**

**Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Moderator, United Reformed Church Southern Synod**

**Rt Revd Peter Hill, Bishop of Barking**

**Very Revd David Ison, Dean of St Paul’s**

**Revd Les Isaac OBE, CEO Ascension Trust**

**Ven Rosemary Lain-Priestley, Associate Archdeacon of London**

**Archbishop Fidelia N Onyuku-Opukiri, Worldwide of Born Again Christ Healing Church International**

**Dr Hugh Osgood, Free Churches Moderator**

**Rt Revd Rob Wickham, Bishop of Edmonton**

**Rt Revd Ric Thorpe, Bishop of Islington**

**Rt Revd Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington**