

Summary of proposals to ensure better quality new homes.

Quality should consist of getting it right first time, on time, every time. Everything should be (where normally expected) straight, smooth, flat, level, square, vertical and free from damage and blemishes. The only really acceptable tolerance is plus or minus zero – not those overly generous ‘get out of jail free guidelines’ in the often quoted – “A Consistent Approach to Finishes” NHBC booklet. Building a new home isn’t like surgery, when a lack of attention to detail results in a dead patient. Anything not right in a new home can be taken down and done again, until the accepted correct standards are achieved. It is only time constraints and a total lack of desire by housebuilders that prevents this!

End state funding and government help for failing and indifferent housebuilders

Withdraw the Help to Buy scheme funding next year, to every housebuilder building 500 or more homes who is rated three stars or less in the HBF builder star rating and/or those builders who have a homes built per NHBC Quality Awards ratio greater than 250.

Independent Electrical and Gas installation inspections.

Electrical and gas safety inspections must be carried out by an outside inspector rather than the current self-certification by the individual or installing contractor.

Fully Independent New Home Customer Satisfaction Survey.

These should be carried out by a totally independent and autonomous government-appointed body such as the OFT. The survey should cover every new home built, not just those selected by the NHBC, HBF and house builders. All results for each house builder should be made public. Perhaps a league table for housebuilders would shock some into taking quality more seriously!

<http://www.new-home-blog.co.uk/hbf-national-new-home-customer-satisfaction-survey-2015/>

New Homes Ombudsman

The support, help and processes for redress available to owners of defective new homes are seriously inadequate. The Consumer Code for Home Builders and the New Home warranty provision is not working as politicians have been hoodwinked into thinking it is. New home buyers have very little consumer protection (other than to take costly legal action in the courts) which is being exploited by house builders and warranty providers who many new home buyers believe are working together to look after their mutual interests. A New Homes Ombudsman (NHO) is a must and would give buyers an independent government body who could help new homebuyers with every aspect. Complaints about misleading and incomplete marketing information and underhand selling practices, poor quality, defects and inadequate or indifferent after sales service – with the NHO ordering housebuilders and/or new home warranty providers to pay buyers justifiable compensation awards.

<http://www.new-home-blog.co.uk/why-new-home-buyers-need-a-new-homes-ombudsman/>

Build larger healthier new homes

The recent space standards should be further improved and incorporated within the building regulations making it a mandatory legal requirement for housebuilders to build a minimum sizes with rooms sizes based on the number of bedrooms and likely number of occupants. We should not be building the smallest, darkest new homes in Europe.

<http://www.new-home-blog.co.uk/new-national-space-standards-for-new-homes-not-enforcable/>

<http://www.brand-newhomes.co.uk/new-homes-are-too-small.htm>

New workmanship standards required

Workmanship can and should be improved by requiring acceptable levels of workmanship including reference to 'Quality' in the Building Regulations and Warranty Standards. There is a real need to replace the "should be" guidance with mandatory "must be" requirements, to remove any ambiguity and 'wiggle room' to ensure better quality workmanship.

<http://www.new-home-blog.co.uk/tolerances-used-by-builders-to-defend-poor-quality-new-homes/>

More independent Inspectors and Inspections.

Every new home must be inspected at each stage of the process not only by the housebuilder's site management, but also signed-off by a fully independent government certified inspector. This will ensure the effective control and implementation of all regulations and standards impacting on the construction of new homes.

Professional Snagging Inspections.

All new homes should be independently snagged and inspected before legal completion by an inspector chosen by the buyer. All costs of this inspection to be paid by the housebuilder. No buyer should be required or compelled to legally complete on their new home until the snagging inspection has been carried out and any and all rectification works have been fully completed.

<http://www.brand-newhomes.co.uk/new-home-snagging-inspectors.htm>

More time to build will result in better built new homes.

The Building Regulations and Warranty Standards should establish a minimum build time for each home variation, taking into consideration the number of bedrooms, number of storeys and floor area. As an overall minimum, no new home should be constructed in a time-scale of less than 12 weeks.

Housebuilder's financial year-end.

As the date approaches, new homes are rushed and any lip-service to quality (if it exists at all) goes out of the window in the stampede for as many legal completions as possible in the house builder's financial reporting year. This could be stopped by a rule that only homes independently inspected four weeks prior to the year-end would be allowed to legally complete before the financial year- end.

Change housebuilder bonuses.

Bonuses within the industry are geared to production and legal completions. Only very seldom are quality and customer satisfaction and after sales service part of the bonus calculation. Therefore it is proposed that production bonuses be limited to 3% annual salary, with any further bonuses paid only by demonstrable quality and customer service KPIs.

New minimum standards of customer service.

The almost non-existent after sales service experienced by most buyers of new homes could easily be improved, along with overall quality of new homes, by requiring all housebuilders to be proactive and demonstrate improved measurable KPI year on year. **Those that fail should not have access to the Help to Buy scheme funding.**

More information can be found here:

<http://www.new-home-blog.co.uk/how-the-house-builders-could-improve-the-quality-of-new-homes/>