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Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary-Group  
for Excellence in the Built Environment  
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CC: Graham Watts OBE  
Construction Industry Council  
The Building Centre  
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Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015

Dear Mr Colville,

### **THE RICS SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY ON THE QUALITY OF NEW BUILD HOUSING IN ENGLAND**

The RICS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. This topic addresses one of the most important factors in addressing the UK's national housing emergency. While the RICS is calling for a rapid expansion of the development and the building of new housing, if this isn't delivered at the necessary standards then we will only be creating the next crisis in the attempt to solve this one. As such we have also been working to examine the standards surrounding new builds, as well as the upgrading of existing stock, and we applaud the APPGEBE for its interest in this crucial matter.

The RICS is the leading organisation of its kind in the world for professionals in property, construction, land and related environmental issues. As an independent and chartered organisation, the RICS regulates and maintains the professional standards of over 91,000 qualified members (FRICS, MRICS and AssocRICS) and over 50,000 trainee and student members. It regulates and promotes the work of these property professionals throughout 146 countries and is governed by a Royal Charter approved by Parliament which requires it to act in the public interest.

RICS Regulation monitors, inspects and advises Members and Regulated Firms to uphold our professional, ethical and business standards, as well as against specific schemes. RICS Regulation takes a risk-based approach to monitoring and regulation of its schemes. In line with better regulation principles, our regulatory activities are transparent, proportionate, accountable, consistent and targeted, and our specific comments below should be taken in this context.

Our role as thought leaders in the formation of national policy pertaining to the built environment is unparalleled, and its unique flavor is secured by our Royal Charter, which mandates us to pursue the public interest, rather than the interest of our members. This distinction was underscored recently in the RICS having been invited to serve as the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary-Group for Housing & Planning, a function which we hope will enable us to

contribute all the more to finding effective and collaborative solutions to the UK housing crisis, and play our part in collaboration with organisations such as the CIC in securing the necessary quality in the development of the houses that Britain so desperately needs.

**Response to points of information:**

Turning to the specific questions posed in this consultation, we have the following comments:

- **Ensuring better quality workmanship and the effective control and implementation of regulations impacting on the construction of new homes**

Quality is an issue and not always part of Building Control but an improvement would be a minimum quality standard set by the government. Better warranty and guarantee standards and schemes would also be useful.

It is a known fact that there is a substantial gap between the standards that are expected within Building Regulations and that which is actually delivered in the finished building.

Much work has been done on this important area but one major fact remains in that there is still a significant problem in regard to the co-ordination between the construction teams and the Building Control bodies.

Two issues are pertinent:

The building regulations have been amended to include the gathering of evidence from sub-contractors as to the adequacy and testing of their installations. This is an area that is not best understood by the main contractor and the collection of adequate data is not achieved and therefore the control that is applied is lost.

Building Control bodies cannot be a permanent presence on site and the chance to inspect key areas is often missed by the lack of co-ordination on site (and probably poor planning by the BC body).

We would recommend the introduction of a specific site Building Control liaison person along the lines of that suggested in Section 9 of the Sustainable and Secure Buildings Act that has never been introduced for fear of being too much of a burden. We accept the burden fear but suggest that this could be encouraged as a trial on larger developments.

If you have any questions about these comments, please contact my colleague Benji-Alexander Williams on [bawilliams@rics.org](mailto:bawilliams@rics.org)

Yours sincerely,

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