

Is building more houses the answer?

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More members comment on the seemingly never-ending housing shortage

Members continue to respond to the issues raised in [An holistic approach to the housing shortage](#) . Here are some excerpts from readers' comments.

Terry Glanville

Terry says he was amazed by some of Andrew Taylor's remarks:

"A greater housing supply could stabilise price": I spent decades in the business and saw many housing booms and busts. I don't recall any time when supply at the strategic level affected price. It is common knowledge that builders only build in a rising market and then stop or leave the site ? consider all the abandoned sites after the last market collapse.'

Arguably, there is no housing shortage: the different levels of tenures have changed

"Unimplemented planning permissions are not an issue": so why are they not being implemented at a faster rate than the drip, drip approach beloved by developers?'

'The main issue [?] is the lethargic and politically stunted planning system [...] where locally elected council members make decisions at planning committees.'

Should planning decisions be made by appointees rather than elected and accountable individuals? Who would appoint them? Terry continues:

'Every recent government measure to help people get on the housing ladder ? in other words, increase demand ? merely pushed up prices. How is increasing supply going to help current renters buy a house?'

'I believe the present crisis started in the Thatcher and Blair years when some 2.5m council houses were sold and rent control removed. These council houses had kept massive demand out of the private market, until they were sold. But that huge sudden increase in supply didn't cause prices to drop. In the short term, homeownership increased, but is now much less than when they were sold. Those houses are generally back in the rented sector but owned by private landlords. '

'Arguably, there is no housing shortage: the different levels of tenures have changed. Properties that would have been occupied by freeholders paying a mortgage exist but are now occupied by tenants paying high rent. Rent control should be reintroduced to give them greater security, and even save enough for a deposit.'

Councils should be allowed to borrow at historically low interest rates, as the government does

'Governments cannot make developers build at a faster rate than they want. The solution lies in the public sector. Councils should be allowed to borrow at historically low interest rates, as the government does, either to build or buy existing houses in their areas. Nationwide, the former could be built by local builders, thus stimulating local economies. Hundreds of thousands of houses were built in this way after the war.'

John Harper

John points out that there have been 17 housing ministers in 20 years and believes the post needs stability.

He has lost count of the various housing initiatives over the past 20 years. RICS, he says, is correct to draw attention to the need for diversity in the housing stock: developers have constantly catered for growing families, while those who are older than 65 will have difficulty in finding suitable accommodation.

There have been 17 housing ministers in 20 years and [...] the post needs stability

Parts of the answer, he thinks, lie in local plans, many of which are out of date or not published. There remains the potential for encouraging downsizing in stamp duty and the rating system. He draws attention to the [UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence](#), and calls for the residential group to extend its remit and make a fuller contribution to the housing debate, picking up the views of the wider membership.

Mike Basquill

Mike, RICS UK Residential Associate Director, comments:

?We communicate to members through the [Residential Roundup newsletter](#), [Property journal](#) and the [Communities page](#) of the RICS website, as well as open access to the working group. Consultations are always publicised and responses sought.?

Jan Ambrose is Editor of the Residential section of RICS [Property journal](#)

Further information

- Read the original feature [An holistic approach to the housing shortage](#) and

- the follow-up feature [Pressing the right housebuilding buttons](#)
- Related competencies include: [Housing strategy and provision](#) and [Planning and development management](#)
 - This feature is taken from the [RICS Property journal](#) (January/February 2019)
 - Related categories include: [Neighbourhood planning](#) , [Newbuild property](#) , [Planning policy](#) and [Residential](#)