

MP responses to CIC questionnaire: Building our Region

Compiled 28 Nov 2006

Transportation

Paul Holmes	Not create a US-style super-highway network. Congestion is costing £20bn per year Must be allied to public transport improvement Road-pricing and wider congestion charging may be most effective solution
Mark Todd	Increased support for community transport
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Government delay in delivering many such schemes Essential to balance with options for people who use public transport
Tim Boswell	In favour of widening the M1 and local access to it on merit Essential to have sustainable public transport

Regional Strategy

Philip Hollobone	Too little
Tim Boswell	Elected local government should have the largest possible say in determining spatial strategies
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Thoroughly opposed to top-down regional targets for housebuilding. Believes they ride rough-shod over local feeling and democratically elected local government, displaying a worrying lack of concern for the environment by allowing building on floodplains and do not take into account the need for new infrastructure to make communities genuinely sustainable
Mark Todd	Local government white paper due Would expect the prime representational role in spatial strategy to lie with district councils

Sustainable Communities

Paul Holmes	Will use building regulations to improve environmental quality of new buildings Local council discretion over how targets are met eg balance housing and transport policies
Tim Boswell	<i>Outlying parts of John Prescott's sustainable communities initiative in his constituency</i> Need for proper infrastructure, sustainable building standards and environmental gain where possible
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Clear more properties need to be built – issue of where and what standard Elected local government should have more say over development in their areas
Philip Hollobone	Level of housing in SE far too great Needs appropriate infrastructure investment
Tom Levitt	I applaud the development of the concept of sustainable communities, however defined, but with an emphasis on energy and resource conservation

Brownfield Land

Paul Holmes	Should be a priority for re-use Supports incentives such as tax credits to assist cleaning of polluted land ut would go much further, reforming the tax sysem to encourage regeneration and re-use and repair of existing buildings Business rate reform and cut rate bills for small businesses to encourage regeneration Reforms would see business rates becoming based on land values not property values, this would extend the local business rate tax base to empty land zoned in the local planning (<i>sic</i>) for commercial use Would cut the VAT charged on repair, modernisation and conversion of existing buildings for residential use (<i>new build on greenfield is zero-rated</i>)
Tim Boswell	Ensure final costs are not out-of-line with a general philosophy of developing brownfield sites in a hierarchy above greenfield
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Must prioritise the development of previously used, genuinely derelict land Back gardens should not be classified as brownfield Re-examine the definition of green- and brownfield
Philip Hollobone	Change planning guidelines and, hopefully, provide a fiscal incentive
Mark Todd	Through community land trusts
Tom Levitt	I applaud the policy of shifting the emphasis of development further on to brownfield sites

Affordable Homes

Paul Holmes	Enormous shortage both to buy and rent Government owns land that could be used for building and could provide it as a subsidy locked in for subsequent occupiers or purchasers – homes could thus remain affordable
Tim Boswell	Accept need for more affordable housing in rural areas... and this will require a degree of flexibility and perhaps cross subsidisation
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Michael Gove, Shadow Housing Member, currently looking at plan
Philip Hollobone	Open to ideas

Transport

Paul Holmes	
Tim Boswell	Sensible mix of car and improved public transport
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	For greener cars, not anti-car Need to make it easier for people to walk and cycle and we need to improve public transport

Skills

Mark Todd	The education/training marketplace should be able to respond I don't encourage pushing education/career choices at government level
Tim Boswell	I would support improved professional development in these important disciplines, including supporting technical development and craft skills
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Shadow Trade and Industry Team hosted a summit earlier this month with representative of the construction industry. Will continue to work closely
Philip Hollobone	Open to ideas

Education

Mark Todd	Government action to incentivise particular educational and career choices is normally unhelpful
Patrick McLoughlin	I am concerned about training in and for the industry
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Decline in engineering and science pupils post-16 is very worrying. The Government can address the poor teaching of these subjects in schools
Philip Hollobone	Too little
Tim Boswell	<i>(Former Education Minister)</i> Concerned at the decline in demanding engineering or science subjects. Important to improve overall quality and approach of teaching in the earlier years and for the industry to show career development

Sustainable construction

Mark Todd	Building standards have already been changed. Buyer's packs are intended to offer efficiency data which will encourage this to be taken into account in purchases
Tim Boswell	Favours a judicious mix of regulation and encouragement Evidence good from Daventry in using sustainable features
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Government's Energy Review report due. Shadow Trace and Energy Team are conducting own review
Philip Hollobone	Change planning guidelines and provide fiscal incentive

VAT on construction

Mark Todd	Any equalisation is likely to raise costs on new building presenting a political risk. Favour in principle but would want to see some work done on its economic effect
Tim Boswell	Clear conceptual difficulties in further derogations on VAT but there may be opportunities for lateral thinking to achieve a similar effect
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	If equalised at zero there would be an inevitable cost to the exchequer If equalised higher, revenue neutral level, it would make new houses less affordable Quality of Life policy group to report
Philip Hollobone	

Sustainable homes

Mark Todd	I'd prefer the measures in the buyer's pack to be tried first
Tim Boswell	Interesting proposal but unable to commit to tax reliefs at this stage
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	High environmental standards should be incorporated. Quality of Life policy group issue
Philip Hollobone	

Building procurement

Mark Todd	Not entirely [satisfied]. There is normally a cost to increasing the range of one's suppliers and an increase in the complexity/risk in demanding a wider mix of partners in a PFI or other project. I'd entertain specific proposals
Tim Boswell	Would welcome a greater perspective on this issue provided it did not further delay the overall process There is some tension between the scale of PFI projects and the need to involve small and local businesses wherever possible
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Small businesses should be encouraged to apply for public sector contracts where they are able to properly undertake the work
Philip Hollobone	

Planning services

Mark Todd	Would like to see evidence that meeting targets increase the number of appeals. My own council area has tended always to be among the fastest and I've noticed no obvious change in appeals
Tim Boswell	The present government has introduced too many targets which have led to perverse effects
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Need to look at planning system to ensure it is efficiently delivering the results we need. The measurement of the quality of planning decision will be vital I am instinctively opposed to centralised inspection regimes that have driven up the number of planning appeals
Tom Levitt	I believe the planning process is better than it was but might be further improved

Design quality

Mark Todd	Good quality stems from a clear brief and a well-understood procurement process Better training in procurement (or better sharing of best practice) could be helpful
Tim Boswell	Good quality design is important in order to ensure a degree of civic calm Move away from pursuit of least cost although money is not unlimited
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Good quality design is extremely important... helping regeneration and increasing quality of life and sense of community Local government should be free to approve designs appropriate to local circumstances

Construction safety

Mark Todd	Construction safety is a contractor responsibility with the HSE being an agency to enforce the law. HSE activity should be focused on a risk analysis (activities and businesses most likely to be generators of construction hazards)
Tim Boswell	Has strong interest in maintaining the important regulatory role of HSE provided that risk is properly assessed and cost kept under control. (<i>Is responsible for H&S matters for own party</i>)
Patrick Mercer/ Mark Simmonds	Policy review on HSE currently