

ABERDEEN RUNNING SHORT OF LAND FOR HOUSING

The North-east is running short of land for new housing developments, according to the *Housing Land Audit 2007*.

The available building sites are only enough to meet demand for a further three years. The audit spells out the likely demand for housing and the land available. It estimates 5,140 new homes will be needed in the next five years.

A total of 8,886 houses were built in the city and an area bounded by the towns of Ellon, Inverurie, Westhill, Banchory and Stonehaven between 2002 and 2006. There is only enough land available for another 6,058 houses between now and 2011 - only meeting the demand for just over three years.

The report, prepared by officials of both **Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils**, said that housebuilders believed that there was still unmet demand for houses, making the shortfall likely to be even greater in the future.

A lack of new housing has been blamed for a year-on-year increase in house prices across Grampian of 26%, with the average house price reaching £163,855. The North-east's population is forecast to rise over the next 25 years, creating a need for nearly 40,000 extra homes.

The joint Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire North-east strategic planning committee will meet in the city's Woodhill House to discuss their officers' findings on Friday.

Aberdeenshire Council leader, Anne Roberston said; "We do need to look to the future. This is the start of the process."

City council leader, Kate Dean said residents needed to accept the need for growth, adding: "If we want to live in a thriving, vibrant city there needs to be a bit of tolerance."



PLANNING GAIN SUPPLEMENT MOVE DROPPED

Moves to force developers to compulsorily contribute a set rate towards infrastructure costs in Scotland appear to have been abandoned by the UK Government.

The planning gain supplement could have disadvantaged Scottish developers because of the differences in planning regimes north and south of the border. UK Government said it would now be up to the Scottish Government to decide if it wanted to take the issue forward. The UK Government's recognition of the problems that could have been caused was welcomed by industry leaders last night. CBI Scotland chairman David Thorburn said: "Scotland has already embarked on reforms which ought to deliver an improvement in the performance of the planning system."

Scottish Council for Development and Industry chief executive Alan Wilson added: "Scottish developers and local authorities will be breathing a sigh of relief at not having to implement this clumsy proposal."



Key Areas of Support your Business Needs



Training

NESBA Organises various training courses throughout North East Scotland

Employment Law

Advice on disciplinary procedures, redundancy, holiday pay etc.

Construction Law

1 Hours free advice from a solicitor who is a construction law specialist

Debt Recovery

Advice from debt recovery experts along with free legal letter to your debtor



All Available from your Local Construction Trade Association



Tel: 0845 055 1663
www.nesba.co.uk
admin@nesba.co.uk

NESBA was Established by Construction Companies through out North East Scotland



NESBA the Voice for Builders in North East Scotland

December 2007

FREE LEGAL HELPLINE

NESBA is pleased to announce that we have engaged the legal services of the construction division of Ledingham Chalmers to provide our members with up to one hour of legal advice free of charge.

The construction team is headed by Jennifer Young who is accredited by the Law Society of Scotland as a Construction Law specialist (and is the only lawyer outside the central belt of Scotland to have that accreditation). Another key member of the team is Sarah Lane who is dual qualified in Scots and English law. Both are ranked as leaders in their field. A recent addition to the team is Roddy Cormack, who is based in the firm's Inverness office. We believe this is the right team to give members the legal advice and support we need and give us the ability to make sound business decisions.

Ledingham Chalmers understands the business of construction and will give specialist advice to NESBA members on contractual issues that arise from time to time either by telephone or in person. The experience of NESBA so far has been very positive and that of a team whose approach on any legal problem so far has been delivered in plain English (and Scottish) along with a great deal of common sense.

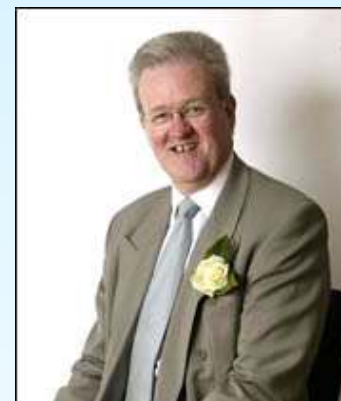


NESBA is north east Scotland's local construction association for small to medium sized businesses so it's a great advantage for us to have team of construction law specialists on our doorstep and whose origins like NESBA are in the north east.

NESBA was founded by construction companies with the purpose of having an association that is far more focused and relevant on issues affecting our industry and businesses in north east Scotland. We believe Ledingham Chalmers are ideally suited to assist in our objectives and we look forward to developing a strong and lasting relationship with Jennifer and her team.



ROGUE BUILDERS MAY FACE NEW FINES



Rogue developers who flout planning laws could be fined without being taken to court under proposals revealed by the Scottish Government

The planned new powers would allow councils to issue fixed penalty notices where individuals or businesses fail to comply with the enforcement action. Enforcement notices can be issued to individuals or firms who build without proper planning consent. Currently if these are not complied with local authorities have to go to court which can be expensive and time consuming.

Under new proposals councils would be able to issue fixed penalty fines of up to £5,000 without having to take legal action. Minister for infrastructure Stewart Stevenson said:

"Enforcement has a fundamental role in the operation of an effective planning system". "Fixed penalty notices will give councils an effective tool to deal with those who persistently flout the law".

Under the proposals developers who fail to comply with an enforcement notice would first be given a £1000 fixed penalty notice. For each breach of any subsequent enforcement notice the penalty would be increased by £500 up to a maximum £5,000 the proposals are being consulted on came about after the Planning Act 2006 brought in new powers enabling enforcement action

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STATEMENT BY NICOLA STURGEON

The importance of good quality housing cannot be overstated. The portfolio that I am responsible for - health and wellbeing - acknowledges the vital link between housing and health. That was a link first recognised when John Wheatley, health minister in the first Labour government, pioneered the 1924 Housing Act to encourage the building of new houses at modest rents.

It is a link that this progressive SNP government is proud to restore. It is a fact that the Scottish housing system is not meeting our needs as a country. The supply of houses to buy is failing to match demand, pricing first time buyers out of the market and in turn adding to the pressures on an already stretched social rented sector.

This frustrates the hopes and ambitions of individuals and families across the country. It leaves many in unsatisfactory accommodation, or unable to live near their work - a particular problem in our rural communities - and some without settled accommodation at all.

The causes of these problems are deep rooted and affect all parts of the housing system. This Government is determined to tackle them by reforming the housing system and making it fit for purpose. Today, we set out our proposals for doing so in our discussion document, Firm Foundations. The key message at the heart of our proposals is clear.



If people are to meet their needs and aspirations for housing that they can afford; and if the country is to benefit from sustainable growth, we must build more houses - to higher standards - across all tenures. Let me first emphasise the point about variety of tenures. There has been a fundamental shift in housing aspirations in favour of owner occupation. Part of government's role is to help people to realise that aspiration.

But government also has a duty to those who can't or don't want to buy a house. To meet the needs of all in Scotland, our housing policy must provide choice and variety - a mix of houses to buy and to rent. That means taking demand for rented housing as seriously as that for owner occupation

That is why the proposals in the document address every element of the housing system. Our proposals are based on a clear recognition of the need to build more houses. The current rate of new house building - 25,000 new houses a year - is simply inadequate. It can and must increase if Scotland's housing requirements are to be met.

I therefore propose to set a national goal to raise the rate of new housing supply to 35,000 a year by the middle of the next decade. 35,000 houses a year may seem an ambitious target but it is one I believe we must meet if we are to reverse declining affordability and I believe it is achievable.

But simply building where we can without regard to the nature of need in local markets, and to factors such as the availability of water and sewerage infrastructure and flood management considerations, will not be a sustainable solution to our problems. We must get the balance right - across the country, between and within regions, and between tenures - so that we build the right houses in the right numbers in the right places. That means adopting a more strategic approach to setting and meeting targets for new houses.

Local authorities and other key players such as Scottish Water must work together at a regional level to agree collective targets for new housing to ensure local housing markets meet demand. And then - through the planning system - ensure that sufficient land is released, so that developers and builders can get on with delivering these houses.

This strategic approach to improving supply - which will also be assisted by the work of the Housing Supply Task Force - will be accompanied by initiatives to assist first time buyers, those who prefer to rent from local authorities and housing associations, and those looking for the flexibility of the private rented sector.

Assistance for first time buyers

Home ownership is the ambition of most people. Research shows that almost 90% of all people, and 60% of tenants in social housing, would prefer to own their home. We want to help people realise that ambition. To do so, we will establish a Low cost Initiative for First Time buyers - LIFT for short. Through LIFT, we aim to expand assistance for first-time buyers through a mix of Government grants, shared equity schemes, and mortgage related products and services. We will fund this expansion by implementing our manifesto commitment to create a Scottish Housing Support Fund.

Already this year we are helping 1,800 households get their first foot on the housing ladder with Government grants to subsidise low cost home ownership schemes and we intend to extend and improve this model. In addition, we will seek to attract private finance from mortgage lenders and investors to achieve more shared equity homes for more first time buyers.

More generally, we will work with mortgage lenders and investors to create innovative and viable financial products to make home ownership affordable over the long term - looking particularly at the feasibility of lowering mortgage costs for first time buyers. We will also consider further our proposed £2,000 First Time Buyers Grant. And I can confirm that we will take forward the Single Survey which will typically save first time buyers at least £200 - £300 and ensure that all buyers have good information on the quality of a house before they place a bid for it.

CEMENT HEALTH & SAFETY

Cement is widely used in construction. Anyone who uses cement (or anything containing cement, such as mortar, plaster and concrete) or is responsible for managing its use should be aware that it presents a hazard to health.

Health effects

Cement can cause ill health mainly by: skin contact; inhalation of dust; and manual handling.

Skin contact

Contact with wet cement can cause both dermatitis and burns.

Dermatitis

Skin affected by dermatitis feels itchy and sore, and looks red, scaly and cracked. Cement is capable of causing dermatitis by two mechanisms - irritancy and allergy.

Irritant dermatitis is caused by the physical properties of cement that irritate the skin mechanically. The fine particles of cement, often mixed with sand or other aggregates to make mortar or concrete, can abrade the skin and cause irritation resulting in dermatitis. With treatment, irritant dermatitis will usually clear up. But if exposure continues over a longer period the condition will get worse and the individual is then more susceptible to allergic dermatitis.

Allergic dermatitis is caused by sensitisation to the hexavalent chromium (chromate) present in cement. The way this works is quite distinct from that of irritancy. Sensitisers penetrate the barrier layer of the skin and cause an allergic reaction. Hexavalent chromium is known to be the most common cause of allergic dermatitis in men.

Research has shown that between 5% and 10% of construction workers may

be sensitised to cement and that plasterers, concreters and bricklayers are particularly at risk. Once someone has become sensitised to hexavalent chromium, any future exposure may trigger dermatitis. Some skilled tradesmen have been forced to change their trade because of this. The longer the duration of skin contact with a sensitiser, the more it will penetrate the skin, and the greater the risk of sensitisation will become. Therefore, if cement is left on the skin throughout the working day, rather than being washed off at intervals, the risk of contact sensitisation to hexavalent chromium will be increased. Both irritant and allergic dermatitis can affect a person at the same time.

Cement burns

Wet cement can cause burns. The principal cause is thought to be the alkalinity of the wet cement. If wet cement becomes trapped against the skin, for example by kneeling in it or if cement falls into a boot or glove, a serious burn or ulcer can rapidly develop. These often take months to heal, and in extreme cases will need skin grafts or can even lead to amputation. Serious chemical burns to the eyes can also be caused following a splash of cement.

Inhalation of dust

High levels of dust can be produced when cement is handled, for example when emptying or disposing of bags. In the short term, exposure to high levels of cement dust irritates the nose and throat. Scabbling or concrete cutting can also produce high levels of dust which may contain silica. Advice on the health effects of exposure to silica can be found in Construction

Information Sheet 36 (rev1).

Manual handling

Working with cement also poses risks such as sprains and strains, particularly to the back, arms and shoulders from lifting and carrying cement bags, mixing mortar etc. More serious damage to the back can be caused in the long term if workers are continually lifting heavy weights.

Ill health prevention and health surveillance

Skin contact

You should first consider using elimination or substitution to prevent the possibility of contact with cement. Otherwise, you should apply control measures which minimise contact with the skin either directly or indirectly from contaminated surfaces in the working environment.

DUMPERS- A CASE STUDY



A contractor was fined a total of £150 000 and ordered to pay costs of £7500 for two separate accidents involving site dumpers. As the offences were so serious, the magistrates refused to hear the matters and transferred them to the Crown Court.

The accidents happened on consecutive days. The access ramp on the site was dangerous because of the steep slope and loose surface. The downward slope averaged 1 in 3.5, which was steeper than the maximum permissible gradient for the safe use of the dumper of 1 in 4. Workers had been hired from an agency as extra

dumper drivers and labourers to help complete a contract on time. No checks were made to find out if the drivers had the necessary experience and training. After some minor incidents, such as punctured tyres and dumpers running out of diesel, it was obvious to the site foreman that the men supplied were inexperienced and he requested new drivers. When they arrived, again no checks were made on the drivers' competence. One of these drivers appeared to lack confidence and was replaced by a labourer who said he could drive. The following day, the foreman gave the new driver an incorrect demonstration of how to operate the dumper on the slope. Shortly after this demonstration, the same driver lost control of the vehicle and it overturned, throwing him clear. Luckily he only received minor injuries. He did not drive on site again. The next day, the same men reported for work. A man who had previously worked on site as a labourer, and who had no experience of driving a dumper (he didn't even possess a provisional driver's licence) was asked to drive a dumper. This he did, but tragically the dumper overturned on the slope and the young man was killed. The accidents could have been prevented if:

only people with appropriate skills, knowledge and training were allowed to drive dumpers; dumpers were not driven on or across slopes that were steeper than the recommended maximum for the vehicle; there had been better communication between the agency and site management; the management had taken positive action to identify and remedy causes of the minor incidents that had occurred before the dumpers overturned. The contractor was convicted under Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 for failing to ensure that people not in their employment were not exposed to risks to their health and safety. No proceedings were taken against the agency.

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