



## **BUILDING MAGAZINE; INDUSTRY MODERNISATION**

Dear Sir / Madam

Nick Raynsford raises some very pertinent queries with the Government's plans to increase the housing supply (A fight on his hands, pg 30, issue 37).

Surely the crucial issue addressed was whether an expansion of housing would lead to a drop in design and environmental standards. It is certainly fair to think that if the industry attempts to simply expand its output without significant changes to process, something will have to give.

The key is modernisation. Modernisation of the industry is long overdue, and with Gordon Brown holding both the carrot of looser planning permission constraints to allow more houses and more revenue, together with the stick of any Office of Fair Trading findings, the expansion gives the chance for this to finally be achieved.

The way to start this process has to be by looking to off-site construction. More than 300 years after Adam Smith's theoretical pin factory was increasing its production through division of labour, many building sites still work largely on a piece-work basis. Off-site methods bring the advantages that factory production lines offer: lower costs, increased output, better use of resources, a safer environment and a more consistent, higher-quality product.

Off-site construction also uses more appropriate materials. Using brick and block may be traditional, but it is not the most effective, whereas steel is lighter, stronger, more durable and, when coupled with off-site advantages, more sustainable.

The Government has presented the building industry with a challenge: to modernise and meet the needs of a growing population. It is undoubtedly a challenge, but with generous rewards available for those willing to embrace modern products and processes, the industry has never had a better opportunity to move into the 21st century.

Bassam Burgan,

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