



# Radical Simplification is Needed to **Unblock** the Supply of New Social Housing

Despite government targets and the will of Local Authorities to create new social housing, completions remain way below the numbers needed. Over 1m people are on waiting lists, stuck in unsuitable accommodation or effectively homeless.

The process of providing new housing for social rent needs to be radically simplified if we are to have any hope of picking up the pace and providing the homes our country desperately needs.

Barriers exist at every stage: feasibility, planning, design, build and handover. Effective solutions need to involve both a simplified product and a simplified development process.

To overcome these barriers, Osborne has partnered with Innovaré - specialists in manufactured housing technology - to simplify every step of the process. Together we provide an end-to-end social housing solution for local authorities and housing associations.

Greater standardisation of the product delivers greater confidence over the cost, timing and viability of projects while also delivering high quality and energy-efficient homes.



## How Many Homes?

According to government targets the UK needs to build over 300,000 new homes each year. Recent research by Herriot Watt University suggests that the number of homes needed may, in fact, be significantly higher at 340,000 per year up to 2031. The research points to the fact that there is already a 3.9m shortfall in the number of homes.

How close are we to meeting these targets? Official statistics show that in the twelve months to December 2018, 165,090 new homes were completed. Of these, housing associations accounted for 27,450 and local authorities just 2640. It is in social housing where the impact of this shortfall is felt most.

Social rented housing is in desperately short supply. It is the only affordable option for millions of people while shortage of supply continues to inflate house prices for owner occupiers. 'Affordable' rented accommodation with rents at 80% of the local free market level is still beyond the financial means of many. Figures for completions of homes for social rent in 2017-18 were just 6363, compared to 30,000 a decade before. We need a way to open up the supply of new homes for social rent on a massive scale.

## Barriers to New Social Housing

100% of local authorities surveyed by Scape Group said they would like to provide more housing for social rent. Finance is clearly a major issue but the Scape research also revealed that skills shortages and slow construction were perceived as significant barriers. Scape, significantly, also pointed to these factors as opportunities. Organisations that can present a credible plan to overcome these barriers should have an advantage when it comes to attracting funding.

## The Need for Simplification

Construction has evolved into a complex business. While other industries have embraced standardisation and digital technologies to improve productivity and quality, construction is still predominantly reliant on traditional skills and methods. Every build in effect is a new prototype, rather than a systemised and repeatable product.

Skills shortages are becoming more acute, and complex delivery models elevate cost and timing risks to levels that prevent social housing projects moving forward. A viable solution to the social housing shortage is unlikely to rely on traditional methods of construction.

### MMC and Offsite

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and offsite have been highlighted as viable options to deliver the productivity and economies needed to achieve an exponential increase in social housing starts. The government even has a presumption in favour of offsite in publicly funded procurement.

Unfortunately, there's still a lot of confusion about different types of offsite construction. There's further confusion over different terminologies such as modular and what they mean in practice for future residents and in terms of construction costs.

There is also a lack of experience of using offsite methods among local authorities, housing associations and many developers. This lack of familiarity is a brake on more widespread adoption of the technology.



## A Simplified Approach

Osborne in partnership with Innovaré have risen to the challenge by developing a systemised house configuration framework and a simplified model for new social housing site development.

Flexihomes by Innovaré is a component-led product that features standardised designs for a range of house types from one bed apartments to four bed houses. House styles can be adapted easily and quickly to meet specific site requirements and market expectations.

The service led site development process encompasses every stage from feasibility to handover. All homes can be based around prefabricated bathroom and kitchen pods that are shipped to the site as fully fitted out units, with a range of finishes to reflect the market expectations of the different types of tenure.

The remainder of the structure is built from Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs). These comprise a rigid foam core sandwiched between stressed OSB skins. The assembly method of construction delivers a high quality home with speed, being watertight in 48 hours.

SIP technology has been used by Innovaré for over 15 years and has been successfully applied to housing, schools and hospitals. Panels have a minimum certified design life of 60 years.



## Systemised Designs and a Managed Process

Component-led housing has a uniform above-ground build cost for all designs. The designs can also be modified to make best use of available land or to achieve the desired housing density. Manufacturing precision also means minimal defects and snagging.

The product is all about certainty to ensure that schemes are completed on schedule, meet energy performance targets and have low maintenance requirements throughout their minimum 60 year design life.

CAD and BIM methodologies guarantee buildability and building performance. The manufacturing process brings control, simplicity and certainty over costs and build times.

The repeatability of the product ensures there are fewer defects, while comprehensive 'as-built' documentation simplifies the handover and ongoing maintenance of new homes. Maintenance requirements are minimal, providing long-term cost savings to social housing providers.

The systemised product and process overcome the barriers faced by local authorities and housing associations wishing to create more social housing.



Contact Osborne to discover more about how component-led design can simplify the supply of new housing.

Visit: [www.osborne.co.uk/systemisedhousing](http://www.osborne.co.uk/systemisedhousing)

Email: [richard.king@osborne.co.uk](mailto:richard.king@osborne.co.uk)