

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ALL-MEMBER MEETING**

Date: 29 January 2016

Subject: **Overcoming barriers to housing delivery**

Report of: Nick Woolfenden, SEEC Head of Policy Co-ordination



Recommendations:

- i) Take the opportunity to discuss and raise issues with the guest speakers.
- ii) Identify actions SEEC/partners should take to help tackle housing delivery barriers.

1. Turning local approvals into development on the ground

- 1.1 SEEC is very pleased to welcome two guests to discuss tackling barriers to delivery of locally approved housing plans/permissions:
 - **Lord Gary Porter of Spalding CBE, LGA Chairman** - Leader of South Holland District Council since 2003, Gary became LGA Vice-Chairman in 2011, before becoming Chairman in 2015, also being made a life peer.
 - **Carrick Casson-Crook, Strategic Land Director, Barratt Southern Region** – A town planner by background, during his 15 year career in house-building Carrick has worked on a wide variety of residential schemes across the country, securing permission for over 20,000 homes. Carrick previously served as infantry officer.
- 1.2 The South East builds the most homes in England – 21,900 in 2014-15 (CLG figures), some 3,600 more than 2nd place London. Members are keen to see locally approved housing plans delivered and permissions built before they give more. There is widespread concern that development is often slow to be built once permission is given. For example recent LGA research shows a growing number of unimplemented permissions in the South East, rising to 66,751 homes in 2014/15 (2nd highest after London at 111,008); and recent press articles show national capacity for 600,000 homes on landbanked sites of the nine top housebuilders.
- 1.3 SEEC members are looking at what could be done to ensure more timely/rapid development of locally approved permissions. The issue is also a priority in London, if the Mayor is to deliver on his commitment for London to meet its needs in its boundaries. Further overspill pressure from London to the South East would be unsustainable given existing high levels of South East housing need and environmental/infrastructure constraints. The challenge of delivering housing is a widespread priority at the moment, for example with the [Government's review of national planning policy](#) (proposing a local 'housing delivery test'), [LGA's Housing Commission](#) and [IPPR London Housing Commission](#).

2. For discussion & next steps

- 2.1 Our speakers will share their views on what could be done to tackle barriers to housing delivery. In discussion, members may wish to consider what action SEEC and others could take to address the challenges – issues raised recently by members include:
 - Is there a role for discretionary incentives/powers for councils to encourage timely delivery of locally approved plans/permissions eg council tax on stalled developments with planning permissions?
 - How could industry capacity/skills be improved eg local council control of skills budgets to better target funding to the training needed?
 - How can infrastructure (transport, utilities, services) better keep up with demand eg greater freedoms/investment opportunities to deliver infrastructure 'up-front'; and how to fill the potential greater funding gap arising from new Government initiatives such as 'starter homes' that do not contribute to infrastructure?
 - Government focus seems to have been on changes to the planning system for some years now, but what more could the development industry itself do?