

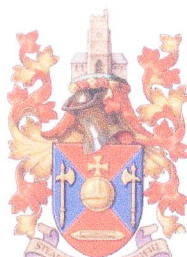
AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN CLERK
MISS HILARY KIRKCALDIE

OFFICE HOURS
10.00 A.M. – NOON
MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND
THURSDAYS

Tel. 01297 32088

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THE GUILDHALL,
WEST STREET,
AXMINSTER,
DEVON
EX13 5NX

16 January 2019

Mr. N. Parish M.P.,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1 0AA

Dear Mr. Parish,

REQUEST THAT LEGISLATION BE BROUGHT FORWARD TO ADDRESS THE NATIONWIDE PROBLEM OF SUB-STANDARD CONSTRUCTION BY MASS MARKET BUILDING DEVELOPERS

The lack of any effective means of regulating the standards of construction in mass housing projects undertaken by major developers is a matter of long-standing concern to this Town Council. I am sure you will recall the out pouring of fury expressed by residents on the one of our major new development sites in summer of 2016. Complaints focus around the quality and credibility of the House-building Council certification scheme.

Major developments in Axminster in recent years have given rise to a stream of complaints from purchasers and residents generally about significant defects which builders have been, at best, slow to rectify. The problem is that where homes are covered by the scheme, local authority building inspectors cannot assess whether building regulations have been met beyond foundations being laid down. These matters have been brought to the attention of Councillors. In many cases developers fail to respond to matters raised by purchasers. This pattern of behaviour is replicated nationwide so requires national legislation. Those affected are advised to raise their problems with the National House-building Council which appears to be an utterly ineffectual body, if comments from our residents are to be believed. Some effort was made by MPs in previous Parliaments to address this issue, but the momentum seems to have been lost; and the problem is increasing. Indeed, some builders have recently set aside millions of pounds for just this problem.

We are writing to ask that:

1. Legislation be introduced setting out regulations requiring all developments to be divided into "phases" of, say, 25 houses and empowering Planning Authorities to freeze commencement on the next phase of construction so long as there are unresolved snagging issues (either in construction or in installation of required amenity provision such as play areas) outstanding on the preceding phase or impose other appropriate penalties to focus the minds of the developers on the need to raise standards.
2. Any NHBC certification MUST be augmented by a full inspection of the property by local authorities to ensure an independent assessment of building regulations. This to be paid for

by the developer. Such inspection should include not just the building but the entirety of the hereditament to ensure the dwelling meets the plans approved.

3. A far less bureaucratic system of dealing with complaints is set up, with an independent arbitration scheme or at least a house building ombudsman.
4. A publicity programme is implemented to ensure that new build purchasers are aware of their rights, to impress on them that snagging issues **MUST** be dealt with before they sign off their purchase.

We look forward to receiving your response to the points we have raised.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Healden', with a small horizontal line at the end.

TOWN MAYOR

cc: Oliver Letwin MP, Ben Bradshaw MP, Maria Miller MP