
The Housing Forum is the UK's cross-sector, industry-wide organisation that represents the entire housing supply chain.

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Manifesto for Housing 2024

Key policies the housing sector would like to see included in general election manifestos for 2024

Our growing membership, drawn from over 150 organisations across the public and private sectors, share our determination to drive quality in the design, construction and decarbonisation of UK homes. They have a commitment to partnership working and share in our vision of 'A Quality Home for All'.

We have drawn on this sector-wide expertise to set out the key policies we would like to see included in general election manifestos for 2024 to ensure that everyone can live in a good quality, sustainable and affordable home.

Our call to action

Poor housing quality causes homelessness, damages health and reduces opportunities in life. It contributes to carbon emissions and fuel poverty. Housing shortages make housing unaffordable and hold back economic growth as well as trapping people in poverty.

Fixing our housing crisis won't be easy – and will require a long-term strategy with upfront spending – but we believe there is a way forward.

Our three key themes are supported by all main political parties. We are calling for manifesto commitments that support delivery and action.

1. Increase housing supply

A quality home for all our citizens is critical. Housing is essential infrastructure and contributes directly to growth. An increase in the supply of new, well-designed homes can be delivered within the next parliament, growing the economy and helping to address climate change.

2. Improve quality, safety and sustainability

New homes dramatically reduce the carbon emissions from energy use in housing. We need to move our existing housing stock to zero carbon energy use and drive up standards in new homes by supporting supply chains with new technologies.

3. Ensure affordable housing and choice for all

Funding is needed for the affordable housing sector to deliver homes for those in need, and to enable housebuilding to continue during a period of housing market downturn. A range of housing products is needed to ensure choice for all generations.

We are calling on all political parties to commit to a long-term plan for housing.

Our vision for housing in 25 years' time is one of sufficient housing for everyone, supported by improved infrastructure in well-designed places where communities flourish.

1

Increase housing supply

All major political parties have emphasised the need to increase housebuilding.

To do this, they should:

- 1 Ensure housing is at the heart of decision-making within cabinet and work across departments to **make housing a top 5 Government priority**.
- 2 Drive up housing supply with ambitious **housing targets** and **strong incentives** for local authorities to meet them, including requiring a five-year land supply and increasing infrastructure funding to areas meeting or exceeding their targets.
- 3 Better **resource the planning system** by improving recruitment and retention, and elevating the status of planners, underpinned by a strong performance monitoring system. We need a professionalised planning service, with local planning officers trusted to determine applications that do not legally need to go to a planning committee, such as reserved matters consents.
- 4 Tackle **nutrient pollution** at source and remove the rules that prevent housebuilding in areas at risk. The Environment Agency should be empowered – and expected – to tackle the issue of pollution from farming and poor wastewater management.
- 5 Incentivise building on **brownfield** sites, with flexible and long-term funding where required to make this viable, and **support for public and private sector partnerships** to bring these sites forward.
- 6 Support local authorities to work together on **strategic reviews of greenbelt** land. This may involve building on brownfield sites within greenbelts and/or moving greenbelts further out to allow cities to grow.
- 7 Move community input into planning **upstream to the plan-making stage**, including the use of design codes, so that applications that are in line with local plans can proceed with more certainty.
- 8 **Underwrite borrowing** for social landlords and the Build to Rent sector, to bring down the costs of raising private finance to fund housebuilding.

2

Improve quality, safety and sustainability

The poor quality of much of our housing stock has never been far from the news lately and needs tackling urgently. We also need to reduce the energy consumption of housing, and to build new housing that is carbon-neutral over its lifecycle.

To do this, policies need to:

- 1 Support a **cross-sector roadmap** with visibility of long-term investment to achieve low-carbon targets in both new and existing homes. This should include **long-term funding for social landlords to invest in their stock** – improving condition, building safety and energy efficiency in a cost-effective and co-ordinated way.
- 2 Take forward the **Strategic Spatial Energy Plan** that sets out plans for how to heat UK homes, including heat networks, the future of the gas network and the big increases in electricity capacity needed to move to zero-carbon energy.
- 3 Reform and update the social rent formula, with **rents reflecting the energy efficiency of the property**, to incentivise landlords to upgrade properties.
- 4 Ensure that **homeowners** are not overlooked and are strongly encouraged to make improvements to their homes, with grants where needed.
- 5 **Skill up the workforce** to deliver and maintain the homes of the future.
- 6 Work with the sector to create a more **reliable market for low-carbon housing**, including the use of Modern Methods of Construction (**MMC**) to futureproof the housebuilding industry.
- 7 Create better incentives to upgrade and improve existing buildings by **removing VAT** from all forms of retrofitting, regeneration and fire safety work.

3

Ensure affordable housing and choice for all

Secure and affordable social housing can transform lives. All political parties recognise that there is an acute shortage of affordable housing and choice for a range of income groups. This leaves too many families in temporary housing or in private rented accommodation they struggle to afford.

To tackle this, government should:

- 1 Create a **Housing Accelerator Fund to tackle the affordable housing backlog**. This would be a £4bn fund to provide 60,000 new affordable rented homes to reduce homelessness by more than half over three years and slash expenditure on temporary accommodation.
- 2 Commit to a **long-term grant settlement** for building affordable homes, with the flexibility to deliver value in changing market conditions.
- 3 Reform grant rates for affordable housing to a **rate per habitable room** in order to encourage building larger family homes where needed.
- 4 Improve the existing system of **S106 and CIL**, rather than introduce a new system that may not have the flexibility needed to deliver the most from affordable housing. This includes improving local authorities' **confidence with using CPO powers**.
- 5 Require a higher proportion of affordable housing via S106 on **greenfield sites than on brownfield sites**. This will ensure that brownfield development remains viable whilst maximising the affordable housing output of greenfield sites, which are generally easier to develop.
- 6 **End the Right to Buy** in order to preserve the current stock of affordable housing for future generations. It is particularly important to end it for new-build council housing so that councils have a stronger incentive to build.
- 7 Support **households who aspire to home ownership** but cannot afford to buy unaided. Increase the income thresholds for shared ownership, to update them in line with earnings.
- 8 Commit to a **long-term rent settlement** for the social housing sector, to help business planning and leveraging of private sector finance.
- 9 Renew the **Community Housing Fund** in order to support community-led development, self-build and custom-build.
- 10 Ensure that **Local Housing Allowance** is updated each year to remain pegged to private rents, to ensure that low-income households can rent in the private sector.



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