

# HOUSING

## SOCIALIST HOUSING POLICIES FOR A RECOVERING BRITAIN

*Making a reality of a decent home for all*

When it looked as if would be no Annual Labour Party Conference in 2020, LHG agreed with Thangam Debbonaire that we would hold a small conference just about housing. We knew there would be a lot of interest – at Annual Conference in 2019, there were more fringe meetings and resolutions about housing and homelessness than even the NHS.

Our two key themes were *how to win the next General Election through progressive housing policies* and *how to help the recovery from Covid-19*.

Our keynote speakers were **Thangam Debbonaire**, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, who focused on **the failings of the Tory Government** on housing before and during the current crisis and **housing policies to address climate change**.

Shadow Chancellor **Anneliese Dodds** was interviewed by long-time LHG member Steve Hilditch.



Thangam  
Debbonaire

Anneliese  
Dodds

### IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2: Conference overview

Pages 3-7: Reports from  
conference workshops

Page 8: Tackling rogue landlords in  
Newham

Page 9: Shocking Shetland fires -  
no more Grenfells?

Page 10: Modern almshouses

Page 11: RedBrick anniversary

# CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Cllr Danny Beales (Camden), Sarah Sackman (barrister), Duncan Bowie, University of Westminster

Leonie Cooper (LAM & SERA), Julia Park (housing researcher), Jane Briginshaw (architect)

Joanne Darbyshire (National Leasehold Campaign), Mick Johnston

Click on a bubble to jump to that workshop's report.

**A**  
Building a better future - Design, quality, sustainability

**H**  
Delivering affordable housing needed in the face of Government proposals on planning

**B**  
Widening our perspective - different tenures, different places

The 8 workshops covered topics across the housing spectrum and heard from speakers from local authorities, Socialist Societies, and community groups, as well as from MPs and academics.

*We sought to make the private rented sector fit for purpose and how to improve quality, design, and sustainability, benefiting both tenants and owners. We also focused on the experience of black and ethnic minority residents and housing workers, both critically affected under Covid-19.*

*Other workshops explored planning issues, how to make our housing policies suitable for all types of areas, funding issues, and the legacy of Grenfell.*

The *Building Council Homes* workshop heard James Murray, MP announce that he will be leading a joint project with LHG to explore how building council housing can once again become a reality across a wide range of local authority areas, with the aim of reporting to next year's Annual Conference.

*Watch this space for coverage of its findings and how you can contribute.*

**C**  
Building public housing once more

Clive Betts MP, Aileen Evans, (SHOUT), Emma Skinner, (Labour Campaign for Council Housing), James Murray MP

**D**  
Learning from Grenfell

Mike Amesbury Abena Oppong-Asare (MPs)

**E**  
Funding the social homes we need

Dr Janice Morphet, University College, London, Cllr Johnson Situ (Southwark)

**G**  
Making the Private Rented Sector fit for purpose

Jacky Peacock (Advice4Renters), Liz Davies (Society of Labour Lawyers)

**F**  
Housing and BAME communities: how racial inequalities have impacted on BAME communities

Cllr Sem Moema (Hackney), Cllr Amina Ali (Tower Hamlets), Anndeloris Chacon (Bristol Black Carers)

### Workshop A. Building a better future - Design, quality, sustainability

Chair: Ross Houston

Leonie Cooper (SERA and London Assembly Member):

Labour members can make a difference even in opposition

- There is widespread opposition to Robert Jenrick's plans, including from Tories
- The last London Labour manifesto section on cleaner greener London: creating world-class public spaces, cleaning up the air and protecting the environment - including solar panels on rooftops, creating energy networks and encouraging biodiversity
- Labour members can influence Local Plans and push for high quality sustainable housing
- Neighbourhood planning systems enable residents to get formally involved in the planning process

Jane Briginshaw (Design England):

- Design is not just 'nice to have'; it is a proxy for talking about people
- One example is Low Traffic Neighbourhoods - we need to overcome people's resistance to reducing car use by painting a picture of a better future, and resisting parking outside new homes
- New towns provide the opportunity to explain what could be when it comes to green transport and healthy living (e.g. Ebbsfleet Garden City)
- We must work with developers to help them sell 'green' as a product
- This all needs political leadership and top-to-bottom conversations that include local communities

Julia Park (housing researcher):

- The highest priority is an affordable home for everyone but we need high quality as well
- People's homes are even more important since Covid-19 - they need to be flexible, adaptable, suitable for any tenure and for working from home, and last for 200 years
- Homes that are not zero carbon should no longer be being built
- Dense, high-rise housing also causes problems for tackling climate change

- Daylight, accessibility and access to open space are all important - good design should include dual aspect windows, balconies, utility space, space for desks in bedrooms and sound proofing

Immediate actions should be:

- ensure that every home has 2 living spaces (i.e. separate kitchen and living room)
- ban studios
- make use of roofspace
- create purpose-built HMOs with decent-sized rooms

#### Key points

- **Political leadership and top-to-bottom conversations are vital**
- **Homes that are not zero carbon should no longer be being built**
- **Daylight, accessibility and access to open space are more important since Covid-19**
- **We must work with developers to help them sell 'green' as a product**

### Workshop B. Widening our perspective - different tenures, different places

Chair: Ed Derrick

Joanne Darbyshire (National Leasehold Campaign):

- Number of possible 'holds' - freehold, share freehold, Leasehold, Shared Ownership, Commonhold
- Shared Ownership is not true ownership and is misleading
- Ground rent is unnecessary, and service charges are uncontrolled and unpredictable
- Other countries with blocks of flats and shared facilities have shown that leasehold is not necessary, and it has been abolished in Scotland
- Commonhold is the best option for replacing leasehold, but has failed to take hold because lenders don't understand it, and there is no support from the state
- Commonhold would allow residents to employ their own management company
- There should be a ban on all new-build leaseholds, with affordable solutions with current leaseholders, a Right to Manage, support

for those with flammable cladding, and commonhold as the default tender

**Mick Johnston** (Retired public sector worker, rural housing expert)

- Rural communities have been written off by the Labour Party for too long
- Issues include serious deprivation and lack of access to affordable housing
- Section 106 has failed as a mechanism for providing affordable housing, especially in rural areas
- Local authorities don't want to resource rural housing enablers
- Many local authorities have long ago contracted out their housing
- Private rental sector very small in rural areas
- Options for other tenures are not there

**Key points:**

- **There should be a ban on all new-build leaseholds, with commonhold introduced instead**
- **All existing leaseholders should be offered other solutions including support to tackle flammable cladding**
- **Rural housing issues must be moved up the agenda within the Labour Party – we cannot try to have one size fitting all**

### Workshop C. Building council housing once more

**Chair: John Cotton**

**Clive Betts MP (Chair of Communities & Local Government Select Committee):**

- Government talks about affordable homes that aren't really affordable – instead we need to talk about genuinely affordable public homes
- To deliver 300k new homes target, at least 150k need to be public homes
- This will require expansion of modular and other modern construction methods, with clear quality standards to avoid the mistakes of the post war period
- Councils should be able to suspend Right To Buy in areas of high housing demand

**Aileen Evans (SHOUT Campaign for Social Housing):**

- Reform land value capture

- Build on green belt – there is space for 4m houses on green belt inside M25 area alone
- Homes suitable for working from home
- Homes need to be cool in summer and warm in winter

**Emma Skinner (Labour Campaign for Council Housing)**

- 8,000 council homes lost in London alone due to regeneration projects - 1m council homes shortage
- Housing policy classism, barrier to council housing
- Cancel Public Works Lending Board debt - £4.5 billion yearly
- We need to speculate to accumulate with council house building

**James Murray, MP**

- There is a clear case for council housing
- We are currently achieving the highest number in 30 years, but this is only 10% of the numbers in the heyday of council house-building
- LHG will lead a project on how to get back to building the council housing we need: "Council Homebuilding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"

**Key points**

- **Kids' life chances are being ruined by housing issues**
- **The abolition of the Right To Buy is an essential element in this, whether total or only in high demand areas**
- **Land issues are key: affordable land for affordable housing campaign**
- **We need a major public house building campaign and to speculate to accumulate**

### Workshop D. Learning from Grenfell

**Chair: Sheila Spencer**

**Mike Amesbury MP and Abena Oppong-Asare MP**

- Now over 3 years since Grenfell and things are moving at a snail's pace, still 300 tower blocks with ACM cladding
- Constant change of housing ministers is hindering progress
- The stigma around social housing has still not been removed, as was promised immediately in the aftermath of Grenfell



- Still opportunities for sub-standard works to occur unless they are dealt with fully in new building regulation proposals
- Leasehold costs issue with many differing parties involved and in conflict - mortgage issues arising with leaseholders unable to sell
- Suggested a round table to sit down with all parties to resolve all these issues – need out-of-the-box thinking
- More transparency needed to build the trust of tenants - at Grenfell, tenants had lost trust and were going elsewhere for advice
- Grenfell tenants all now rehoused and had a much better offer, given more choice than those who are offered housing from the normal waiting list / allocation process - this is how a proper and normal housing service waiting list / allocation should operate.

### Key points:

- **3 years on there are still 300 blocks with dangerous cladding**
- **Sub-standard work is still possible - the building regulations review has not removed this possibility**
- **The stigma around social housing has still not been removed**
- **We suggest a round table to sit down with all parties to resolve all these issues, with out-of-the-box thinking**
- **More transparency is needed to build the trust of tenants**

### **Workshop E. Funding the social homes we need** **Chair: Rachel Blake**

**Johnson Situ** (Southwark Councillor and Cabinet lead for Housing):

- In 1980, 94,000 homes were built, now 6,000 homes a year mostly by local authorities and housing associations
- The Tories have allowed an increase in local authority building and Section 106 has contributed about £4 billion to social housing
- Greater London Authority has a housing target for 325,000 over 10 years - 70% of these would be social housing costing £74.5 million. £4.9 billion a year is needed, but the GLA has only one seventh of that amount

### Conclusions

- It is important to link the economic case to the social one

- The cost of Housing Benefit has doubled, making big savings possible
- In order to win the argument the political argument, this needs combined work by think-tanks, housing associations and others as well as local authorities
- The case should be made for growth post-Covid19
- We need to talk about people's stories and offer tangible benefits

### **Janice Morphet (University College, London):**

- Councils are still providing social housing using their own resources
- International financial reporting standards allow loans on councils' whole asset bases but this has not been implemented in the UK (the Housing Revenue Account system, unique to the UK, gets in the way of this)
- Despite antipathy to 'executive homes', some areas do still need larger houses
- Some councils are currently buying land for use in 20 to 30 years' time and putting clawback into planning agreements
- There is a need to replace the European Investment Bank - this funded Glasgow's developments
- The main issues are lack of skills and the will to make things happen
- Local Authorities often fail to work with Housing Associations and some are now setting up their own Housing Associations

### Key Points:

- **Housing policy needs a better link to the Treasury**
- **Investment in welfare should be viewed as growth**
- **Large-scale building programmes can only be built with grant**
- **Houses can be built more cheaply and flexibly using modern construction methods**
- **The country's housing asset base needs to be used to fund new homes**
- **The HRA system needs to be reviewed, as promised by Labour in the past**

### **Workshop F: Housing and BAME communities: how racial disparities and inequalities in housing provision have impacted on BAME communities**

**Chair: Amanda Pinnock**

**Cllr Sem Moema (Hackney):**

- The BAME community has been disproportionately affected by Covid19
- Poor and inadequate housing has a significant role to play – in Hackney, overcrowding is suffered by 1 in 3 households of some ethnic groups (Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African) compared to 1 in 20 white households; nationally 15.7% of black households are overcrowded compared to 3.4 % of all households
- Nationally 17% of white people live in poverty, compared with 39.9% black people
- Former housing Associations specifically set up for BAME communities are now absorbed into larger structures
- Policy is needed to help improve life changes to address inequalities

**Cllr Amina Ali (Tower Hamlets):**

- We must address gentrification, and how these structures serious impact the majority of the black communities in London and the south – it pushes up the cost of housing, and leaving run down social housing surrounded by shiny buildings
- This creates a loss of identity and the feeling of belonging, and it is difficult to find green spaces. BAME communities seldom benefit from these changes.
- Local authority planning policy should ensure that property developers and contractors factor BAME communities into their development plans which is beneficial for all, irrespective of backgrounds
- We need more initiatives to allow for BAME communities to benefit from developments in the area, with long term gains e.g. opportunities for young people in training and apprenticeships and creating a sense of belonging and ownership.

**Anndeloris Chacon (Bristol Black Carers):**

- Social institutes can work in silos which negatively impacts BAME communities the most, in relation to housing, health and education
- The lack of joined-up approach means people fall through the cracks – some services such as open housing departments have been removed,

whilst online and self-help services do not take account of digital exclusion and technophobia

**Key points:**

- We need more joined-up and integrated working at local and national level, and more resource to specifically tackle issues affecting BAME communities
- The term BAME is often very unhelpful because it suggests that all sizes fit all
- We need a manifesto that meets the needs of all
- More events like the LHG conference are needed to highlight key issues and give a platform for important discussions

**Workshop G. Making the private rented sector fit for purpose****Chair: Janet Berry****Liz Davies (Society of Labour Lawyers):**

- The moratorium on possession proceedings in the PRS was extended to 20<sup>th</sup> September, existing claims can now be reactivated and new claims can be lodged but are being processed very slowly.
- Most evictions will not take place until March as under the new rules landlords must give 6 months' notice, and there will be a winter truce with no evictions in December and January - a "tsunami" of court cases may happen next summer
- Housing standards are worse in the private sector – councils can enforce but have experienced severe funding cuts
- The government has postponed its plans to abolish Section 21 notices and introduce a Renters Bill
- Section 8 rent arrears as a reason for eviction should be made discretionary not mandatory to allow the courts to consider the reasons and propose a payment plan
- Local Housing Allowance needs to be made realistic and brought back to 50% of median market rents, and the benefit cap and Bedroom Tax should be scrapped.
- Landlords discriminating against benefit claimants are being threatened with legal action

**Jacky Peacock (Advice4Renters):**

- More people are renting privately due to a lack of council housing
- Councils should pull together a council-wide private renters' strategy, involving environmental health, licensing, planning and advice services
- Councils should define broad objectives for intervention in the PRS e.g. improving conditions, driving out the worst landlords, providing decent homes for low income residents
- Councils should audit the interventions they use and what other regulatory powers they have - there are lots of underused powers and duties
- In-house advice services should also be supported
- Urgent action also needs to be taken now on the health risks of cold homes

### Key points:

- **The most vulnerable are being forced to live in the most unregulated end of the PRS**
- **We need a comprehensive PRS strategy in each area to drive up improvements in conditions and management**
- **PRS properties need to be genuinely affordable and this means no benefit caps and no Bedroom Tax**
- **Need to promote the fact that housing benefit discrimination against tenants receiving housing benefit is unlawful.**

### **Workshop H. How can we deliver the affordable housing we need in the face of the Planning White Paper?**

**Chair: Chris Worrall**

**Sarah Sackman** (Barrister):

- There is disquiet across the country, not just in cities
- There would be a reliance on development plans shaping outcomes and providing the only access to consultation - it would mean an automatic permission for development in anything other than 'protected' zones based on centralised formulas
- It is based on the false premise that planning processes are to blame for delays - but over 1m homes already have permission but are not built; this allows developers to control prices by land banking and keeping house supplies low
- There is nothing in the proposals about the green belt, resources for housing construction or

effective consultation and it is not a positive vision in any sense

**Cllr Danny Beales** (LB Camden):

- Permitted Development (PD) proposals are likely to have dire consequences on our available housing stock - research shows that the changes will lead to the delivery of small unsuitable housing, effectively a 'modern slum'
- In Camden, the proposed 'First Homes' will be well beyond the reach of low income families, and significantly reducing the pot for truly affordable homes
- Current CIL and S.106 payments gives us far greater flexibility than these proposals
- Zoning proposals offer the worst of all worlds:
  - Growth areas are likely to become a 'wild west' of unplanned development
  - Protected/Conservation areas could stop delivery of all new housing
  - Renewal areas could seriously damage relationships with local communities.

**Duncan Bowie** (University of Westminster):

- Planning should be about serving the public interest, with a national social plan identifying areas for residential growth - it should not be left to developers who will seek to build where most profit is available
- Any plan should assure provision of suitable accommodation, both quantity and quality
- There should be national minimum standards and proper enforcement
- Applications with less than 70% affordable housing should be refused; we should push for a better definition of affordable of no more than 30% of mean household income
- Land ownership is a major issue with land banking raising land values to a point where affordable housing seems to be unviable

### Key points:

- **It is essential that we articulate an alternative vision for planning, focusing on affordable homes and revitalising high streets, especially in the light of Covid-19 and climate crisis**
- **We need to push for more power to local authorities to deliver the development we need, trust the planners, and identify those who want to block essential reform**
- **The real solutions to affordable housing development are local authority direct delivery, and increasing supply and speed of delivery through use of offsite construction systems**
- **It is important to hear all voices and get those not normally heard involved in the campaign**

# ROGUE LANDLORDS



## HOW TO PROTECT TENANTS AND RAISE STANDARDS

**Newham has one of the most extensive, longest running and most effective landlord licensing schemes in the country.** It was set up in 2013 and renewed for another 5 years in 2018.

*At one stage Newham was prosecuting more criminal landlords than the rest of the country put together.* Despite this, every day our enforcement teams have to tackle serious disrepair, anti-social behaviour, illegal evictions and harassment of tenants. Since February 2018 we have fined 247 landlords and prosecuted 38.

We regulate 17,000 landlords who between them hold 40,000 licences. Nearly 50% of our entire housing stock is privately rented, 20% of which have repair hazards.

The vast majority of landlords are not "rogues" and want to do the right thing for their tenants but there is an issue that 13,000 landlords only own a single property. I have worked for Councils and Housing associations for nearly all my professional life and know how hard it is to manage properties even when you have a big organisation behind you.

**So education and support for landlords is a must.** We have established forums for landlords and intend to resume holding quarterly meetings (virtually) and workshops. Since Covid we have been sending out e-newsletters to landlords offering advice and reminders of their responsibilities.

**We think we can make a difference by encouraging landlords to become more professional, but we will not hesitate to prosecute the true rogues.** We are doubling the size of our enforcement team and working with Planning to shut down unlawful HMOs.

We are also working with Council Tax fraud investigators and trying (not that successfully so

far) to get Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to tackle tax evasion by landlords.

We also want to work with renters' unions and other campaigning groups. We are helping tenants who have been illegally evicted or lived in unlicensed properties to claim back their rent from these landlords.

- We call on the government to do what they have promised and abolish so called "no fault" evictions, whereby tenants can be legally thrown out even if they pay the rent and look after the property. Some landlords use this power to frighten tenants from reporting repair issues or harassment.
- We also need compulsory national landlord registration, a requirement to have written tenancy agreements and an increase in criminal sanctions, fines and effective powers to compulsory purchase the very worst properties.
- We demand an end to the inexplicable anomaly that allows landlords who rent their homes to local authorities and the Government for temporary accommodation to be exempt from licensing. Well done to our East End neighbours, Waltham Forest, for their legal challenge on this.
- My final licensing demand would be for Councils to be able once again to regulate rents. Between 2011 and 2018, rents in Newham increased by 56% but salaries have only risen by 21%. A reasonable 2-bed flat in my ward can cost £1500 per month. 49% of all families in Newham live in poverty after their housing costs are taken into account. A staggering 66% of our children live in poverty for the same reason.

We have powers to tackle rogue landlords but not rogue rents. Why not?

*John Gray is Cabinet Member for Housing services in the London Borough of Newham. He is a member of LHG London's Executive Committee and a member of UNISON's National Executive Committee for Housing Associations and the Voluntary sector.*



# NO MORE GRENFELLS?



In July 2020, the 106-bed Moorfield Hotel in Brae, Shetland burned down dramatically. Fortunately, the small band of guests and staff escaped safely with only possessions lost.

The loss to the island's economy was considerable but not unanticipated, since the Total oil company had already announced it would no longer use the hotel.

For around 40 minutes the guests, who had heeded the alarm, suspected it was a false one as there were no obvious signs of fire.

Then fire quickly engulfed the entire roof and fire-fighters were powerless to stop it, despite having called out reinforcements.

This was not the only such incident in Shetland in recent times. In April 2019, the bird observatory on neighbouring Fair Isle had also burned down quickly and completely.

## **What the two buildings had in common was modern methods of construction (MMC).**

Moorfield Hotel was built in 2013 from materials produced in a factory in Northern Ireland using combustible polyurethane insulation held between two sheets of oriented strand board, a product made from compressed wood flakes.

A fire engineer said of the incident *"No building should be able to burn to the extent that there is nothing left of it, and the level of destruction in this case is indicative of how combustible the [materials] were"*.

Shetland's remoteness and transport that is often disrupted by bad weather has made MMC increasingly popular.

**It may also be the case that projects have received less than full scrutiny by the authorities.**

In March 2020, *Shetland News* reported that the Shetland Islands Council had embarked upon a major recruitment drive.

Head of Planning Iain McDiarmid said the service employed about 30 people locally and a 25 per cent shortage of staff was significant. *"If you are looking for example at the development plans team,*

*we are 50 per cent short of officers there, and we are a couple of posts short at development management – so it has a significant impact on what we can do and how we do things,"* he said.

McDiarmid said Shetland wasn't the only local authority in Scotland that was struggling to keep its planning service going as *"There are fewer people-to-job as a whole, the planning schools are only turning out 30 trained planners every year, and if you consider that there are 30 odd local authorities*

*looking for planners, and the whole private sector, then you have a shortage of people in planning and building standards"*.

## **LESSONS TO BE LEARNED**

- Novel fire risks need to be "designed-out".
- Additional regulations and building control may be required for these structures.
- Quality standards must be checked and maintained on-site as well as in the factory.
- Fire crews may need specialised training and equipment to handle such fires.

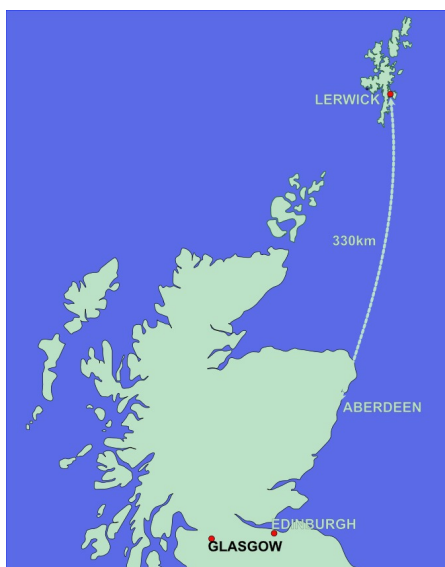
Paul Martin

### Acknowledgements

Peter Apps' excellent and more extensive article in *Inside Housing's* October edition inspired this one.

*Shetland News:*

<https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2020/03/10/efforts-ongoing-to-recruit-planning-staff-as-workload-continues-to-grow/>



# THE MODERN DAY ALMSHOUSE

## Case Study: Worcester Municipal Charities

A lot of water has flowed under the Severn Bridge since the first Worcester Municipal Charities almshouses were founded with a large gift in 1618.

The charity has remained at the heart of the Worcester community, with the current Board of Trustees providing stable, adaptive leadership since 1985, under Chairman Paul Griffith MBE.

The Trustees made the decision to update the residency criteria of the charity for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the younger homeless in Worcester were dominating the queues for re-housing.

In the last 6 years the Charity has created 39 new dwellings, mainly from refurbished offices and empty spaces, with help from Home England.

Worcester Municipal not only helps to tackle homelessness and housing affordability in the area, but its services are uniquely integrated within the wider community.

For example, they fund and provide rent-free office space for the local Citizen's Advice service. This partnership with Citizens Advice's "SmartLets" project means that not only is the Charity housing those in need, it is also helping to provide access to services that can help these individuals move on and up the housing ladder, towards long-term security.

The Charity has reacted quickly to changing events, replacing less profitable investments with new ones in retail and office space. Their latest project is to turn a redundant Probation office into 25 flats for the homeless, taking their total to 96 units by 2021.

This progress has required considerable effort and expense, which has been made possible by grants from Homes England.

However the Charity had to become a *Registered Provider of Social Housing* (RPSH) to access these

funds, a lengthy and expensive process which took three years to achieve.

This process may be too great an obstacle for other almshouse charities smaller than Worcester. *Many are unable to expand their services because they cannot access the needed funding from Homes England.*

The Almshouse Association believes that more needs to be done to provide funding to charities which do not wish to go through the arduous process of becoming a RPSH.

Almshouse Association members have found Section 106 agreements problematic. In this case, Worcester City Council insisted on the Charity meeting the Council's own legal fees for its latest development of 25 flats.

We believe that it is illogical for councils to charge a charitable organisation for carrying out their duty of providing affordable housing.

At a time when local councils are stretched the Almshouse Association believes we should look to expand this uniquely integrated service across the country.

**With the removal of unnecessary barriers, and given adequate resources, Almshouse charities can provide good quality homes with wrap-around services that can support different age groups.**

**Jack Baldan** /[www.wmcharities.org.uk/index.html](http://www.wmcharities.org.uk/index.html)

**£ APPEAL £ APPEAL £ APPEAL £ APPEAL £**

If you cannot spare time and energy, you can still donate to "Labour Housing Group" as follows:

Bank transfer to account number 50478080, sort code 08-90-06, Co-operative Bank, PO Box 1AN, Blandford Street, Newcastle, NE99 1AN.

By cheque made payable to "Labour Housing Group" c/o The Treasurer, Flat 2, 8 Torrington Park, London N12 9SS

**PLEASE QUOTE "LHG2020 CAMPAIGN"**



# RED BRICK - TEN YEARS CELEBRATED

Red Brick blog was launched ten years ago, after Gordon Brown's defeat, to provide a platform to debate the Coalition's policies and to develop housing policies in preparation for a Labour government.

Sadly, we're still suffering under the Tories ten years, 800 blog posts, around 800,000 words later.



This anthology of around 100 posts tracks the Tory policies as they got more and more disastrous.

The title refers to one of Beveridge's five great evils - squalor - because so many of the posts talk about the growth in

homelessness, the explosion in temporary accommodation, declining standards in parts of the private rented sector, and the emergence of a new crisis of unsafe housing.

Unaffordable housing costs, outstripping wages, have created a tension for millions of people between being able to pay the rent, keeping their home warm, and feeding themselves and their children.

**Of course there are solutions, just not under this government.**

The blog has made the case for huge investment in new social housing, and especially council housing, at genuinely affordable rents, for regulation in private renting, and for help for home owners feeling the strain due to the feudal leasehold system.

It has defended the homelessness safety net and called for the enforcement of decent standards in all tenures.

Following my 'retirement' this year, having edited the blog through its first ten years, Red Brick was relaunched as a service offered by Labour Housing Group under the editorship of Chris Worrall. It will be open to anyone with a

progressive view to contribute in a non-sectarian way.

Please read it, write for it, Facebook and retweet it to help Labour build a comprehensive housing policy which will command public support.

Steve Hilditch

## THE RETURN OF

**SQUALOR** is an anthology drawn from the RED BRICK housing blog. It contains posts published during 2010-2020, highlighting issues such as homelessness, the lack of affordable housing, the economics of housing investment, regeneration, renting across all tenures, the failure of the benefits system, and the stigma faced by social tenants.

It is available from

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B08M2FY1Q7/>

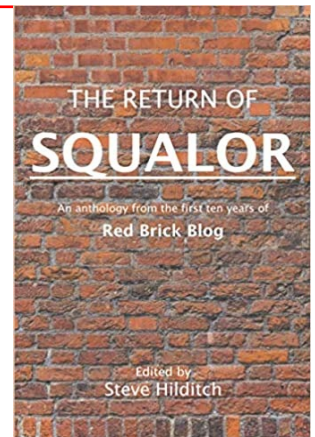
The book is available in both paperback and kindle versions. Royalties, around £2.50 per copy, will go to LHG to help keep housing at the centre of Labour's campaigning.

You can read Duncan Bowie's review of the anthology at Red Brick -

<https://redbrickblog.co.uk/2020/10/the-return-of-squalor/>

Duncan says:

*"The archive could be called contemporary history. It is a reminder of the struggles of the last decade, and how appalling the last 10 years of housing policy have been but also, even more regrettably, of how little attention successive governments have paid to the arguments put forward in Red Brick and by other progressives".*



# THE LABOUR HOUSING GROUP TEAM

LHG EXECUTIVE 2020	
<i>LHG's Executive was elected at the AGM 21<sup>st</sup> March for the two years to 2022.</i>	
Executive member	Constituency/role
Andy Bates (co-opted)	<b>Speakers' organiser</b>
Janet Berry	<b>Membership Officer</b> ( <i>Winchester CLP</i> )
John Bevan	<b>Vice-chair</b> ( <i>Tottenham CLP</i> )
Rachel Blake	<b>Branches liaison</b> ( <i>Bethnal Green &amp; Bow CLP</i> )
Nick Bragger (co-opted)	<b>Fundraising</b> ( <i>Guildford CLP</i> )
John Cotton	<b>Chair</b> ( <i>Birmingham Perry Barr CLP</i> )
Ed Derrick	<b>Website link</b> ( <i>Newcastle Central CLP</i> )
Gerard Heffey (co-opted)	( <i>West Derby CLP</i> )
Ross Houston	<b>Treasurer</b> ( <i>Finchley &amp; Golders Green CLP</i> )
Heather Johnson	<b>Vice-chair &amp; Events Organiser</b> ( <i>Hampstead &amp; Kilburn CLP</i> )
Paul Martin	<b>Newsletter Editor and Policy Officer</b> ( <i>Poplar &amp; Limehouse CLP</i> )
Amanda Pinnock	<b>Social media</b> - ( <i>Huddersfield CLP</i> )
Sheila Spencer	<b>Secretary</b> ( <i>North Tyneside CLP</i> )
Christopher Worrall (co-opted)	<b>Blog lead</b> ( <i>Poplar &amp; Limehouse CLP</i> )

## WHAT IS THE LABOUR HOUSING GROUP?

The Labour Housing Group is a lobbying group that is affiliated to the Labour Party and dedicated to the development of a socialist housing policy.

You can contact us at <http://labourhousing.org/contact> and join us at <https://labourhousing.org/membership/>

Individuals must be members of the Labour Party and agree to be bound by Labour Party rules and the LHG constitution

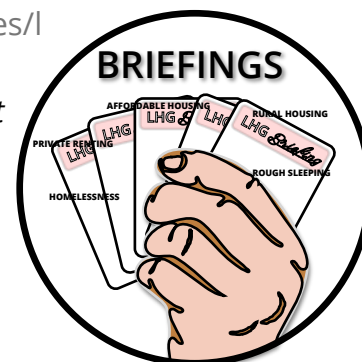
**For readers new to housing policy issues, *Labour Housing Group* publishes a series of short guides aimed at a wide readership.**

Our six published **Briefings** on current topics include *Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Affordable Housing, Private Renting Sector, Rural Housing* and *Leasehold Reform*. They can be found at:

<https://labourhousing.org/resources/hg-briefings/>

Forthcoming issues will cover, *Right to Buy, Sustainable Homes* and *Council Homes*.

If you would like to contribute, please email our Policy Officer, Paul Martin at [pauljmartin@clara.co.uk](mailto:pauljmartin@clara.co.uk).



*Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Labour Housing Group.*