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FUTURE OF  
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# Housing for the future

Yorkshire's homes aren't going to look like those inhabited by *The Jetsons* anytime soon, but something does need to be done to meet demand in the region, said Insider's panellists

**H**ousing is a subject on everyone's lips. The country needs more homes, and annual targets of 300,000 look to be well out of reach. At the Conservative Party Conference in October, prime minister Theresa May opened the door for local councils to borrow more money to develop more council houses as a new way to try and break the deadlock.

Yorkshire's residential property market is evolving too, with more build-to-rent properties coming through the planning process and modular construction increasingly being seen as a viable alternative to traditional construction. *Yorkshire Business Insider* brought together some property heavyweights to discuss the issues at play and the policies and changes that could make a significant change in the region.

"Keeping products under the Help To Buy threshold seems to be the mantra of the moment, so there's a lot of nervousness in the industry when the current commitments run out," said Brian Ham, executive director for development at the Home Group housing association, giving his assessment of the housing market.

"Virtually all of the affordable housing we build goes to groups with the highest needs and what's emerging is quite a big

## PANELISTS

**Richard Conroy** chief executive, Conroy Brook Group

**Nigel Barclay** head of SME Investment, Homes England

**Andrew Cook** investment manager, M&G Real Estate.

**Amanda Beresford** partner and head of planning, Shulmans

**Craig Liddell** partnerships director, Ilke Homes

**Brian Ham** executive director for development, Home Group

sector in the private rental market, which is being hit by a reduction in buy-to-lets and build-to-rent properties coming forward."

The Help to Buy agreement will come to an end in 2021, leaving just a few years left for buyers, and the industry, to take advantage. Nigel Barclay, head of SME investment at Homes England, the successor to the Homes & Communities Agency, gave an insight into the current situation. He said: "We fund about 50 sites in Yorkshire every year, most to smaller developers, ranging from five to 250 homes. Typically we see that half of all sales are reliant on Help to Buy and the industry is really hooked on the programme.

"It isn't realistic for the government to pull it without a replacement in 2021, but it also can't continue in its present form. In Scotland, the policy is not just for new-build homes but for the resale market as well and the value is capped at £200,000, which feels a bit more sustainable to me."

Richard Conroy, chief executive of Conroy Brook Group, added: "We build 30 to 40 houses a year and less than five of those will use Help to Buy and that's because our pricing tends to be a little higher at the £400,000 mark. We are registered for Help to Buy, it has proved useful on occasion and following the acquisition of the Ben Bailey brand we're engaging more in the system. We've been less reliant on Help to Buy than most volume housebuilders and I do think it will be a difficult drug to wean the industry off."

Asked about the ways in which the planning system was helping to enable further housing development, Amanda Beresford, partner and head of planning at Shulmans solicitors, said: "One of the problems that is of most concern to the government is delivery. The government has introduced some changes into the planning system to enable faster delivery, including legislation stopping local planning authorities from





# 'DELIVERING INNOVATION THROUGH EXPERIENCE'

An insight into the award winning manufacturer Willerby Ltd and how they continue to strive for excellence

## Introduction

Founded in 1946, Willerby has established itself within the UK holiday home market as a brand associated with premium quality, technical innovation, and breadth of offering. From its two recently expanded production sites in Hull employing c.900 people Willerby has over 70 years' experience in the holiday and leisure market. Willerby's specialist knowledge and state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques are what really set them apart from the rest. Willerby prides itself on innovation – no matter how unusual or challenging it may be – on time, on cost Willerby aim for a truly exceptional result.

## Modular Housing

Over the past 7 years, Willerby have developed a fully approved modular system for manufacturing houses, bungalows and commercial projects delivering over 300 modules to various sites and projects across the UK.

Willerby's manufactured homes are built to comply with the latest technical guidelines, space standards and are fully mortgageable. Being fully certified by TRADA Q-Mark, all of the homes also come with a 60 year structural warranty and a built to last using modern methods of construction, robust details and sustainable materials.

## Willerby Themed Units

To meet the growing demand for unique holiday accommodation, Willerby Special Projects was launched in 2014. Themed in either a beach or woodland style both internally and externally, the units are designed to fit perfectly into multiple environments and are available as one- or two-bedroom variants, with the option of three- or four-bedroom units also available on request. The units are also suitable for living in all year round!

Willerby's themed units can be found at



Bellevalle Housing Development shown above was built by award winning manufacturer Willerby



Willerby's themed units are showcased at Warwick Castle Knights Village

Alton Towers Enchanted Village Resort. These cosy hobbit themed lodges have everything you need to have a truly enchanting stay at the Alton Towers Resort. Comfortably sleeping up to 5, there is a king size bed and separate children's sleeping area with bunk beds and truckle bed.

## Introducing the Urban Bungalow

The philosophy of Willerby's Urban Bungalow is innovative and simple. Each unit is a self-contained, one or two bedroom, single-storey home, which is 100% manufactured at Willerby's dedicated production facility in Hull. Willerby's world class manufacturing techniques enable a home to be made



Merlin Alton Towers Enchanted Village built by Willerby was carefully designed to enhance each visitors experience

every day, or to put it simply, five families each week can be housed appropriately.

## Park Homes by Willerby

One of Willerby's most recent ventures is into the Residential Park Homes Market. Park Homes by Willerby' has launched with a collection of three models named the Hazlewood, Charnwood and Delamere. Built to exceed BS3632 residential standards and the option to fully bespoke, these homes are robustly built (benefiting from a 10-year Goldshield Warranty), highly energy efficient and offer stunning interior designs to ensure you're the envy of all your neighbours!

## Contact

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Brian Ham



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Nigel Barclay



Richard Conroy

attaching pre-development commencement conditions to planning approvals without the developer's consent."

Modular builder Ilke Homes is looking at how factory built homes could be better used. Partnerships director Craig Liddell said: "We're not here to replace traditional housebuilders, it's about bringing bringing in affordable housing, built in a consistent environment, and we think the market will change. There is a bit of a hangover from the 1960s with regards to the perception of modular homes and we're creating a really high performance product. My personal mantra is that 'you wouldn't buy a car built in a field'. You need to see some different homes in the market now and we're generating a huge amount of interest."

On the modular question, Ham said: "We see a rapidly changing industry. It's no accident that the bedrock of the modular industry is in Yorkshire and we will start to see more houses that are 'built' in the South East but manufactured in this region. We're experimenting with different modular systems and we're doing research to find out what they're like to live in."

Richard Conroy likened the industry to still "building like the romans – stone on stone, brick on brick". He said: "We are still trying to create a Rolls-Royce product in the middle of a field, which is difficult in winter. But at some stage we do feel that we'll have to break out of the traditional

model of construction. For a low-volume housebuilder, it's more cost effective to keep building traditionally. We have done timber-framed homes, but it is a difficult leap to make. Recently we've seen Amazon invest in a modular builder as well."

Beresford addressed concerns about delivery: "With more pressure to get homes out of the ground, you could see a narrative being made that as modular is speedier out of the ground it's easier to gain planning permission against traditional housing."

Liddell highlighted the cost savings: "When you look at the cost of modular construction, you need to look at them in the whole. You need to look at the savings across a project, reduced prelims, design fees, downtime due to weather or management, reduced waste as well. We're using traditional building materials, so the cost base of our product is at least equivalent. But there are regional variations: in Leeds you could be looking at £1,500 per sq metre, while in London it is £2,500 a sq metre, which is where you can see more savings being made."

While modular housing is slowly starting to change the public's perception with respect to improvements in quality and build, audience member Gurminder Sanghera from AHR Architects posed the question: "How long do you think it will take before you feel the general construction industry

and housing developers will adopt this approach to housing?"

"For an SME developer, modular has real challenges. Developers only want speed to match their sales. The cost of development is an issue as well," replied Barclay. "The elephant in the room is also the capacity of providers. We've seen some big names come into the industry, but we need to get some of the larger housebuilders involved and open to the idea of developing more using modular methods."

M&G Real Estate has been crucial in getting a number of developments off the ground in the past 12 months. Investment manager Andrew Cook said: "The rental sector will be where we see a lot of modular really kick on. The issues with getting mortgages and security with a modular product is unknown at this time. Modular really works in the student sector, because it's all held by one owner. We could put up a property, rent it out for 30 to 40 years and then take it apart and build a new one. As a model that would work for us."

Ham added: "You can't turn supply on and off with modular housing, and you end up with higher costs if you slow factories down. The major providers in the sector might only be creating 10,000 houses in a year, which is a drop in the ocean if the target is for 300,000 homes. It's up to the industry to grow its own capabilities before it becomes mainstream." ■