

# Housebuilders welcome government moves to help boost construction

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23 June 2020



Housebuilders including industry giant Barratt on Tuesday welcomed government moves to help firms hit by construction delays due to Covid-19.

While businesses were never formally ordered to close building sites for lockdown, a number shut them due to the difficulty of observing social distancing rules. They have worked on rules and much of the industry has now returned to work.

New measures planned to help the sector will be introduced this week, the government said. Planning permission deadlines will be extended, planning appeals will be sped up and builders will be allowed more flexible working hours following agreement with their local council.

David Thomas, chief executive of Barratt, Britain's largest housebuilder by volume, said: "Extending working hours in particular will help us to increase production without putting health and safety at risk. It's important that government continues to act quickly and boldly to underpin the progress made over recent years in building the homes the country needs."

He added that extending Help to Buy would be something else that would provide the industry with “significant reassurance too”.

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The current Help to Buy model is set to be replaced in April 2021 with a two-year scaled back version that is restricted to first-time buyers and includes regional property price caps.

Dean Clifford, co-founder of London housebuilder Great Marlborough Estates said this week's changes are a “welcome springboard for wider reform - and proper resourcing - of the planning system post-pandemic to make it more flexible and efficient”.

Victoria Hills, chief executive of the Royal Town Planning Institute, said the measures should mean that developers "can get on and start on the housing developments we need without having to apply for extensions".

Planning permission usually expires after three years if work has not started on site. Sites with consent that have an expiry date between the start of lockdown and the end of this year will now see the consent extended to April 2021.

More details are available here from the government:

[\*\*https://tinyurl.com/y89gffbm\*\*](https://tinyurl.com/y89gffbm)

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