

South Meadow Homes Ltd.

Designers & Builders of Quality Homes in Pembrokeshire

33 Main Street, Pembroke, SA71 4JS Tel: 01646 682342 Fax: 01646 621390

www.southmeadowhomes.co.uk

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Communities, Equality and
Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Our Ref: GT/HC

24th June 2013



Dear Madam

Re: **Inquiry into Barriers to Home Building in Wales**

Thank you for your letter of 13/6/13 inviting contributions to assist your Committee's Inquiry into what is holding back the delivery of new homes in Wales.

We are a family owned and managed Housebuilding Company that has been building new homes in Pembrokeshire for over 30 years. We are currently operating at less than half our average level of activity over that period despite having retained earnings to create a strong balance sheet and more importantly having young award winning management eager to expand. We employ and train local craftsmen. We have built over 600 homes in Pembrokeshire.

More erudite commentators will explain many of the industry's woes but you may wish to consider the following simple improvements to assist delivery of new homes by SMEs.

1. **Planning Applications**

In our area SMEs are not getting similar considerations to larger companies. For example we have a non-contentious application taking over three years to process whilst there are examples of "nationals" being fast tracked at unseemly haste.

"Quick win solution" – take this up in your next letters to Chief Planning Officers and invite feedback from applicants. (Satisfaction surveys?)

2. **Local Development Plans**

These appear to be geared to revising policy and identifying larger sites. They have proved unimaginative and inflexible in respect of small scale opportunities where rigid development limits are 'desktop' imposed on smaller settlements.

"Quick win solution?" – letter to Chief Planning Officers to use these limits as a guide only and to consider applications against policy also, particularly in brownfield situations.

**Welsh Winners & UK Finalist 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010,
2011 & 2012 of NHBC Site Management Quality Award
UK Winner 2012 Pride in the Job
Management Award (Category 2-50 per year)**

3. **Design**

Some Planning Officers seem to think they are required to insist that every new residential development should replicate an inner city brownfield clean up. This is deterring some land owners who will be retaining adjacent land, to release potential development land at this time.

“Quick win solution?” – guidance to Chief Planning Officers to encourage schemes that reflect the vernacular styles of the locality and individuality of dwellings. This will also encourage SMEs to build flexible appropriate homes that they feel confident they can sell.

4. **Building Regulations**

Is this really the best time to be allocating scarce resources away from frontline services to finance the quest for a “Welsh” house?

Why not let England share our regulations or vice versa. Basically everyone is trying to upgrade Regulations, why not work together for efficiency savings. This will hopefully harness the international input of the building products industry, the world renowned input of the Building Research Establishment and most importantly bring some stability to our industry. Others will have explained to you the cost and confidence ramifications of current proposals. If the Lions can, why can't we?

“Quick win situation” – declare a fixed term moratorium before any further changes are made.

It is a fact of current economic life that the proven method of creating new homes on any scale is by speculative investment. Stability helps create confidence. Uncertainty deters investment. Anything you as a Government can do to reassure us as investors of capital, energy and reputation to continue to invest in local housebuilding will be appreciated.

Finally the current and foreseeable situation of more people involved in the ‘cerebral’ aspect of housebuilding than actually working on site is not sustainable by any definition of the word.

Yours faithfully



GUY THOMAS FRICS

Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

**Welsh Winners & UK Finalist 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010,
2011 & 2012 of NHBC Site Management Quality Award
UK Winner 2012 Pride in the Job
Management Award (Category 2-50 per year)**