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Fixing our broken housing market - Round Table with Gavin Barwell MP, 24th February 2017, HCA, Nottingham

Lynette Swinburne, Vice Chair

This well attended session focused on three questions posed by the Minister:

- What are the main barriers to increasing the supply of new homes?
- What measures in the White Paper will be most useful in increasing supply in your area?
- How can we work together to implement the White Paper?

The Minister then made the following points:

1. The need to make sure we have plans in place everywhere.
2. We need to be honest about housing need.
3. We need to make sure we put homes in the right places (referring to huge differences in the demand and need across regions and districts).
4. He is keen that the White Paper looks beyond authorities just issuing planning permissions and focusses on actual delivery of planning consents.
5. It seeks to encourage house builders to be honest about their delivery of homes.
6. He is keen to ensure that small and medium size builders (SME) and Local Authorities enter the housing market.
7. He is pushing for innovation in construction to make construction faster.
8. He accepts that this is a problem that needs many years to address and will need a much higher supply of housing before it starts to have a meaningful effect on house prices.

Attendees were a mix of public, private sector representatives along with housing providers and the questions asked, and views expressed reflected the diversity of the audience.

The Minister stated on the record that he hoped the White Paper would send a clear message about the importance of growth not only in our urban areas, but also in our rural areas to meet the demand that already exists in these places.

He emphasised that the White Paper is putting forward measures, which he considers will provide 'a period of policy stability', and noted that his aim is for planning to adopt a more "place based approach".

In addition, the Minister provided confirmation that the new NPPF will be issued for consultation "before summer 2017".

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Promisingly, he revealed, although he was unsure if it had been formally announced, that new bursaries are proposed for planning students to encourage more young people into the profession.

Notwithstanding the announcement about bursaries, the Round Table did not add anything to the content of the White Paper. Commitments to stability are welcomed; however, it is not clear how this will be achieved, whilst the proposals within the White Paper include measures which will necessitate changes to plan-making and the calculation of housing land supply figures in the shorter term. In relation to adopting a 'place based approach', it was unclear how this would differ from the existing system of Local Plans, which by their nature are locally based. However, the Minister's vocal commitment to Neighbourhood Planning was evident at this session, and perhaps he sees these documents as a way to add further local perspective to policy?



Minister says new
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