

Innovation Forum held in Leicestershire with British Gypsum

October 2017

“Building Better Homes: How process, innovation and attitude all make a difference?”



Innovation Forums give an understanding of product innovation and its potential benefits in housing. The October Forum considered the challenge of introducing innovative products to a sector focused on initial price rather than lifetime cost and utility to customers.

This Forum also examined the national and local issues affecting delivery of housing from the perspective of the HCA, NHBC and Housing Associations

Shelagh Grant, Chief Executive, The Housing Forum introduced the event and spoke about the key issues facing the sector. Quality is at the forefront of work The Housing Forum is doing and it believes innovation is key to achieving this. There are also challenges of affordability and supply, which the Government is recognising.

Richard Hartshorn, Regional Director, NHBC gave a presentation of house building performance. 2016 saw the second highest number of registrations by NHBC (accounting for 80% of market) since 2007 and outside London the highest number since 2007.

Completions nationally were 141,175 which was a 1% increase on 2015. Richard noted that over the last decade trends towards more apartments had reversed. Regional completions in 2016 were 12,205 (up 6%) for East Midlands and 14,310 (up 5%) in Eastern regions.

Trends in the house building sector include the move of affordable housing providers into the market sale. The Government has stated additional support for council house building, social rent and the further commitment to Help to Buy. Significant challenges lie ahead in terms of skills shortages and Brexit.

Caroline Cormack, HCA summarised the emphasis on supply. Funding is available for all tenures in the current bidding round and there is flexibility to switch current allocations from Shared Ownership to Rent where it will bring forward supply in 17/18. The rent settlement, the announcement of an additional £2bn for affordable housing, £2.3bn for garden towns and the Green Paper have also been announced recently.

Anthony Riley, Waterloo covered housing association issues, investment programme and local trends in shared ownership. In a fluctuating economy, there are good opportunities for housing associations offering a wide tenure portfolio.

David Kowal from **British Gypsum** then gave a presentation which examined the challenge of persuading housebuilders and housing providers to invest in quality and to adopt innovation following extensive consumer research into motivation for buying behaviour. The example used focussed on two areas of innovation from British Gypsum. The first introduced a specially developed reinforced plaster board core which reduced the number of visits required for patch repairs in the social rented sector and offered total lifetime maintenance cost savings. The second profiled the way enhanced plasterboard products could add significant value to a new home. A case study is attached.

The Innovation Forum then had the opportunity to view the products and test them out. British Gypsum are currently looking for partners to undertake pilot installations of the products.

The following took part in the Innovation Forum:

Speakers:

- Caroline Cormack, Head of Home Ownership & Supply – Midlands HCA
- Anthony Riley, Group Director of Development and Operations, Waterloo
- Richard Hartshorn, Regional Director East, NHBC
- David Kowal, Market Development Manager, British Gypsum
- Shelagh Grant, Chief Executive, The Housing Forum

The Housing Forum Staff:

- Michael Cleaver, Director, The Housing Forum
- Laura Waind, Membership & Development Manager, The Housing Forum

Delegates:

- Chris Seeley, Company Director, Ark Consultancy
- Stuart Murray, Housing Policy and Development Officer, Ashfield Council
- Paul Wilson, Associate Director, BWB Consulting Limited
- Neal Farmer, Head of Development, Derwent Living
- April Knapp, Regional Development Manager, emh group
- Jyoti Madlani, Regional Business Development Manager, Keepmoat Regeneration part of the ENGIE Group
- Niyi Anubi, Regional Business Development Manager, Keepmoat Regeneration part of the ENGIE Group
- David Stutting, Senior Land Manager, Longhurst Group
- Allan Fisher, Development & Sales Director, NCHA
- Glyn Jones, Director of Housing North West, Leicestershire District Council
- Paul Maddern, Partner, Ridge & Partners
- Peter Bignell, Regional Business Manager - Central Midlands, Scape Procure
- Michael Scrimshaw, Business Development Manager, SE Controls
- Dan Gooch, Partner & Investment Manager, Westleigh Housing
- Stephen Corbett, Principal New Business Manager, Willmott Dixon
- Mike Hayes, Contracts Manager, WM Housing Group

**The Housing Forum is grateful to British Gypsum
for hosting the Innovation Forum**