



CPRE issues quality challenge to house builders

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In the midst of a controversial national debate over the Government's proposed changes to the planning system, CPRE has proposed a series of challenges to house builders and developers.

These were put forward by Shaun Spiers, CPRE Chief Executive. He acknowledges the scale of the country's housing crisis: England needs many more new homes, particularly affordable homes. But he also challenges the house building industry to commit to five principles that will help minimise local opposition to new housing.

The five principles are:

1. A brownfield-first approach to identifying sites
2. High design and building standards
3. New homes with decent space standards
4. Master planning for better places, not just planning for houses
5. Industry support for a democratic planning system

Shaun Spiers says: "The Government's proposals to weaken the planning system have understandably provoked a backlash from countryside campaigners like CPRE. But it should be possible to develop a system that allows for necessary development without unnecessarily damaging the countryside or the character of our towns and villages.

"I hope that we can move beyond the current state of barely suppressed hostility between developers and conservationists. For that to happen, organisations like CPRE will have to demonstrate that we really are able to support housing developments, as well as oppose them. I recognise that it is not enough to support the idea of new

housing in the abstract: we must demonstrate that we can support specific housing schemes.

“But house builders also need to raise their game. Following the five principles CPRE is proposing will go a long way to building trust with those who might otherwise oppose new developments.

“Ministers may think that they will achieve a boost to house building by weakening the planning system, but their proposals are more likely to result in costly and divisive planning battles across the country. If the country is to get the homes it needs, we need an emphasis on quality and on good planning - more planning, not less.”

CPRE's five principles in full:

1. **A brownfield-first approach to identifying sites** - All new projects should seek to use previously developed, or brownfield sites where they are available and sustainable. If greenfield sites are to be used, developers should demonstrate that a suitable equivalent brownfield site was not available.
2. **High design and building standards** - Improving energy efficiency, accessibility and aesthetics should not be viewed as ‘gold-plating’ which undermines profitability. The industry should commit to quality as well as quantity.
3. **Space standards: size matters** - Housing needs to use land efficiently but it also needs to be big enough to live in comfortably. The industry should engage constructively with the Royal Institute of British Architects’ (RIBA) HomeWise campaign and voluntarily publish the size of all new homes completed.
4. **Master planning for better places, not just houses** - An emphasis should be placed on master planning, where local communities are engaged in shaping proposed developments and ensuring good quality local services and transport links.
5. **Stop knocking the planning system** - The planning system is our best and only way to ensure development delivers what we want where we need it. House builders have admitted that it is financial circumstances and not the planning system that is currently slowing rates of new building. Rather than knocking planning, they should champion it.

Supporting housing facts:

- Enough previously-developed land exists to accommodate approximately 1.5m homes - much of this in the SE. [2]
- CABE's housing audit, carried out between 2005 and 2007 rated 29% of new housing as 'poor', a further 53% was just 'average'. [3]
- The average new build home is only 92 per cent of the recommended minimum floor space. [4]
- New homes in the UK are the smallest in Western Europe [4]
- The average home in the UK is 85m². The average new home in the UK is 76m².

Notes to Editors

[1] Shaun Spiers was speaking at the Housing Market Intelligence Conference:

<http://bit.ly/r5BPOj>

Other speakers included: Imtiaz Farookhi, Chief Executive, NHBC; Jake Berry MP; Stewart Baseley, Executive Chairman, HBF; Steve Morgan Chairman, Redrow Homes; David Smith, Economics Editor, Sunday Times; John Stewart, Director of Economics, HBF; Caroline Flint MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; Professor Michael Ball, Professor of Urban and Property Economics Henley - University of Reading; Richard Donnell, Director of Research, Hometrack; David Cowans, Chief Executive, Places for People; Andrew Whitaker, Director of Planning, HBF

[2] HCA's National Land Use Database survey for 2009

[3] CABE Housing Audit, 2005 - 2007

[4] RIBA - Case for space (2011).

