

# Firms may get refunds for plan delays

## HOUSING

**Joanna Bourke**

NEW plans for property firms to get refunds if councils take too long to approve planning applications should boost building, Housing Minister Esther McVey told the Standard.

McVey said: "We are looking at some of the things we can do to make planning smoother, faster, more effective."

One method is more refunds of planning fees. The move would mean planning departments "are held to account" for why building work is not happening sooner, McVey said. It could encourage housebuilders to commit to projects

even if they find a council tough to work with.

McVey was speaking after she gave a speech at the Mipim property conference in the City yesterday. The detailed proposals will be published this year. Dean Clifford, co-founder of Great Marlborough Estates, said: "Planning application fees can run as high as £300,000 for very

**Speech:** minister Esther McVey

large schemes. Any initiative which increases accountability on local authorities to deliver their part on time is to be welcomed."

Separately, builder Bellway reported revenue growth of 8.6% to £3.2 billion for the year to July 31. Pre-tax profits rose 3.4% to £662.6 million. It sold a record 10,892 homes. Buyers benefited from the Help to Buy scheme and low interest rates. Boss Jason Honeyman cautioned the rate of growth will be slower this year.

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