

Movers & Shapers

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Troubling targets

Local authorities in London and in the South East are set to build 100,000 fewer homes than expected under the government housing delivery targets (writes Emanuele Midolo).

The capital and the south of England are struggling to meet their targets for the third year in a row despite high housing demand, analysis by the property portal LandTech of the latest government data shows.

Meanwhile, councils in the north of England are over-delivering, with local authorities such as Richmondshire in North Yorkshire building 2,113 per cent more homes than required.

Eastbourne, Epsom and Ewell, and Havering are the three councils delivering fewest homes in England, with 29 per cent, 34 per cent and 36 per cent of their targets built respectively.

Overall, councils were asked to build 207,000 homes and completed more than 251,000 – 121 per cent of the national target.

Last year's numbers, between April 2019 and March 2020, were 11 percentage points up on the previous year.

"This is a reminder that, even before Covid, many areas were struggling to meet their housing targets," said Jonny Britton, the chief executive and a co-founder of LandTech. "The mini boom in house prices has shown that the homeownership dream is very much alive. Many people will not care why more houses are built, just that they are."

Anyone for winter tennis?

Forget winter swimming – that was the leisure pursuit of lockdowns past (writes Katrina Burroughs). This time round it's all about outdoor table tennis, in rain, wind and snow.

The designer of the Serve Happy table (servehappy.co.uk), Tim Worsley, searched in vain for a good-looking robust table tennis table for his garden. After the pandemic struck, with time on his hands to devise his own, the creative director at Big Helping advertising studio developed a bright modern

design, in all-weather powder-coated steel. When the net is down, Serve Happy dons its other hat to become an alfresco dining table.

There are four frame designs to choose from and six colours – or you can order a two-tone table. Serve Happy will set you back £3,400, which includes white glove delivery. Twelve per cent of the cost is a donation to UK food charities, including the Trussell Trust.

Design for life

The latest craze sweeping the interior design world is "biophilia" (writes Melissa York). It blends three bigger trends – sustainability, naturalism and wellness – into one stylish, probably green interiors smoothie.

This philosophy says that we should aim to mimic the patterns and materials found in the natural world in our decor because it simply makes us feel better than synthetic alternatives.

The idea has been creeping into our workplaces since the 1960s and its fans say that introducing these elements increases productivity and reduces absenteeism. Now many of us are working from home, perhaps we can take a leaf out of the biophilic book.

Big brands such as Farrow & Ball have taken biophilia into the mainstream. Its new line with the Natural History Museum, Colour by Nature, has paints with names such as Sap Green and Broccoli Brown, while demand for Freddie's Flowers, a £25-a-week subscription service for self-assembly blooms, surged by 73 per cent during the first lockdown.

This week the long-time biophilia expert Oliver Heath (*left*) launched a design school to teach people how to bring "human-centred design" into the home to "bring a closer link with nature and improve our health and wellbeing".

The introductory course comprises 13 lessons and costs £75, while the most comprehensive course, which includes a one-on-one consultation, is £595. Biophilia is becoming big business.

