

HOUSING WORTHLESS!

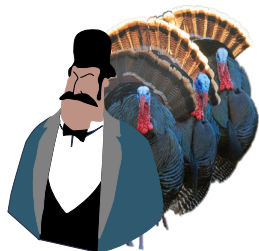
Now we know exactly how much a Tory promise is worth — nothing! In their 2019 Manifesto, the Conservatives pledged to bring in “a better deal for Renters”. In May 2023 they went as far as to publish what was promised to be new legislation to make this a reality.

Now, nearly six months later, they have kicked it into the long grass, claiming they need to “reform the legal system first”!

What they are really afraid of is their own supporters – including 68 Tory MPs who are themselves landlords.

In any other place, those Members of Parliament would have to declare their interest and step back.

But this gaggle of Tory turkeys won't vote for Xmas and have found a way to keep on raking in the rents until they are thrown out in the next General Election.



Labour reckons that more than 30,000 more notices could have been served by then.

Angela Rayner, Labour's Shadow Levelling Up Secretary, said:

“The Government has betrayed renters with this grubby deal with the Tory backbenches.

Having broken the justice system, they are now using their own failure to indefinitely delay keeping their promises to renters in the most underhand way.

After nearly five years of foot-dragging, it appears they need to be appeased with yet more delays. This comes at a heavy price for renters who have been let down for too long already.”

The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019

We rat on Renters

“We will bring in a Better Deal for Renters, including abolishing ‘no fault’ evictions and only requiring one ‘lifetime’ deposit which moves with the tenant.”

Tory Cabinet member landlords
Suella Braverman, Alex Chalk, Nick Fletcher, Jeremy Hunt, Gillian Keegan.

£10k+

Conservatives

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CONFERENCE DELEGATE'S REPORT

"A real feeling of positivity and that the power of Government is within our grasp"

There is no denying that Labour had a good conference this year. From the conference floor there was a real feeling of positivity and a distinct feeling that the power of Government was within our grasp.

In addition to the speeches and presentations of the main conference sessions, there was an enormous array of fringe meetings stretching across the day and into the evenings all of which were well attended and created a lot of energy.

As a housing campaign, LHG members were disappointed that the subject was not chosen as a priority for debate and thus no housing motion was discussed or voted on.

However, housing was up high on the agenda, coming 7th in the CLPs priorities vote and 6th for affiliates, with 27 different housing motions being proposed by CLPs.

This importance was reflected in the main speeches from our front bench. Housing was highlighted in most speeches from different angles.

This started with Angela Rayner at Women's Conference, when she referenced the importance to her of council housing, highlighting the difference a decent Council house can make to families in terms of health and expectations.

Retrofitting homes and energy efficiency was referred to by Ed Miliband as a key part of the fight against climate change.

Rachel Reeve included house building as part of a refreshed economy, bringing down mortgage costs and a proposal to use an increase in stamp duty to deter foreign buyers driving up house prices and leaving much needed accommodation empty for years.

Revisions of the Planning system to increase the number of homes built was referred to on a number of occasions, as was

the invidious position of leaseholders needing a change to a commonhold system.

Keir's speech also referenced increased house-building and the importance of home ownership, especially for young people just starting out.

LHG held two excellent fringe meetings that were incredibly well attended.

The first concerned the importance of housing to election campaigning. We heard how Labour campaigners had already been using housing issues locally to win seats at local elections and an excellent exploration of what opinion polls tell us about the importance of housing to the public.

Our second meeting concentrated on retrofitting as a central plank in fighting climate change with positive examples of actions already being taken.

Both meetings had an excellent panel of thought-provoking speakers and active participation from the audience. It was clear that those attending had plenty to add to the debates and we could have gone on for a lot longer had time allowed.

The number of housing-related fringe meetings was huge, often making it difficult to choose which to attend. LHG members had been invited onto the speaker panels of a wide range of fringe meetings and round table discussions.

The range of topics included private renting, rural housing, affordable and council housing and temporary accommodation.

There were also fringe meetings on other issues where housing was involved, including domestic violence, refugees, pension fund investment, climate change and regeneration to mention a few.

Overall conference had plenty to offer for those interested in housing and clearly demonstrated the range of policies a Labour Government would be able to offer to address the current crisis in housing provision.



Conference delegate Cllr Heather Johnson (LHG Vice-Chair)

CONFERENCE REPORT 2023

CAMPAIGNING ON HOUSING AS A WINNING ISSUE

Our first fringe event discussed the status of housing as a winning issue in the impending election, whenever that may be.

The discussion built upon our motion to conference, which was backed by multiple CLPs, calling for Labour to make housing a central issue and to communicate how its housing policies could transform the lives of millions of working people.

Packed to the rafters

This was a conference abuzz with talk of both housing (there were 67 fringe events on the topic alone) and the next election. As such it should have been no surprise that our event was packed to the rafters, with around 130 attending.

John Cotton, LHG Chair and Leader of Birmingham City Council, chaired the event and started off by remarking to attendees that if the level of attendance in the room was anything to go by, there could be no doubt that housing is an election winning issue.



John Cotton (LHG Chair)

Our first speaker was **Mike Amesbury, Shadow Minister for Homelessness and Building Safety**. Mike recommitted in his speech to: building a new generation of social homes on a scale of which we have never before seen, legislating the feudal system of leasehold into history and ending no-fault evictions once and for all.

Labour will build more homes

He promised that Labour would build more houses, ensuring that it was accompanied by the necessary infrastructure. He would also reform the planning system, re-purpose the term “affordable homes” and hold developers to account.

Labour is the Party for you

He finished by reminding us that if you are one of 4.5 million private sector tenants desperately saving to buy your own home, someone trapped in a leasehold property or one of 1.2 million households on council waiting lists, then housing is a vital election issue and Labour is the party for you.

Elsie Blundell, PPC for Heywood & Middleton and LHG North West Chair, offered a well-informed perspective on housing rooted in the communities of Greater Manchester, where she discussed the realities of housing for many in her area.

Doorstep conversations often focused on housing issues: children without a permanent home, council tenants in inadequately maintained stock, thousands of families struggling with mortgage payments and adult children still living with parents, with no prospect of renting or buying their own home.

Elsie also emphasised the necessity of devolution, noting the record of the Mayoralty of Manchester and Salford in building new homes.

Labour must lead opinion

Ben Marshall, Research Director at Ipsos, introduced insights based on polling into the conversation, noting that housing is the defining issue of our times, before highlighting the Tory's electoral woes.

He admitted that whereas private renters and mortgage holders were historically the bellwether tenures, recent years have seen a decisive shift of private renters to Labour.

Liz Truss' short tenure as PM had torpedoed the Conservatives' standing among mortgage holders. He reminded us that though housing was seen as a Labour issue, principally on the grounds of fairness, the Party should not lose sight of *aspiration* and this must be reflected in its housing policy.

He finished with a rallying cry for Labour to be bold and lead opinion not just follow it. He noted that political issues only develop electoral significance if the electorate believes that the party will be able to do something about it once in power.

If Labour wants to fight an election on housing, we must make it clear what we will do differently.

Rachel Blake, LHG Vice-Chair and Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Cities of London & Westminster spoke about her perception of housing from a London viewpoint.

CONFERENCE REPORT 2023

MAKING ENDS MEET THROUGH RETROFITTING OUR HOMES

LHG's second fringe event tackled '**retrofitting**' and how that could reduce residents' energy bills while still fulfilling our obligations to meet net zero. Attendance was high and produced some of the best discussions held at an LHG fringe meeting.

Two key challenges

John Cotton, LHG Chair and Leader of Birmingham City Council, chaired our event once more, reminding us of the importance of retrofitting to tackle **two key challenges: the cost of living and climate change.**

Jeff Smith, Shadow Minister for Clean Power and Consumers, reminded us of Labour's commitment to the £28 billion that will be ramped up to over the course of the first Parliament.

He pointed out that £6 billion of that pot will go to Labour's **Warm Homes Plan**, which will make decisive progress on retrofitting efforts.

Key role of Decarbonising

Decarbonising homes is one of the key things that Labour needs to do, he said, and estimated that this investment could **cut household bills by up to £1000 a year**, break our dependency on Russian oil, provide new opportunities for jobs and for businesses, and **help us to build the skills we need.**

Cllr Emma Hoddinott from the Co-operative Party offered us a perspective from an organisation which has a unique ability to support energy initiatives with a range of different communities.

A decisive role for co-operatives

She made the point that co-operative models should be a decisive factor in solving our energy crisis as they are built in place, rooted in communities, and trusted.

Emma said that *retrofitting* could be as simple as visiting homes and advising on immediate steps to improve energy efficiency.

The Co-op Party's '*Can't Wait To Insulate*' campaign has led to people-powered retrofit programmes in a number of northern cities.

Warm Homes Now!

Emma finished by stressing the urgency of this mission: people cannot wait another winter, a warm homes plan is needed now.

Brian Robson, Northern Housing Consortium offered another valuable perspective from the North of England.

Inflation Worse in the North

He emphasised that the cost of living crisis has hit the North disproportionately. Eight out of ten places experiencing the highest inflation are in the North, where homes are also generally older and colder too.

Pilot schemes have shown remarkable cost savings, making the retrofitting of homes the best thing that could be done for people in the North.

Greater ambition and drive needed

He admitted that 700 homes needed to be retrofitted each day to meet the 2035 net zero target, but insisted that this was no reason to give up and called instead for greater ambition and drive to meet it.

Rhys Moore, National Housing Federation, repeated his organisation's calls for a joined-up and long-term housing strategy from the Government.

There is no more pressing need for long-term thinking than reaching net zero.

Social housing has a good story to tell

He reminded the room that social housing has a good story to tell on achieving energy efficient homes, but we must not lose sight of what more could be done.

He told us that getting social housing stock up to Energy Performance Certificate rating 3 would save £700m, equivalent to a 3% pay rise for a tenant on minimum wage.

CONFERENCE REPORT 2023

RETROFITTING (cont'd)

Adam Scorer, Chief Executive of National Energy Action, underlined the need to make energy more affordable, particularly for the 5.5 million households who currently cannot afford their bills.

He advised the Labour Party to develop a plan that is *place-based*, and focused on energy efficiency. It must emphasise market reform and develop a supply chain for materials, as well as offering financial interventions to help poor people get through winter.

Homes of the poor are key

After all, he reminded us, there is no path to net zero that does not run through the homes of the poor.

To finish, **Ben Powell of Hough Bellis** spoke on how we should communicate about retrofitting. We need to offer a vision to win over hearts and minds by focusing on people and their lives.

Fundamentally a social justice issue

We should make it clear that retrofitting is fundamentally a social justice issue. It will mean freedom from soaring bills, the right to a comfortable home, and even a guilt-free bath at the end of the week.

If the Government wanted to retrofit homes across the UK then they *could*, before finishing with an imperative for Labour to make the argument as to why they *should*.

We need healthy homes for all!

A WINNING ISSUE (cont'd)

Labour can end homelessness

She noted that all voters had noticed in the last 13 years was a rise in homelessness and rough sleeping.

The last Labour Government had made unarguable progress on ending homelessness and we should be able to do so again.

She pointed out that the policies heard so far at Conference were transformational and we had a significant story to tell voters about how Labour can fix our housing crisis.

Finally, **Richard Bayley**, a representative of our sponsor **EDAROTH UK**, spoke briefly on their work, citing their memorable message:

Everyone Deserves A Roof Over Their Head.

ANGELA'S AFTERWORD

Angela Rayner commented at a Sunday night discussion: -

"The Tories look down on people living in social housing. Well I say, let's stare right back and never be ashamed. We'll start by salvaging the system that the Tories have taken a sledgehammer to.

"Where the Tories have snatched billions from affordable housing, Labour will unlock government grants to deliver new homes by making the Affordable Homes Programme more flexible so that every penny gets out the door to build the homes people need. And by working with the local leaders – who know their areas best – we'll use these funds more effectively".

"Second, we will strengthen the rules to prevent developers from wriggling out their responsibilities and we will speed up the building of new social and affordable housing. We will do this by reforming the planning system. Elected local leaders will be given the powers they need to stand up to vested interests in building new developments, through a specialist government Take Back Control Unit that will work with them to rebalance the scales."



CONFERENCE REPORT 2023

Mike Amesbury, Labour MP for Weaver Vale reflects on Government's failure to tackle the housing crisis, record levels of homelessness and Labour's alternative vision.

I am delighted to return to the front bench as Shadow Minister for Building Safety and Homelessness.

Tackling the housing crisis, homelessness and rough sleeping will be a key aim of a Labour Government.

A large part of my brief is finding ways of reducing homelessness. We know well the damage homelessness causes individuals, their loved ones and the cost to society.

A stable home is a prerequisite of good physical and mental health, happy relationships and the base from which to develop a career and raise a family.

We know there are many reasons why people find themselves homeless or even sleeping on the street. They include care leavers, veterans, women fleeing domestic violence, people suffering trauma and mental illness or struggling with addiction.

Thirteen years of Tory failure has only made matters worse.

The Kerslake Commission provides a sobering assessment of rising homelessness and the Government will miss its target to end rough sleeping by next year.

Recent figures showed 104,510 households are living in temporary accommodation, a 10% rise in a year and almost 300,000 households need local authorities' support with homelessness.

We have a waiting list of 1.2 million people waiting for council housing.

There's a chronic shortage of decent, secure and affordable housing. A toxic mix of rising rents, the cost-of-living crisis and a failure to end no-fault evictions is hitting the most vulnerable.

So I've been hugely encouraged by our announcement at Labour Conference to bring about the biggest boost in affordable housing in a generation – 1.5 million new homes over the next 5 years.

The big picture for Labour will be creating a strong economy, a fairer society and opportunities for all with a safety net for those on hard times.

I recently visited a *Housing First* programme, spearheaded by Greater Manchester Metro Mayor **Andy Burnham**, which prioritises access to permanent housing with tailored, open-ended support for residents with complex needs.

At its heart is the principle of co-production, where people with lived experience of rough sleeping and homelessness use their insight to help shape the services provided to others.

Launched in 2019, the scheme has been a huge success story with 372 people supported into homes across Greater Manchester already and 76% of tenancies sustained.

However, there is a housing supply and affordability crisis in the UK.

Housing First, which has similar projects in Liverpool City Region and the West



Mike Amesbury

Midlands, is already starting to come up against that brick wall in terms of sourcing future properties.

It will be a priority of the next Labour Government to fix this mess. It won't happen overnight but will involve ramping up supply, with a fundamental shift towards social housing available for genuinely affordable rent.

The last Labour Government's *Rough Sleepers Unit* made huge inroads in the battle against rough sleeping, freeing households with children from bed and breakfast accommodation and reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation to around 50,000.

We have the knowledge, expertise and compassion to make a real change in the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

It's Labour that will take seriously the homelessness prevention agenda, ensuring agencies work together to stop those at the sharp end falling through the cracks.

Where there is a political will, there is a way. We have the political will, and we must find the way. Together, we can make that vision a reality.

HEBBURN MINEWATER PROJECT

In May 2022, we reported enthusiastically on the Hebburn, South Tyneside project to heat an 18-storey block of 111 flats and community amenities using geothermal energy from a disused mine.

Sadly, this project will now need to be supplied by other heat sources due to a technical shortfall. This mine-working had been idle for nearly a century and further investigation revealed stability issues with one of the boreholes. This means the water cannot be extracted and returned to the mine workings as intended.

A Council spokesperson said "We are naturally very disappointed, but we are still committed to generating modern energy solutions using our historical and natural resources. Unfortunately, there are no tests or surveys which would have allowed us to foresee this issue; we had to rely on historic maps, which don't detail the intricacies of the mine workings.

A revised scheme will use air source heat pumps to feed into the energy centre, which will then provide low carbon heat to residents and council buildings via a pipe network, as planned."

This is a blow since few technologies are being developed that are suitable for multi-storey residential buildings.

Fuller details are available at: <https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/14913/Update-on-Hebburn-Renewable-Energy-Scheme>

TRUE BLUE TIME

DOING NOTHING IS AN OPTION FOR THIS ROOKIE MINISTER

A senior civil servant has resigned from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities after his report on preventing the collapse of buildings was sent back by Lee Rowley to include the option "for doing nothing".

Rowley has been Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety since November 2022.



He has had three Tory predecessors in this Parliament, Marcus Jones, Stuart Andrew and Chris Pincher who all held the higher rank of Minister of State.

And none of them have done anything of note to improve the safety of our homes!

YOU CAN \$TILL HE£P

If you are too busy to give time and energy, you can still help us in our work by making a donation by bank transfer to:

"Labour Housing Group"

Account number 50478080,
Sort code 08-90-06

Co-operative Bank,
PO Box 1AN, Blandford Street,
Newcastle, NE99 1AN.

Of course, you can also send a cheque made payable to "Labour Housing Group" c/o **The Treasurer, Flat 2, 8 Torrington Park, London N12 9SS**



SUBURBAN LONDON'S GREAT HOUSING PIONEER

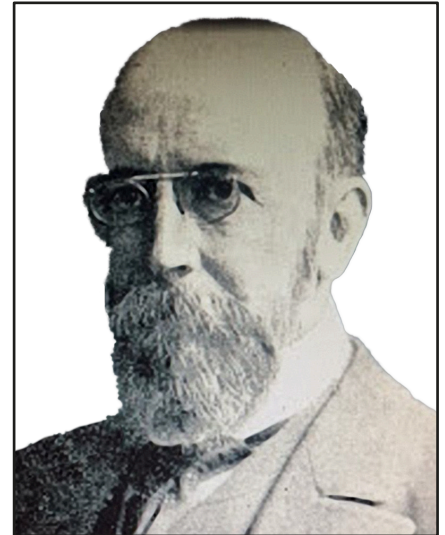
Archibald Corbett, a Glaswegian who made London his life's work - must stand as one of the great pioneers of housing.

Most notably, the great, new homes for families in Ilford remain as monuments to his popular vision.

Between 1893 and 1900, he built thousands of modern, attractive and affordable homes for the clerks who went to work in the City.

He identified and bought farmland in what was then Essex and persuaded the Great Eastern Railway Company, which had run trains out of Liverpool Street since 1875, to provide new stations at Seven Kings and Goodmayes.

His new estates in Ilford included Grange, Clementswood and Downshall.



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE, OR NOT...

Despite being designated a "new town" in 1950, Corby was left without a railway station until 2009. At one time, it was the largest town in Europe without one!

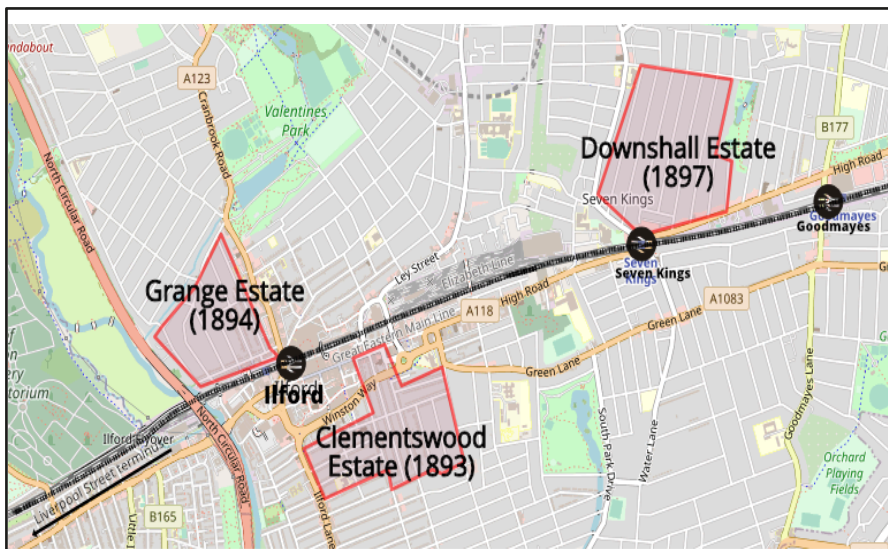
Corbett's simple message of cheap land and good transport seems to have been forgotten in the age of the car.

WHAT IS THE LABOUR HOUSING GROUP?

The Labour Housing Group 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.



"DOWNSHALL ESTATE, 107 acres, immediately adjoins the new station shortly to be opened by the Great Eastern Railway, about, one mile beyond Ilford Station. To all the undermentioned house, Gas is introduced free of expense, and each house is completely fitted up with Drawing and Dining Room Gasoliers, Hall Lamp and Bedroom Gas Brackets, so that purchasers are saved all the usual expense for such fittings. Window Curtain Poles for the Public Rooms are fitted in all Houses of 29 ft. frontage and over.

The houses can either be bought freehold or on 999 years' leases which prevents the diminution in value which takes place with 99 years' leases.

Serious expense is often incurred by purchasers of houses who are called upon to make unexpected payments for paving, &c., when the [iota] Authority takes over the roads. On those estates this cannot take place, as the freeholder makes the roads and footpaths in accordance with the Directions of the Local Board, and the purchasers of houses are exempt from all such charges."

NO HEAT-LOSS FIX FOR MANY HOMES

It's tempting to think that the carbon emissions that are overheating the planet are all down to "industry" or "big business", but our homes also contribute to 17% of these gases.

Campaigners' demand for new, sustainable and affordable homes is rightly in the spotlight, but the poor energy efficiency of existing houses is just as crucial.

Older homes are likely to be difficult and expensive to insulate sufficiently to achieve a "C" rating of energy efficiency.

According to Government statistics, 4.5 million of the UK homes that were built before 1919 are either owner-occupied or privately rented. **That's nearly 1 in 5 of all homes.**

But who is leading the drive to upgrade these homes and what progress - if any - is being made?

Research in Redbridge

I selected 1,145 homes that were built over 120 years ago in the suburban London Borough of Redbridge and analysed the 747 Energy Performance Certificates publicly available which show their energy efficiency ratings.

These are not poorly built or neglected houses.

Quite the opposite, they are popular family homes currently selling for around £650k and there is current evidence of major renovations.

But there is nothing like enough progress to meet our climate change commitments.

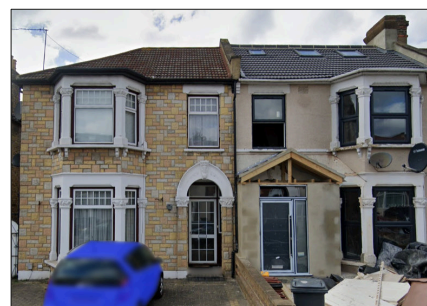
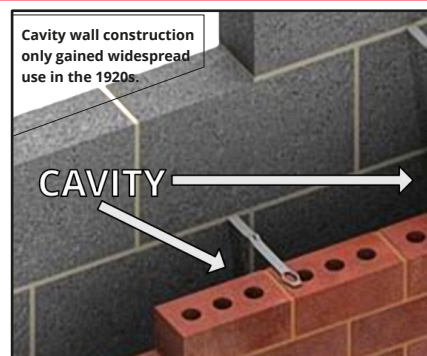
What should now be obvious is that individual owners and renters have been left to make sense of the Government's ever-changing "guidance".

They must navigate the highly technical world of construction and engineering in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis when skilled labour is hard to find and materials are in short supply.

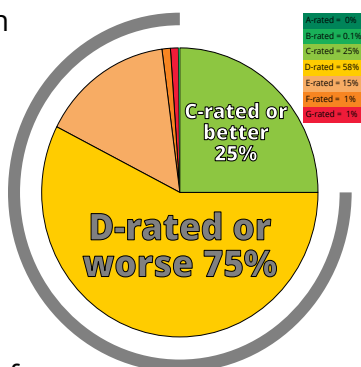
"A project without a project manager!"

This is a project without a project manager!

The only way this project will succeed is if Government provides local authorities with the funds and powers to offer the necessary lead.



Reducing heat lost through single-thickness walls may require extensive - and expensive! - works, such as external cladding or internal "skins".



| Energy Efficiency Rating | | |
|--------------------------|----------|---|
| (92-100) | A | Very energy efficient - lower running costs |
| (81-91) | B | |
| (69-80) | C | |
| (55-68) | D | |
| (39-54) | E | |
| (21-38) | F | |
| (1-20) | G | Not energy efficient - higher running costs |

Paul Martin
(Editor)



Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Labour Housing