

[Press release: Medway leading the way in efforts to fix the broken housing market](#)

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell visited Medway today (16 February 2017) to see how the area is leading the way with ambitious efforts to fix the broken housing market.

Following publication of the [housing white paper](#), the minister toured 3 sites across Kent and Essex, which demonstrate the diversity of the measures set out and their potential to deliver a housing market that works for everyone.

The visits reflected the 4 key aspects of the white paper – planning more homes in the right places, building the homes we need, diversifying the market and helping people now.

The minister opened a new affordable homes development in Gillingham – one of the largest council-built, energy efficient bungalow sites in the UK.

Built on the former site of Gillingham Community College, the site comprises of 32 one to two bedroom bungalows for social rent, part of a £8.5 million housing development project.

The homes have been designed with older tenants and people with mobility problems in mind, suitable for those looking to downsize as well as people who struggle in their current living accommodation. Some of the properties are fully accessible for wheelchair users.

The minister also saw first-hand a new housing development at Kitchener Barracks, one of the largest new developments of carbon-zero homes in the country, awarded £14.4 million by the Homes and Communities Agency through the [Home Building Fund](#) to boost construction on the site.

Thanks to this government funding, Latis, an ambitious SME housebuilder, is delivering nearly 300 new homes as part of a flagship gated eco-community on public sector land formerly owned by the Ministry of Defence.

The development will include 94 new build homes and 101 new build apartments, as well as 72 conversion flats in the historic barracks building at the centre of the site.

Housing and Planning Minister, Gavin Barwell said:

It has been a great opportunity to visit 3 exciting developments across the South East of England today, showcasing the range and diversity of our housing ambitions as set out in our housing white paper.

From seeing a better choice of accommodation for older people in Gillingham, to the re-development of public sector land in Chatham by an ambitious SME housebuilder, and witnessing the expansion of infrastructure in Tilbury. All of these sites reflect the key priorities for this government and these developers are leading the way in efforts to fix our broken housing market and ensure this is a country that works for everyone.

Earlier in the day the minister visited the Port of Tilbury in Essex – one of the UK's top ports for construction materials – to discuss their future plans for growth in the Thames Gateway area.

Tilbury's £1 billion investment programme will see the development of the largest warehouse in the UK for Amazon UK, a new 40MW energy-from waste power station and the creation of a new 152-acre deep-water port facility.

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) General Manager for the South East, Paul Kitson said:

I am delighted that the HCA has been able to support Latis in developing this landmark site, just 40 minutes from central London by train. This will provide much-needed homes that otherwise might not have happened, and is part of the HCA's ongoing commitment to the Medway area.

Medway Council Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Howard Doe said:

We are very proud of Centenary Gardens and we were very pleased to welcome the minister to officially open the new-build development, which is one of the largest council-built energy efficient bungalow sites in the UK.

This new development of 32 affordable homes caters especially for those who are less-mobile and some have been specially designed for wheelchair users. These council homes follow on from the success of phase one of this multi-million pound project which saw the creation of 26 homes on former garage sites.

The aim of this housing project was to offer people the chance to rent good quality, energy-efficient homes that they can afford, and it's safe to say we have achieved this.

The site at Gillingham is named Centenary Gardens to commemorate 100 years since World War One, with plans for the project given the go ahead in 2014.

Construction at Kitchener Barracks is set to commence this year with full completion expected by 2020.

Outline planning was obtained by Latis in April 2015.

The new [Home Building Fund](#) brings together our existing loan funding streams, such as the Builders Finance Fund, making the new Fund more accessible to small developers, and less bureaucratic to apply for than previous funds.