

For immediate release, 13 November 2007

George Howarth MP adds weight to the North West Housing Forum's call for the Government to improve access to affordable housing in the region

George Howarth today joined other North West Members of Parliament from all political parties at the launch of the North West Housing Forum's push to secure more sustainable and accessible housing for the region.

The case for housing in the North West: The region's contribution to homes for the future will be launched at a meeting of North West Members of Parliament later today, 13 November 2007. It outlines the key asks that will help deliver affordable homes that meet local needs. There are four overarching messages coming out of the document

1. We welcome the growth in the regional housing allocation announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. However, the way funding is allocated between regions needs to be reviewed so that it better reflects the complexity and affordability of diverse housing market areas.
2. There are three core elements to an effective housing strategy, all of which are essential to deliver affordable housing that will support continued economic growth:
 - Developing new homes
 - Improving existing housing
 - In a few places there is an oversupply of the wrong type of housing that fails to meet local needsOnly through a housing strategy that addresses all of these points can we achieve a tangible increase of affordable houses for local people. We need to get the balance right between regeneration and new build.
3. We need to focus on long-term solutions to increase the supply of socially-rented housing in the region and we welcome the proposals highlighted in the consultation paper *Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable* (Jul 2007).
4. There should be strong representative voices speaking out for local interests. We need direct participation of regional experts and local representatives to input into the development of national housing policy.

The document describes priorities for housing in the region, how the markets have changed over recent years, and urges Government to take specific actions to respond to the diversity and complexity of the issues currently faced.

Councillor George Davies, Chair of the North West Housing Forum said:

"Sustainable funding to build new housing, renovate existing homes and develop truly sustainable communities is essential to support a growing economy.

"Our plan outlines how we can build vibrant communities supported by proper housing, accessible to all. We want to work in partnership with Members of Parliament to ensure policy and resources meet the housing and housing-related needs of the region."

George Howarth MP said:

"Access to affordable, decent housing is a right, not a privilege, but too many of my constituents are inadequately housed. We need to make sure that we regenerate unused housing and build new homes where appropriate.

"I look forward to working with the North West Housing Forum to put pressure on the Government to make affordable, accessible homes a reality for all."

Notes to Editors

1. The North West Regional Housing Forum is an inclusive and independent body which represents strategic housing organisations and a range of other stakeholders who have a shared interest in influencing policy and maximising resources to meet the housing and housing related needs of the Region.
2. The Forum has been supported in this work by Dr Brian Iddon MP for Bolton South East and George Howarth MP for Knowsley North & Sefton East.
3. For further information about the meeting, the publication or the work of the Forum please contact Sue Powell, Senior Manager – North West Housing Forum on 01228 882831/07939 239024 or e-mail sue.powell@carlisleha.org.uk