

## **Seminar Observations on White Paper (Feb 2017) Affordable Housing & Land**

*CPRE and OBU held an evening seminar on Affordable Housing on 22 March. Reps attended from Oxfordshire NPs and NForums. The aim is to send a response to the February White Paper Consultation before May. OBU School of The Planned Environment is collating responses from our group discussions.*

*I will circulate the Final Response when complete. 'Affordable' has been perhaps the trickiest word WNP have had to use – and that, repeatedly. I also attach PRE/OBU's bullet-summary of the White Paper.*

John Fox.

1. 'Land value uplift capture' dominated the evening ! Farmland costing £15,000 rises to £350,000 once planning is granted. Agents account for 15% , CIL and S106 25% of the increase. Home buyer is the last payee. It costs relatively little to build the actual house.
2. How then to 'capture' that 'value uplift' ? CPRE would like to see a formal Land Bank and pricing reform. Options on much of Oxon land are now 'banked', but unofficially. In a real Land Bank, the option would have a 'use or lose' limit and a price curb. CIL and S106 costs to the builder should also be reduced according to number of affordable homes built.
3. Community Building would help 'recapture'. By definition not for profit. However, little or no mention of Local Authority housing in the WP, although LA has big borrowing potential (it has the collateral), the will and the need. This really would be the Community at work. Perhaps more unitary authorities, more collaborative and efficient, might bring this about ?
4. Woodcote NP said that W. majority opinion shunned affordable housing as 'council housing'.
5. All Parish Councils should be responding to the WP about affordable housing needs.
6. What about a change in the Charity Law which requires charities to sell at highest price ?
7. The market is profit-led, not need-led. Therefore affordability is so mercurial it is not definable, subject only to market rise and fall.
8. Is private sector build-to-let a solution in isolation, without LA oversight ?
9. Should legislation require carbon-neutral houses ?
10. Would the WP suggestion of cutting down building regs to speed up building end up as a quality and even a health hazard ?
11. Central Govt should enable /facilitate LA purchase of land.
12. Central Govt should encourage small building companies (diversity), self-build, factory pre-fabrication, and model terrace housing not Georgian *pastiche*
13. Outlaw the wriggle-room which developers use to reduce required % of affordable homes. It makes 40% stipulation ineffective and 10% even more of a joke.
14. WP promises land ownership transparency, which currently it is not. However it also removes any link with average income in calculating the 'affordable' and offers no resolution as to how to maintain 'affordability' of a house beyond the first buyer.
15. WP seems genuinely to recognise the rural affordability issue and how serious it is. The rural dream for those in the city wealthy enough to move out also accounts for high prices.

*PS. I'm not 100% sure what 'built out' (top of p.2, WP summary) means, but do give me credit for cracking 'Land Value Uplift Capture'. I'm quite proud of that. JF*

