Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

1. Paper / Proposal Title: The future of policy and standards for low and zero carbon new homes in England

2. Format:

verbal presentation

3. Author(s) Name: Dr Dan Greenwood, Dr Alina Congreve

4. University or Company Affiliation: University of Westminster and Climate KIC.

5. Abstract (300 words):

Our research evaluates policy and standards for low and zero carbon new homes in England, where national and European-defined targets have recently been removed. The low/zero carbon homes agenda was launched in 2006 with the aim of establishing 'performance orientated' policy tools including a complimentary mix of mandatory national regulations, voluntary and quasi-voluntary standards. With the aim being to establish a baseline national standard while driving innovation, such an approach would seem to resonate with the influential notion of 'smart regulation' as a much discussed alternative to traditional 'command and control' regulation. This paper assesses the effectiveness of policy strategy in achieving a 'smart' policy mix, as a fundamental part of the challenge of moving towards a low carbon, sustainable built

environment. The research addresses the need for in-depth qualitative studies to complement quantitative analyses of regulatory impacts. Drawing from 70 semi-structured stakeholder interviews, the study, funded by Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (RICS), assesses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges ahead. All interviewees were involved in local housing projects and/ or national policy-making.

Our findings highlight:
• The fundamental importance of clearly defined, strong mandatory regulations, complimented by public support for industry-led research, development and training.
• The potential for non-mandatory sustainability standards to drive innovation, promote consumer engagement and housing delivery.
• The impacts and costs of a lack of policy certainty and clarity.

Key conclusions
• Streamlining needs to be distinguished from 'deregulation' which involves a lowering of standards, widely viewed as neglecting the potential for regulations and standards to foster innovation towards sustainability goals.
• Problems experienced with the Code for Sustainable Homes, could instead have led to further reflection and learning. Addressing these problems required reforms, not necessarily the abandonment of a smart, performance orientated approach.

6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr Dan Greenwood is Senior Lecturer in politics at the University of Westminster. His research expertise includes governance and policy evaluation. Since 2008, he has undertaken extensive research evaluating the zero carbon homes policy agenda in England and took part in an industry placement with the Zero Carbon Hub in 2012/3. He is joint coordinator of the PhD programme for politics and international relations at Westminster.

Dr Alina Congreve has worked as a planning lecturer at Reading and Hertfordshire Universities. Her current role is education lead for the UK and Ireland at Climate KIC. She has recently completed a project to identify and compare local authorities in the US and UK that are leaders in climate change mitigation, carried out with Professor Pitt from Washington. She has completed a secondment at Centre for Cities, where she contributed to their policy and advocacy work on planning and devolution. She has also worked for the UK Green Building Council bringing stakeholders together to see how the green buildings and city devolution agendas could be better aligned.

https://www.linkedin.com/in/alina-congreve-8630332b