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Article on HIPs

Government U-turn delays HIPs until August

Date: May 23rd 2007

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The introduction of controversial Home Information Packs, that should have come in on 1st June, has been delayed until August 1, but 10 local solicitors say they will keep helping their clients to move, with or without HIPs.

Sellers have been confused about what HIPs would entail, but 10 legal firms in Basingstoke got together over a year ago to make sure they were ready to prepare and explain the contents of these packs right now.

Alex Preshaw, partner at Phillips Solicitors, said: 'We began this initiative at least a year ago and we have been united in wanting to simplify the buying and selling process for our clients. We have even successfully trialled some HIPs to make sure the process works, so we're absolutely ready, whatever the government decides to do.'

The ten legal firms are keen to streamline the conveyancing process even further and are working together to standardise the legal documents that they all must use. The number of properties coming onto the market in Basingstoke surged in May as people rushed to sell their houses ahead of the intended introduction of HIPs next week. Alex Preshaw commented on the impact on the housing market: 'There has been some market distortion as sellers have rushed to put their houses on the market, and this could be made worse by a further rise in interest rates. It could have serious implications for the wider economy but we'll have to wait and see. Our main message to our clients is that they can trust their solicitor to help them move house and, if HIPs do indeed become a reality in August, we can prepare and explain the contents of their HIP – it will then belong to them, whoever sells their house.'

A shortage of accredited Energy Assessors is the main reason given for the two-month delay for the introduction of the packs which will include legal documents and a certificate rating properties' energy efficiency, but which are controversial because they cost hundreds of pounds. The government argues they are needed to cut delays in home buying while the

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energy certificates will promote energy efficiency, thereby reducing carbon emissions from homes. From August the packs, including energy performance certificates, will only be required for four bedroom properties and larger houses, so a lot of people intending to sell their houses this year will not have to fork out hundreds of pounds for a HIP. Ms Ruth Kelly, communities and local government secretary, said in the Commons on Tuesday that the U-turn offered a "pragmatic way forward" and would give "clarity to everyone" about the way ahead.

The row over Hips, which the Government claimed would speed up the property buying process and reduce the risk of failed transactions, has rumbled on at Westminster for the last ten years but has been opposed by many professionals in the housing market.

Basingstoke solicitors working together	
Phillips Solicitors	Brain Chase Coles
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ENDS

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