

## WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### Housing Standards

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Stephen Williams):** For the last two years the Government has been undertaking a major programme to rationalise the complex range of technical standards that can currently apply to new housing. We want to both save money and time for industry and authorities, and consolidate essential requirements into a national framework centred on the Building Regulations. These changes should make it easier to bring forward much needed new homes, whilst improving quality, safeguarding environmental protections, and protections for disabled people. This exercise has received wide support from all sectors.

In March we announced the main outcome of the review. We also set out a roadmap for delivering a radically simplified system for setting standards in the design and construction of new homes by the end of this Parliament. Once all the changes have been fully implemented the predicted savings for industry are significantly greater than those estimated last summer. The impact assessment published alongside the consultation provides a central estimate of around £114 million savings per annum.

The standards which we are bringing forward replace a range of different standards which have been applied hitherto, each with different arrangements for checking which adds significant cost. They are simpler and clearer than those they replace and focus on essential quality, sustainability and accessibility matters. They are being brought within the Building Regulations' system so there will be a simple, single compliance process so reducing bureaucracy and achieving significant savings in process costs.

I am announcing today the publication, for comment, drafts of our proposed standards on access, water, and security and internal space. We are also publishing clarified guidance on external waste storage and external waste standards (Part H of the Building Regulations).

These new standards will underpin the delivery of high quality housing whilst ensuring that the overall cost of development is reduced. This includes for the first time the introduction of Building Regulations for security standards to ensure homes are better protected from crime; and optional Building Regulation requirements, which can be introduced where justified by need and viability for age friendly and wheelchair user housing standards to meet the needs of older and disabled people, and for higher water efficiency to ensure that new development is sustainable. We will also publish a national space standard for new dwellings to enable local authorities, communities and neighbourhoods to influence the size of development in their local area.

We are setting out how the new system will be implemented and the transitional arrangements. This includes the steps to ensure a seamless transition in delivering zero carbon homes policy through the Building Regulations to ensure that the energy efficiency of new homes is further improved, building on the significant improvements that have already been delivered during this Parliament.

It is crucial that the new system beds in quickly, and that practitioners, from authorities to developers, recognise the weight that Government gives to the approach we are setting out. We are confident that the benefits of this new simplified system will be recognised widely – especially given the flexibility this new approach provides to support the delivery of high quality

housing. Nevertheless, if in the light of experience of applying the system the Government considers that it is not being applied as intended by planning authorities, then legislation will be considered.

Finally, we are also publishing an updated Impact Assessment for comment. The Impact Assessment indicates the scale of savings that could be achieved, based on more comprehensive evidence and survey information received since last year's initial Impact Assessment. The potential scale of savings is very substantial.

These changes will be implemented during the course of 2015 once, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Deregulation Bill receives Royal Assent, other than changes relating to energy standards, which will be implemented when the zero carbon policy is brought into force in 2016.

I am arranging for copies of the consultation document and associated documents to be placed in the Library of the House.