Communities and Local Government: Empty Properties

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative) Click here to watch Sarah live

What steps he is taking to make (a) empty houses and (b) vacant properties above shops available for rent.

Grant Shapps (Minister of State (Housing and Local Government), Communities and Local Government; Welwyn Hatfield, Conservative)

Our strategy for empty homes applies to all properties, including flats above shops, but we are also committed to revitalising high streets and shortly will publish the Government's response to the Mary Portas review.

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

The South Hams is one of the least affordable places to live in the UK, with house prices on average 16.7 times the average income, and more than 1,200 households on bands A to D of the housing waiting list. What does the Minister plan to do to address these affordability issues in the South Hams?

Grant Shapps (Minister of State (Housing and Local Government), Communities and Local Government; Welwyn Hatfield, Conservative)

My hon. Friend is right that for levels of non-affordability in many areas to have reached 16.7 times average earnings is unacceptable. The Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend Andrew Stunell, referred to the social house building programme and the 170,000 being delivered during this Parliament. She will also be pleased to hear about the provisional allocation, within the local authorities comprising her constituency, of more than Â£3.5 million under the new homes bonus, which will also encourage greater affordability when used to build more homes. We are also considering allowing homes over shops, and many other changes coming from the Portas review.

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