



Position Statement June 2008

Housing Green Paper 2007

Introduction

The publication of the Housing Green Paper as one of Gordon Brown's first major policy announcements last July put housing at the top of the political agenda, for the first time in decades.

The Green Paper proposes the biggest increase in house building since the sixties with a proposal to deliver 2 million new homes by 2016 and 3 million new homes by 2020. Local authorities through the planning system, working with developers and social housing providers and with a renewed emphasis on councils will be instrumental in ensuring that this housing growth is achieved.

The Paper contains the following themes:

- increasing supply of housing
- improving design and sustainability of housing
- increasing the supply of affordable housing

The bulk of the proposals set out in the paper form the Housing and Regeneration Bill, currently before Parliament. This position paper sets out our broad overview of the Housing Green Paper. For more detail on our views of specific issue, please refer to our website <http://www.arch-housing.org.uk/>

ARCH's view

The Green Paper sets out a vision that people should have access to homes at a price people can afford, in a place they want to live and work. ARCH agrees with this vision but believes that the paper places too great an emphasis on new build and particularly new private build. There is a need to recognise that not everyone can afford to buy and that a reasonable supply of social housing must be available for them. Retained authorities have a vital role in providing good quality, well managed, affordable rented housing. We believe that councils should be encouraged and enabled, through the finance system to provide more social rented housing.

ARCH recognises that there is a need to increase the supply of housing but is concerned that there is potential in the rush to deliver build targets that quality and community are overlooked. We believe that this should not simply be a numbers issue, but that Government should concentrate on the issues of place and quality. Otherwise the homes we build today will be the regeneration projects of the future.

The continued investment in existing stock is vital to ensure the maintenance of quality and standards.

Climate change and the contribution that housing makes to carbon emissions is a vital concern for ARCH members and we agree that there is a need to ensure lower emissions from our homes and support the moves to reduce emissions from new build.

We welcome the target in the paper to increase the supply of social rented homes by 45,000 per year. We would however, like to see that increase include our members and not be restricted to housing association and ALMO new build. We believe that this should include grants to retained authorities to allow them to increase the supply of council houses in their area to meet their community needs.

ARCH welcomes the inclusion of Local Housing Companies and believes that this a positive move towards replacing some of the stock local authorities have lost through Right to Buy.

ARCH believes that the Homes and Communities Agency needs to develop real partnership arrangements with local authorities and should work with them to help them deliver their strategic priorities. ARCH would also like to see stock retained authorities being included in future HCA grant programmes, as this would give us parity with Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and enable us to provide much needed additional housing to our communities.