

Submitted to Planning Reform Working Paper: Speeding Up Build Out
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Introduction

About You

1 What is your name?

Name:
Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

2 What is your email address?

Email:
enquiries@abingdon.gov.uk

3 What is your organisation?

Organisation:
Town/Parish Council

4 What type of organisation are you representing?

Neighbourhood planning body, parish or town council

If you answered 'other' please provide further details:

Questions

5 Do you agree with the evidence base and theory we have set out on build out rates?

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Agree with the average over a long term, but can be faster if the rest of the economy is moving well. As an Oxfordshire council it can move faster.

6 How could we go further to support models of housebuilding which build faster, such as small sites, strategically master-planned and mixed tenure?

How could we go further to support models of housebuilding which build faster, such as small sites, strategically master-planned and mixed tenure? :

SME builders including those building out between 2 and 6 properties per site are currently holding back due to global economic conditions impacting the UK.

A surety or financial guarantee scheme in conjunction with smaller site planning streamlining is likely to be necessary to help that sector.

In our area we have already two strategic master plan developments and these seem to be progressing well.

Mixed tenures including a full mix of affordability's rent and construction methods should always be encouraged however householder affordability levels in our high priced area are likely to be the biggest challenge and will need further consideration.

Utility company and infrastructure providers need to give firm contracts and timescales for connection of sites for services.

7 For mixed tenure, what would you consider to be an appropriate threshold level?

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Dependant on development sizing rather than adopting a fixed number of units as the threshold a percentage of total units basis would ensure that this model if reflected consistently across all major sites, 100 unit plus.

8 Do you have any views on how the proposed Compulsory Purchase Order measures would work best in practice?

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Conditional confirmation of CPO's would be a good measure to ensure consistent pipeline delivery by developers. Local district councils have experience of developments being timed purely to suit the private higher value market, which can heavily impact much needed affordable tenures for working families.

9 How should MHCLG guide local authorities and developers towards reasonable build out schedules (noting that ultimately this will be negotiated locally)?

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Robust enforcement of tenure mix parentages across all phases of a development together with meeting planning deadline times e.g. start on site within three years of planning permission being granted.

This needs to be combined with conditional compulsory purchase orders to avoid minimal start on site conditions being met and sites mothballed to suit developers shareholders cashflow models.

10 What are the right set of exemptions for external factors that impact build out rates? Should this include economic downturns which reduce sales rates, or does that mean that payments would be too weak to induce the shift toward the partnerships business models we want to see?

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External factors should include:

1. Lack of competent workforce.
2. Severe economic downturns e.g. a 2007/8 financial crash or covid-19 - normal slowing of markets should be allowed for by the site feasibility studies before purchase and build commences.
3. Several severe weather incidents within specified timeframes - floods, severe winters in sequence.

11 For the Delayed Homes Penalty, do you agree with the intention to use it to incentivise the shift towards higher build out models of housebuilding?

Delayed Homes Penalty:

Yes we agree, however if above points towards utility connections available workforces and market conditions are met this should be an absolute last resort.

12 How should the Penalty be calculated? What are the strengths and weaknesses of using a percentage of house price, or reference to local council tax rates? What information would local authorities require?

Penalty calculated:

The strength of using the percentage of house price is that the developer has factored in a profit margin per property and this would have a direct impact on the not completed properties.

Local authorities would need anticipated sales values from an RICS surveyor.

Downside of council tax rates is that it is likely to be a smaller financial penalty and calculation of 1999 band values is very much an academic exercise.

13 Are there wider options you think worth worthy of consideration that could help speed up build out of housing?

Are there wider options you think worth worthy of consideration that could help speed up build out of housing? :

The infrastructure and utilities being available linked to actual milestones within the planning conditions to smooth the process is essential. There are too many parties involved in matters like highways infrastructure which allows a backwards and forwards movement of responsibility.

Once planning is agreed delivery of that key infrastructure needs to be streamlined subject to one overall authority to ensure quality and delivery to time.

14 Do you anticipate any environmental impacts from these proposals that the government must consider and the Environmental Principles Policy Statement?

Environmental Principles:

Not if Environmental assessments have been correctly completed and are adhered to.

Environmental and Biodiversity as present should be maintained.

15 Do you anticipate these proposals giving rise to any impacts on people who share a relevant protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, that the government must consider under the Public Sector Equality Duty?

Equality Act:

We do not believe that they will however any impact of the Act that are already catered for when planning new developments should not be adversely affected or impacted.