

Speech: Sajid Javid's speech to the Federation of Master Builders

Good evening everyone, it's great to see so many familiar faces and it's a real pleasure to have you all here in Parliament.

As you know, the Palace of Westminster is beginning to show it's age, we really do need to get the builders in.

I'm pretty sure I saw some of you pricing the job up on the way here!

And if you want to send your quotes to the Speaker, tell him Sajid sent you!

You are all, literally, master builders.

The FMB does great work in recognising that, certifying it.

Raising and maintaining standards.

And of course providing clients with the reassurance they need.

It's a vital task.

After all, none of us are immune from the kind of shoddy workmanship the FMB protects against.

Even Winston Churchill.

When he was Prime Minister he complained that 10 Downing Street was, and I quote, "shaky and lightly built by the profiteering contractor whose name the street bears".

Today, of course, the centre of government is strong and stable!

Although I'm sure John will take issue with that!

I want to start this evening by saying thank you to everyone in this room who helped us do something amazing last year.

217,000 net additions to the housing supply. The highest level in a decade, and an increase of 70% on what was achieved in 2009/10.

There's still a long, long way to go but thanks to your hard work we're certainly heading in the right direction.

Almost 40,000 of those net additions came about from change of use, including taking spaces above shops and turning them into homes.

This government has, quite rightly, put a lot of time and effort into regenerating high streets and strengthening local economies.

That has generally focussed on the retail side of things, but as the report you're publishing today shows there is no reason why commercial and residential cannot coexist happily together.

I grew up in the flat above the family shop, so I've seen for myself how it can work not just in theory but in practice too.

That's why last month's [Budget](#) set out plans to make it easier to create quality homes in empty spaces above high street shops. And tonight is the first time I've heard John back the Budget, so well done to FMB for their lobbying!

So, [Homes on our High Streets \(PDF, 2.1 MB\)](#) isn't just a fascinating report, it's also very timely contribution to the debate.

It puts forward some very interesting ideas and proposals; I was going through a draft this weekend.

And we'll be looking at it very closely to see how it can help us to fix this country's broken housing market.

Let me also take the time to thank Mark Prisk for all the work he has done, and for being the genesis of this report.

To do that, to fix the market, we're going to have to create at least 300,000 homes each year.

And small and medium-sized builders are going to have big role to play in making that happen.

Our [housing white paper](#) was very clear on this.

Ever since the recession, the market has been dominated by a handful of very large developers.

It used to be the case that more than 60% of new homes were delivered by small firms.

Today the figure is half that, and that's a tragedy.

I want to turn that around, to see more of you building more homes.

And we're backing that with more funding – an additional £1.5 billion of short-term loan finance for SMEs, custom builders and innovators announced in the Budget.

We're doing this because smaller firms are skilled at developing small sites, great at building out quickly, and have a strong track record of innovation.

And you also put a great premium on standards.

On quality.

When my dad was running his shop he had to make sure the clothes he was

selling were of the highest quality...

...because he was selling them to the local community, to people he'd see every day.

And it's the same for SME builders.

When you operate locally, your reputation is just as important as the work that you do.

That's why membership of the FMB is such a badge of honour, it shows that you're only happy with the best.

And it's not just the quality of work that matters.

Quality of design is crucial too.

That's not just my opinion – it's something the great British public agrees with.

You know as well as I do that getting local communities onside is crucial to getting planning permission.

Well, almost three-quarters of people say they would support the building of more homes in their area if they were well-designed and in keeping with the local style.

People don't like looking at identikit red-roofed boxes that could be basically anywhere in the country.

And nor should they.

Just because we need to build more homes it doesn't mean we need to build ugly homes. Last month I was looking at RIBA's House of the Year.

Make no mistake, the winner was undoubtedly a stunning piece of architecture.

But I'm not sure your average new-build 3-bed home has space for an art gallery, performance area and 27,000 fruit trees!

Good design doesn't have to mean Grand Designs.

To be beautiful, to win that local support, new homes don't have to make bold statements.

They just need to be an appropriate addition, something that local people want to live in and live next door to.

Last week we [invited bids for our new fund](#) that will help local authorities plan for growth and improve design.

But I want to go further.

So, in the spring, we will be working with the sector and with local

government to host a national housing design conference.

It will be a showcase for ideas, insights and best practice from across the country and across the world, kicking off a real debate about how we can raise the design bar for everyone.

But I want you to be building houses that are worthy of your skills as master builders.

And this conference will go a long way to help making that happen.

As I said, there is still much to be done.

Still a long way to go to fix our broken housing market.

But with the FMB's support, with your commitment to quality and innovation, I know that we can get there.

And I'm looking forward to making that journey with you.

Thank you.