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Issued on behalf of the Independent Housing Policy and Delivery Oversight Committee



“Government own worst enemy on housing” – Sir Vince Cable

Independent Housing Policy and Delivery Oversight Committee

Government interventions have made housing targets, which were already looking unrealistic with the slowdown in new build, even more difficult according to the independent Housing Oversight Committee headed by Sir Vince Cable.

The Committee, sponsored by the Family Building Society, says the new build slowdown combined with the Building Safety Levy due in October this year and the lack of skilled construction workers and planning expertise further threatens the viability of many proposed developments.

The committee, which includes the Chief Executive of the House Builders Federation, Neil Jefferson, Vicky Price, chief economist of the Centre for Economics and Business Research and Chair of the Social Care Foundation, Damien Green also expressed frustration at the lack of social housing.

Following its latest meeting members commented that despite recognition of the extreme pressure on social housing, there is little sign of revived local authority activity in social housing or councils having greater capacity.

Sir Vince said: “The Government is looking like its own worst enemy by trying to make building easier with one hand but making it more difficult with the other. It’s no good trying to speed up planning approvals while making it more expensive to build at the same time.

“Local Government reorganisation will only make it worse as councils amalgamate resources leading to even fewer planning officers employed than now. With new build forming only one per cent of the housing stock at most, policies encouraging improving existing properties and downsizing are essential otherwise reaching the 1.5 million new homes target will be extremely difficult.”

The Committee spelt out the barriers to achieving the target at its recent meeting. They are:

- New build slowdown and lack of affordable homes
- Building Safety Levy due October 26 threatens new build viability
- New high rise safety rules threaten new build and refurbishment
- Lack of skills capacity in some areas including planning officers causing long delays
- Local Government reorganisation may lead to decisions being postponed pending final shape of new body together with possibility of fewer planning officers being employed
- Cost of planning – Europe is much cheaper – leading to lack of innovation and planning
- Government target concentrates on new build leading to lengthy delays between application and decision

- Significant number of developments stalled due to lack of Housing Associations to take on affordable/social housing elements

Ends

For further information, contact:

Sir Vince Cable Tel: 07958 476371
 Email: vincentcable@hotmail.co.uk

Mark Bogard – Family Building Society Tel: 07881 911297
 Email: mark.bogard@familybsoc.co.uk

Jonathan Haslam – Haslam Media Tel: 07779 708542
 Email: jh@haslamedia.com

Editors Note:

1. The committee was formed to monitor progress and offer constructive analysis and policy suggestions on housing delivery. As well as broadening the debate from the Government's disproportionate focus on new build, the committee will also consider other options such as better utilisation of existing buildings.
2. Its terms of reference include:
 - To review the Government's evolving housing and planning policy announcements, actions and consequences in as far as they relate to an 'integrated housing policy'.
 - To monitor actions and policies of wider housing stakeholders (housebuilders, lenders, BoE, Landlords etc) that have a direct effect on the delivery of an integrated housing policy that covers both new and existing housing stock.
 - To commission where necessary independent reports to explore in more detail subject areas relevant to the above that provide helpful and informative commentary on ensuring the Government delivers on its ambitions.
3. The independent Housing Policy and Delivery Oversight Committee is funded by the Family Building Society as part of its long-standing contribution to research to deepen understanding of the housing market in the United Kingdom.
4. Apart from Sir Vince Cable the other committee members are:
 - Mark Bogard, Chief Executive of the Family Building Society
 - The Rt Hon Damian Green, Chair, Social Care Foundation
 - Neil Jefferson, CEO of the Home Builders Federation
 - Vicky Pryce, Chief Economic Adviser at the Centre for Economics and Business Research
 - Ingrid Schroder, Director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture
 - Maya Singer Hobbs, Senior Research Fellow, IPPR
 - Professor Tony Travers, a director of the LSE London

About Family Building Society

The Family Building Society, launched in July 2014, is a trading name of National Counties Building Society. It was originally set up by postmen in 1896 and now has assets of £2.9 billion.