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PDR has been a success but more red tape needs to be cut

16 May 2017 | By Martin Skinner

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I read [Simon Creasey's article 'Back Door Plan'](#) with interest - my understanding of the PDR policy is that it was intended to cut red tape and bring forward an increased supply of homes while regenerating outdated and often vacant office buildings.



This has clearly been achieved and the path of future policy should follow this principle to further bolster supply, particularly with such an overloaded and inefficient planning workforce.

On most of our [PDR developments](#), we have gone in for planning not only to extend the building but also to transform the façade.

This has resulted in significantly higher construction costs per square foot but it has maximised the number of homes delivered on the site and given our developments the new residential appearance that our customers want.

In many instances, the challenges and cost of the conversion meant that we probably would have done our own 'knock-down and rebuild' had it not been for space standards (space standards apply to new-build but not conversions).

The [space standards review that we have been campaigning for](#) (which was promised in the housing white paper) and further PDR initiatives should be welcomed if we are going to deliver the number of homes required to meet the government's ambitious housing target.

CASE STUDY: SUTTON COURT



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Sutton Court was a conversion of an old 1960s office building in Sutton into 82 apartments. We spent four months going through planning for a new facade and two new residential floors on top of the building comprising nine new apartments. We stripped the building back to its core and reskinned it in a contemporary style with new windows and balconies. The construction cost (including design fees) came in at circa £260psf. Had we not delivered the improved scheme and gone for PDR only, it would have cost us around £195psf – so the construction costs for the improved scheme was around a third more psf.

As it stands, we have a significant construction capacity constraint and a failed viability model that leaves developers struggling to make money after finance costs (despite the huge effort and extraordinary risks required) without house price inflation.

Every other industry is rapidly learning to do more with less while meeting evolving consumer needs and expectations – why should residential be any different? The government needs to be bolder and take more risks like PDR – reducing regulation and taxation to inspire innovation, competition and supply.

Martin Skinner, chief executive of [Inspired Asset Management](#)

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