

PRESS RELEASE

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LIGHTWEIGHT PREFABRICATION PROVES INEFFICIENT

The Traditional Housing Bureau (THB) is calling on the Government to at last recognise the folly of relying on unpopular and inefficient modern lightweight methods of construction as the blueprint of the nation's future communities. The call comes in the light of comments made by Regeneration minister Geoff Rooker.

Geoff Rooker has openly admitted that modern lightweight prefabricated methods of construction are not cost efficient, have failed to deliver quickly or to reduce costs. This comes after one of the largest advocates of lightweight modular system building The Peabody Trust, had its knuckles rapped by a recent Audit Commission report that criticised the housing association's focus on projects that place innovation over delivery and cost performance.

This admission of the apparent failing of Government building policy to deliver cost efficient results has been reinforced by a damning House of Commons report, "The Role and Effectiveness of the Housing Corporation", which highlighted the concerns over the use of prefabricated techniques. The Committee instead urged the Housing Corporation to consider "whole lifetime costs and adaptability" as more sustainable housing solutions.

Barry Holmes Executive Director of the THB commented: "It is no surprise that it is mainly in the social housing sector where the majority of lightweight prefabricated and modular techniques are employed as the Government's anti-competitive predisposition for these methods puts unreasonable

pressure on HA's to conform. What is significant is that in the private house building sector the take up has been slow as house builders are more free to recognise the economic and performance issues surrounding so called lightweight prefabricated construction."

NHBC statistics provide evidence that the private sector still favours modern masonry construction with the vast majority of new homes continuing to be built in brick and block materials, using the talents of the existing workforce to build long lasting homes.

Homes built by brick and block methods provide durability that lasts far beyond the recommended 60 year lifespan currently promoted for lightweight alternatives. Modern masonry also out performs in terms of thermal efficiency, acoustics, fire and flood resistance making it an all round more sustainable option for the future of Britain's communities.

Further to that, masonry construction provides a more economical solution for the building industry as Barry Homes explains: "As a proven construction method with a well established manufacturing industry the costs involved with building in modern masonry are predictable – and up to 10% cheaper than offsite methods. With off-site construction methods requiring a huge initial outlay, builders are wary of placing all their investment at the front end of a development project before any properties have been sold. The ready supply of materials, without having to wait months for delivery, and sourcing through the existing supply chain allows builders to call off orders and manage their finances much more efficiently."

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