



LHG member responses to the Government paper on brownfield passports

In September 2024, the Government released a [paper](#) inviting views on further action it could take through the planning system to support the development of brownfield land in urban areas. It proposes options for a form of brownfield passport, which would be more specific about the development that should be regarded as acceptable on brownfield sites, with the default answer to suitable proposals being a straightforward “yes”.

In January 2025, Labour Housing Group invited members to send in their responses to the paper in order to collate a unified organisational submission. Five members responded to this call, each representing their personal views rather than a local authority, planning body, developer, or other private sector organisation.

80% of respondents agreed that national policy could be clearer if it were explicit that development on brownfield land within urban settlements is acceptable unless certain exclusions apply. In their responses, members argued that a lack of clarity in the process is currently frustrating applicants, who are reluctant to commit resources to projects when they fear rejection by planners. However, members added that the general expectation of approval should be subject to the imposition of strict timeframes for delivery, and that it might be more conditional where extenuating circumstances exist, such as proximity to hygiene or health risks.

Members expressed a range of views on how urban areas might be identified and defined under the plan. Some argued that local authorities should be tasked with mapping out appropriate sites. Another argued that any land that is not forested or agricultural should be identified as urban by default. One member argued that developers should be allowed to identify the sites and develop proposals for them.

Members were also divided as to whether national policy should play a role in setting expectations about the minimum scale of development regarded as acceptable. 60% argued that it could, but 40% preferred that policy should be set locally.

Respondents offered the following ideas with regard to the parameters that could be set for the scale of development and accessibility:

- Parameters should be set by local elected representatives
- Public transport accessibility level
- Consideration of what non natural habitat built form is there at present

60% of members also agreed that more use could be made of design guidance and codes to identify specific forms of development that are acceptable in particular types of urban area.

There was also a commonly expressed view that the brownfield passport should be accompanied by a significant increase in local authority planning staff.

Finally, members offered a range of other suggestions to accompany and complement streamlined permissions on urban brownfield sites:

- Redeveloping low rise developments to increase density
- Expanding this agenda beyond brownfield sites
- Reintroducing equity loans
- An expedited and separate approval process for transport-oriented developments.
- More work visas for construction workers from abroad