

NEWS RELEASE: 30th November 2007

BuildStore welcome Planning Reform

The recent Planning Reform Bill, published by the Government on Tuesday, has been welcomed by self build and renovation experts BuildStore, the company behind the National Self Build & Renovation Centre in Swindon. The reform bill will introduce relaxed restrictions of the Planning White Paper to allow households to build bigger loft conversions and extensions, without the need for planning permission, from next year.

Anyone who has carried out major extension and conversion work on a property will know only too well the delays that can occur when applying for planning permission from their local authority. However, the new reforms to the Planning White Paper, published in May, will have a significant impact for the growing number of home improvers extending their home or converting their loft, with an estimated 25% (90,000) reduction in the number of planning applications needed.

With a shortage of affordable housing, many households are now choosing to improve their existing homes, rather than move up the property ladder. This has resulted in a significant rise in the number of household planning applications, which now total 350,000 a year, an 11% increase since 1995. A routine planning application can take up to three months and cost in the region of £1,000, yet around 90% of applications are approved. Where there is little impact on neighbouring properties, extensions less than three metres in depth (or four metres for detached bungalows), and loft conversions are less than 50 cubic metres, no planning application is needed. Furthermore, under the old system for permitted development, householders could either convert their loft or extend the rear of their house without planning permission, but not both. This is now possible with the reforms.

Tim Doherty, Managing Director of the National Self Build & Renovation Centre, comments:

“As families grow and large detached homes become increasingly more expensive and hard to find, major extension and renovation is a simple way of adding additional living space, and also increasing the value of your home. At the National Self Build & Renovation Centre, we see a lot of visitors who are looking to do exactly that. We have a dedicated Renovation Zone, featuring a full-size house, which takes visitors through the various stages of renovation, conversion and extension work. Accompanied by an audio guide, our Renovation House shows in detail how to tackle a major home improvement project, giving people the confidence to give it a go themselves.

“Easing restrictions on planning for extension and loft conversions will allow people to create larger additional space in their home, through loft conversion and ground floor extensions, without being limited by planning ‘red tape’. This will also dramatically reduce the workload of the planning authorities, which in turn should help to speed up the process for larger infrastructure projects that *do* need planning permission.”

The 67,000 sq ft National Self Build & Renovation Centre is on a different scale to anything seen before in the UK self build and renovation sector. It has a dual role of helping to educate and inspire people interested in self building and renovation and ensure those actively building have access to all the services and materials they need to build their dream home.

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Notes to Editors:

BuildStore, the company behind the National Self Build & Renovation Centre, offers an end-to-end service to the self builder and people wanting to renovate or convert an existing property. To capture this rapidly growing market, The National Self Build and Renovation Centre was opened in February 2007.

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Visitors can learn about the different stages of the self build and renovation process from the “Education Zone”, which features six life-sized exhibits including, plant, groundworks, walls and roof structures. They can also find inspiration inside the Potton show home, and in the “Renovation Zone”, discover techniques for renovating, with a full-sized house transformed from an ‘old wreck’ to a fully renovated home.

For visitors just starting their self build or renovation journey, the National Self Build & Renovation Centre can help them find a plot of land, renovation or conversion opportunities, with PlotSearch, consider finance

options for their project with the in-house financial advisors, or simply get advice from the team of experts. Those actively involved in the process can take advantage of TradeCard, a unique card which offers discounted prices building materials and tool hire from leading merchants and suppliers. Plus, over 240 industry suppliers showcase their products and services in a dedicated "Trade Village", complete with a bar code system, allowing visitors to easily order brochures and further information, which will be sent to them at home.

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