

# Press release: Medway leading the way in efforts to fix the broken housing market

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell visited Medway today (16 February 2017) to see how the area is leading the way with ambitious efforts to fix the broken housing market.

Following publication of the [housing white paper](#), the minister toured 3 sites across Kent and Essex, which demonstrate the diversity of the measures set out and their potential to deliver a housing market that works for everyone.

The visits reflected the 4 key aspects of the white paper – planning more homes in the right places, building the homes we need, diversifying the market and helping people now.

The minister opened a new affordable homes development in Gillingham – one of the largest council-built, energy efficient bungalow sites in the UK.

Built on the former site of Gillingham Community College, the site comprises of 32 one to two bedroom bungalows for social rent, part of a £8.5 million housing development project.

The homes have been designed with older tenants and people with mobility problems in mind, suitable for those looking to downsize as well as people who struggle in their current living accommodation. Some of the properties are fully accessible for wheelchair users.

The minister also saw first-hand a new housing development at Kitchener Barracks, one of the largest new developments of carbon-zero homes in the country, awarded £14.4 million by the Homes and Communities Agency through the [Home Building Fund](#) to boost construction on the site.

Thanks to this government funding, Latis, an ambitious SME housebuilder, is delivering nearly 300 new homes as part of a flagship gated eco-community on public sector land formerly owned by the Ministry of Defence.

The development will include 94 new build homes and 101 new build apartments, as well as 72 conversion flats in the historic barracks building at the centre of the site.

Housing and Planning Minister, Gavin Barwell said:

It has been a great opportunity to visit 3 exciting developments across the South East of England today, showcasing the range and diversity of our housing ambitions as set out in our housing white paper.

From seeing a better choice of accommodation for older people in Gillingham, to the re-development of public sector land in Chatham by an ambitious SME housebuilder, and witnessing the expansion of infrastructure in Tilbury. All of these sites reflect the key priorities for this government and these developers are leading the way in efforts to fix our broken housing market and ensure this is a country that works for everyone.

Earlier in the day the minister visited the Port of Tilbury in Essex – one of the UK's top ports for construction materials – to discuss their future plans for growth in the Thames Gateway area.

Tilbury's £1 billion investment programme will see the development of the largest warehouse in the UK for Amazon UK, a new 40MW energy-from waste power station and the creation of a new 152-acre deep-water port facility.

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) General Manager for the South East, Paul Kitson said:

I am delighted that the HCA has been able to support Latis in developing this landmark site, just 40 minutes from central London by train. This will provide much-needed homes that otherwise might not have happened, and is part of the HCA's ongoing commitment to the Medway area.

Medway Council Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Howard Doe said:

We are very proud of Centenary Gardens and we were very pleased to welcome the minister to officially open the new-build development, which is one of the largest council-built energy efficient bungalow sites in the UK.

This new development of 32 affordable homes caters especially for those who are less-mobile and some have been specially designed for wheelchair users. These council homes follow on from the success of phase one of this multi-million pound project which saw the creation of 26 homes on former garage sites.

The aim of this housing project was to offer people the chance to rent good quality, energy-efficient homes that they can afford, and it's safe to say we have achieved this.

The site at Gillingham is named Centenary Gardens to commemorate 100 years since World War One, with plans for the project given the go ahead in 2014.

Construction at Kitchener Barracks is set to commence this year with full completion expected by 2020.

Outline planning was obtained by Latis in April 2015.

The new [Home Building Fund](#) brings together our existing loan funding streams, such as the Builders Finance Fund, making the new Fund more accessible to small developers, and less bureaucratic to apply for than previous funds.

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## **News story: HMRC and National Trading Standards agree to share information on estate agencies**

From:

First published:

16 February 2017

New procedures will streamline co-operation and ease the flow of information.

HMRC and the National Trading Standards Estate Agency Team have agreed new procedures for using existing legal gateways, which will enhance and ease the current flow of information on estate agency businesses between both parties.

Estate agency businesses must register under money laundering regulations and for property redress schemes. Most operate within the legislation to protect the financial system and consumers.

This agreement, effective from January 2017, will streamline our co-operation and information exchange, whilst making it more difficult for non-compliant estate agency businesses to operate outside the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 and Estate Agency Act 1979.

The agreement will enable both parties to target areas of risk, those who are trading without registering appropriately and those who may not be meeting their obligations.

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## **News story: Further decisions on**

# reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and appeals

From:

First published:

16 February 2017

Changes to arrangements for reviews and appeals in GCSEs, AS and A levels

Ofqual has today (16 February) announced a number of decisions about the future arrangements for reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and appeals services.

The exams regulator for England announced in July 2016 a number of decisions related to how it intended to make the systems schools and colleges use to challenge GCSE, AS and A level results in England clearer, more consistent, and fairer for all students. Today's decisions were deferred at that time so that more evidence could be gathered about their potential impact. In light of feedback from a range of stakeholders, Ofqual has decided:

- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to make marked GCSE scripts available to centres, before their deadline for requesting a review of marking, for the summer 2020 exam series onwards
- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to provide the reasons for review of marking decisions automatically for the summer 2020 exam series onwards
- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to grant learners the ability to request results of centre-marked assessments for the summer 2018 exam series onwards
- to defer implementation of the removal of automatic grade protection that currently applies, following a review of moderation for at least two years. During this time, we will review the approaches exam boards take to moderation before deciding whether to remove this protection

Ofqual has announced requirements for key dates for the completion of reviews and appeals. These will ensure common, minimum timelines for centres and students.

A final decision regarding extending the grounds for appeal will be taken later this Spring once analysis of a pilot study has been completed. Official

statistics on GCSE, AS and A level result appeals will be published on 21 March 2016.

Ofqual has also launched a [survey for teachers about their experience of the review of marking and moderation services](#) (formerly known as EARs).

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## Green Party: List of employers named and shamed for underpaying workers is just the tip of the iceberg



16 February 2017

The Green Party is appalled by the revelation 360 employers underpaid thousands of workers almost £1 million [1] but believes it is just the tip of the iceberg as the Government process for naming and shaming employers is extremely flawed [2].

The current system means that large, profitable companies are only being named and paying penalties for a small part of all the arrears identified by HMRC [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“Employers must be held to account if they fail to pay their workers properly. It might seem like an insignificant amount of money to the businesses but to the individual workers who need it to pay their rent or buy food it has a huge impact. In this age of insecurity everyone deserves to be able to make a living to support themselves and their families.

“It’s absolutely right these employers are being named and shamed but the Government needs to make sure this is not the only action it takes to prevent the exploitation of workers. There is still a lack of transparency in the process as errors that are self-corrected by businesses are not included in the list. It means most of the back payments remain a secret and the public might never find out the true scale of the problem.

“The Green Party believes the introduction of a minimum wage of £10 by 2020 is a necessary step towards tackling inequality and poverty and we have long campaigned for the minimum wage to be raised to the living wage level.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38979368>
2. <https://www.carolinelucas.com/latest/minimum-wage-enforcement-ministers-making-a-mockery-of-%E2%80%98naming-shaming%E2%80%99-scheme>

3. For example, if two workers owed £500 each bring a complaint, HMRC will investigate and decide the employer owes total of £1,000. The employer will be named and shamed for that amount and pay a penalty of £2,000. However, if the employer reveals it actually has 200 workers in the same position and HMRC agrees, HMRC will allow the employer to self-correct in those 200 cases. But the employer does not get named and shamed for this £100,000 error and no penalty is imposed – because the employer self-corrected.

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## News story: Alok Sharma marks 45 years of UK-China Ambassadorial ties

In Beijing on Thursday 16 February, Mr Sharma met Chinese Assistant Foreign Ministers Liu Haixing and Kong Xuanyou for wide-ranging political talks to strengthen the global partnership between the UK and China. The Minister emphasised the UK's support for China's Belt and Road Initiative and explored opportunities to develop closer infrastructure and finance partnerships.

The Minister's visit to Beijing follows a three-day tour of south China, leading a delegation of UK healthcare and life science business leaders to Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Xiamen. The delegation showcased world class UK expertise and explored trade and collaboration opportunities across the region.

Speaking at a reception in Beijing, Mr Sharma said:

Throughout the last 45 years, the UK-China relationship has been steadily strengthening. Personal ties and mutual understanding are at the heart of any successful relationship. That is why promoting business, cultural and educational links is so important to us. Forty-five years ago, there were 200 Chinese students in the UK and today we welcome over 150,000 Chinese students at universities, colleges and schools across the UK. Through our Generation UK programme, we are working to increase the number of British students studying in China from 5000 currently to 20,000 by 2020.

As we look ahead to the future for the UK and China, it is important to reflect on what our two countries have achieved over the last 45 years. Trade is clearly a key element of our

partnership. In 45 years, trade between our two countries has increased by an incredible 200-fold to CNY 553 billion. We want to do even more. We are also working together to address some of the significant challenges facing the world today, such as conflict in the Middle East and international terrorism. Our Infrastructure Alliance will allow us to work together to build the capacity of third countries, and we are tackling global health issues such as anti-microbial resistance.

An anniversary is always a good moment to reflect on our past achievements. This one is no exception. In the past 45 years since our countries established diplomatic full diplomatic relations, the pace and scope of what we have achieved individually and together is extraordinary.

## **Further information**

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