

below is the response from Helena Housing

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## **RESPONSE TO THE BARKER REVIEW OF HOUSING SUPPLY**

### **GENERAL**

- The dominant driver in the UK housing market is that of meeting the aspiration of most citizens to own their own home. As a result of this, the concentration of activity, finance and risk is all towards the private sector market. Therefore, the housing activity in the United Kingdom is market-led and not needs-led. As a consequence of this, there is not sufficient planning to enable a smooth through-put of new housing when it is required, because the construction industry "reacts to" rather than "plans for" meeting demand.
- The review should cover the needs for new housing within low demand areas. These areas are often characterised by poor quality housing which is in need of clearance but which are not priority areas for development. Therefore, there are difficulties associated with new provision in these areas which are not present in high demand areas.

### **ISSUE 1 - RE LAND SUPPLY**

- The question is not so much "is there a shortage of land for housing" as "is there a shortage of land for the type of housing that developers want to build". Builders hold the whip-hand in this debate as any available land is often "touted" by local authorities to see who will be interested in it rather than builder pursuing councils to find out what needs they can help meet.

### **ISSUE 2 - INDUSTRY CONSTRAINTS**

- There is now a greater opportunity for an increase in the pace of new build within the affordable housing end of the market through the ever expanding

RSL sector, as a result of the increasing number of stock transfers. With the increased emphasis on partnership, this will undoubtedly lead to a more effective response to new build demand. However, there is a danger that if the new Regional Housing Boards concentrate Housing Corporation resources into strategic areas then gross new build targets will not meet.

### **ISSUE 3 - HOUSING POLICY**

- There is a disparity also between the approach to meeting needs from the voluntary housing sector to that of the private house builders in that RSLs are encouraged, indeed required, to look into innovative construction methods such as off-site manufacture or modular design in order to meet needs, while private house builders are less prepared to experiment and concentrate on traditional house with garden designs which are marketable but which are slower to deliver.
  
- In terms of planning policies, the planning policy guidance 3 (PPG3), is not enthusiastically enforced in many areas, therefore, resulting in a market -led rather than a needs led approach. The recently announced re-definition of PG3 (Circular 6/98) will help this position.