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Rip off Britain [1]

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One rather grumpy German resident of these shores is soon to be an ex-resident. Oliver Hartwich [3] from the Policy Exchange is off to Australia for a better quality of life than can be found in London. Fair enough, although I hope he'll remember to take the yoghurt with him, so as to be able to avail himself of some culture*. In his analysis of what's wrong with our fair land he quite bops the nail on the noddle:

> High taxes and complex regulations have both contributed to the phenomenon of rip-off Britain. In particular, a lack of land supply due to planning constraints has pushed up land prices. But somebody has to pay for this, and in the end it is consumers that are footing the bill for our failed planning policies.

We've no shortage of land in the UK for housing or any other form of building, What we have is a shortage of land that we are allowed to build on. The recent rise and fall of house prices for example, has not been about the change in the value of houses at all. They have stayed roughly where they ought to be, around the cost of building a replacement. The variation has been in the price of a piece of land that you are allowed to build a house on.

Such things as the Green Belts (especially the one around London) act as nothing more than a subsidy to those who already own land inside them: pushing up both the cost of housing and everything else that is manufactured, sold or distributed through an actual building. That's the cause for higher prices in the UK.

I would recommend that someone write a report about all this, so as to have a cluebat to beat some sense into those who insist that we should never increase the footprint of civilisation. Fortunately, that report has already been written. Now all we need to do is get people to read it [4], or even a nice summary [5] of it.

* *Yes, Oz bashing is indeed a cultural necessity*.

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