

NEWS RELEASE

HOUSING PLANS RECEIVE MULTI-MILLION BOOST

Ambitious plans for improving housing across the Tees Valley have been given a £6million-plus shot in the arm.

The Housing Minister Margaret Beckett has announced that the Tees Valley will receive £6.18million over the next two years as part of a national £605million programme to increase house building and meet the needs of local communities.

The announcement was warmly welcomed Neil Etherington, Chairman of Tees Valley Living, which looks after the area's housing interests, who stressed that, despite the current economic difficulties—especially in the housing sector—the area had to maintain its long-term objective of improving both the supply and quality of housing in the sub-region.

He explained “The award of £6.18million is one of the biggest in the country and the highest in the North East—again demonstrating of how effective the Tees Valley has become in getting our act together and winning the support we need.

“This announcement is a direct result of the success of our bid, co-ordinated on behalf of Tees Valley Unlimited, for ‘Growth Point’ status, a Government initiative which aims to help areas provide the kind of housing which is vital in driving forward economic regeneration and attracting investment and jobs.

“Through Tees Valley Living we already have developed major renewal programmes in a number of our urban centres in Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool and the South Bank area, but gaining the support available through Growth Point status means we can work on initiatives to open other sites—for instance in Darlington.

“Of course, this a tough time for all parts of the housing industry but that doesn’t mean we should be standing still. The funding available over the next two years will enable us to take action now which can encourage developments for the future—such as the infrastructure improvements needed to open up new housing areas.”

Added Tees Valley Unlimited Chairman Hugh Lang “If we are to deliver our ambitions for regenerating our area we need to significantly boost our housing programme—providing the right mix of homes to meet the needs of all sectors of the community and looking at ways in which we can ensure that people have access to homes they can afford.

“We do face a considerable task—the evidence shows that there are major concentrations of houses which no longer meet the requirements of the local community or people potentially moving into the area. Transforming our housing supply has to go hand-in-hand with all our other regeneration work and, thanks to bringing all the key partners together through organisations such as Tees Valley Unlimited and Tees Valley Living, we are in a good position to make that happen.”

11-12-08

NOTE FOR EDITORS: For further information please contact Peter Dodson, telephone 01642 353111.