



Government considers gazumping crackdown as it looks to speed up house-buying process

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid wants to make buying and selling a home 'cheaper, faster and less stressful'

Ministers will launch a probe into unscrupulous home-buying practices where people who have already put down an offer on a property can be outbid by rival buyers. Communities Secretary **Sajid Javid** has called for views on the custom – known as gazumping – as part of wider plans to make buying and selling a home “cheaper, faster and less stressful”.

The consultation will also consider boosting confidence in the housing chain through “lock-in agreements” to prevent purchases falling through, as official figures show a quarter of sales collapse each year.

The Chancellor is said to be considering moves to tackle the housing crisis by allowing the Government to free up public land and directly commissioning housebuilders, according to *The Sun*.

Mr Javid has been an outspoken critic of his party’s record on housebuilding, telling the Tory conference that **its “failure on housing” had opened the door for Jeremy Corbyn**. Outlining the plans, he said: “We want to help everyone have a good quality home they can afford, and improving the process of buying and selling is part of delivering that.

“Buying a home is one of life’s largest investments, so if it goes wrong it can be costly. That’s why we’re determined to take action to make the process cheaper, faster and less stressful. “This can help save people money and time so they can focus on what matters – finding their dream home.” Under the plans, ministers will also examine how digital solutions could speed up the process, and encourage buyers and sellers to gather more information in advance so homes are “sale ready”.

A new survey showed 69 per cent of sellers and 62 per cent of buyers report stress and worry due to delays in the process, while half of sellers were concerned about buyers changing their minds after making an offer.

Shadow Housing Secretary John Healey condemned the “feeble proposals” and insisted that ministers do not understand the scale of the problems facing buyers. “This smacks of a political diversion from the hard facts of the Tories’ housing record,” he said. Mr Healey added: “Home ownership is at a 30-year low and the number of younger homeowners is in freefall, but ministers can only come up with a ‘call for evidence’ on improving the home-buying process.

“This is a government out of touch and out of ideas. Conservatives know housing was a big part of why they did so badly at the election, but after seven years of failure, ministers still have no plan to fix the housing crisis.”

Alex Neill, *Which?* managing director of home products and services, said: “The current home buying process is outdated and flawed. “The Government must put consumers first, ensuring that estate agents deliver a better service for both home-buyers and sellers and that the conveyancing process is simplified.”