

Building on Progress

Essays on the housing crisis
and how to solve it



Edited by the

Labour



Housing Group

ABOUT

Labour Housing Group

Labour Housing Group is a socialist society affiliated to the Labour Party. We campaign for housing policy that puts a decent, secure, affordable home within reach of everyone, and we bring together members, councillors, tenants and experts working across the housing sector to believe that another future is possible.



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FOREWORD

Building on progress

JACK SHAW, CHAIR OF THE LABOUR HOUSING GROUP, AND RACHEL BLAKE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR CITIES OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER

Labour has an overwhelmingly positive story to tell on housing. After 15 years of going backward, in government Labour has begun to make changes that have been avoided for too long. The Renters' Rights Act is giving renters greater security. Significant supply-side and planning reform has been undertaken. A National Plan to End Homelessness has been published, and the Prime Minister has made ending rough sleeping a defining commitment of his government. There is a level of political attention on housing that creates a genuine opportunity to change things.

There is progress on the ground too. The Government has committed substantial new investment in social and affordable housing, while local authorities, housing associations and the voluntary sector are developing new approaches to prevention, supported housing, regeneration and homelessness. As the essays in this collection demonstrate, there is no shortage of ideas about what comes next.

But the scale of the housing crisis means progress must now translate into delivery. There remains a gap between policy and implementation. Too many families are living in temporary accommodation for too long; too many people remain locked out of secure and affordable housing; and even in relatively affluent places like London and Bristol, the cost of housing is a key determinant of financial insecurity.

That tension is increasingly apparent. The Government must "be more aggressive in dealing with the housing crisis", Think Labour concluded earlier this month. The Office for Budget Responsibility — looking at the challenge from the other end of the kaleidoscope — is reportedly considering revising down its assessment of the economic potential of the changes Labour has made over the last 24 months. The message is clear: despite progress, Labour will need to go further to tackle the housing crisis.

Whitehall alone does not have the answers. The solutions are to be found from the Government working alongside local authorities, mayors, housing providers, charities, businesses and communities. That is why the Prime Minister's focus on devolution, and the development of spatial development strategies for strategic authorities, will be critical to unlocking our economic potential.

This collection of essays also adds to the public debate, drawing on the expertise of organisations and individuals working across the housing system, bringing different perspectives on what Labour has

done, what is beginning to work and where it should go further. Authors explore topics ranging from how we can end rough sleeping and reform temporary accommodation to supported housing, home ownership, regeneration, skills and devolution.

There is no single answer to the housing crisis, but there is a common thread: Labour has begun the work of fixing the foundations of the housing crisis. The task now is to go further, faster and turn that ambition into positive change for people across the country.

ESSAY ONE

Ending rough sleeping is a pledge about the kind of society we want. Here's how we stay true to it

JASMINE BASRAN, HEAD OF POLICY AND CAMPAIGNS, CRISIS

When a Prime Minister makes ending rough sleeping his first instruction to government, that says something about the mission of government itself. Rough sleeping is the most visible sign that things aren't working as they should: public services not collaborating in the way that's needed, and the basic right to a home out of reach for too many. Committing to address it first and foremost signals the kind of society this government wants to see, and where it sees its own role in that.

That signal has been backed by immediate action. £340 million was made available on day one. Weeks later came a further £112 million and a national drive to offer everyone in England sleeping rough, or at imminent risk of it, a 'route off the streets' by Christmas, with a summit this Autumn. There is more political ambition pointed at rough sleeping than at any time since the pandemic.

So it feels like the start of something that could be genuinely transformative.

Delivering that drive by Christmas will take enormous commitment from homelessness charities, the housing sector, councils, mayors and everyone else besides. But it is the part we proved we can do in the pandemic. What we have never managed is keeping everyone in. That is the harder instruction, and the one that will decide whether this government ends rough sleeping or merely manages it more kindly.

The 80/20 problem

The latest CHAIN figures for London, the most robust data available, show just under 4,000 people sleeping rough between April and June, down 10 per cent year on year. That is real and meaningful progress. But of those who moved off the streets into accommodation that quarter, 80% went into hubs, shelters and other temporary accommodation, remaining homeless. Just

20% got a settled home.

That ratio is the whole argument in one statistic: the difference between a rough sleeping response and a rough sleeping solution. It is also the shape of nearly every English initiative of the past fifteen years – a burst of activity, a period in which people's situations are managed, and then a slow but steady return to the streets or to other forms of homelessness for far too any people.

What a 'housing first philosophy' has to mean

That isn't to diminish the ambition and impact of this winter's national drive – it will be transformative, and for some people life-saving. The average age of death for someone who is homeless is 44, and the toll rough sleeping takes on physical and mental health is well documented. But alongside getting the winter right, we have to turn to what comes next, so that this is truly a first and only instruction.

The Prime Minister set out the answer himself in his first speech as MP for Makerfield, when he called for a 'housing first philosophy' to be applied nationally. He had already sought to apply it as Mayor of Greater Manchester, taking inspiration from Finland.

Finland has treated reducing homelessness as an unashamed priority for decades, across governments of every stripe. It began with rough sleeping, but rather than treating people as the problem it focused on the solution staring everyone in the face: to end homelessness, you need homes. Acquiring homes and making sure people sleeping

rough could access them came first, and support for mental health, trauma and substance use was wrapped around people once they had a home of their own. With tenancy sustainment rates of up to 90 per cent, Finland extended the approach across its entire system, so that the first response to homelessness became rapid access to a settled home.

IPPR and IPPR North's recent report *Home Truths* points to the same evidence, with deep dives into Greater Manchester, the North East and Oxfordshire. Examining what the Prime Minister calls a 'housing first philosophy', and what we at Crisis call a housing-led approach, they ask the vital question: what stops places implementing this approach? They found local leaders doing the right things and hitting the same wall. Ambition is not the binding constraint; the supply and affordability of homes is.

That is perhaps unsurprising. England lost more social homes than it built last year, a net loss of almost 4,000. Rents climbed while housing benefit stayed frozen, closing the private rented sector to the lowest incomes. Councils spent £2.8 billion last year on temporary accommodation. We have built an expensive machine for managing homelessness and are still running it at full tilt.

How can we address the housing crisis?

Change on this scale needs innovative thinking. The government is pushing hard, and the first allocation from the £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme is

hugely welcome: the work of building social rent homes can begin.

But we need to pull every lever, and again others offer inspiration. Alongside Finland's cross-party consensus and its dignified approach, there is a third lesson: the pragmatics of delivering homes. Finland has the Y-Foundation, a non-profit body set up to acquire and develop homes at scale for people who are homeless, now one of the country's largest landlords. Spain has Provivienda, which works in alliance with a homelessness charity to secure homes and support for people locked out of the housing market.

Crisis has proposed an English equivalent: a body funded solely to acquire or develop the homes needed to move people straight from the street into a settled home, with support to stay there. The Prime Minister's commitment to fund 1,000 settled homes for people with histories of rough sleeping is the right start. Matching the scale of need will take bigger thinking still.

What more is needed?

Alongside that, three unglamorous things have to work immediately.

Housing benefit must be restored so it covers at least the lowest 30 per cent of local private rents. That is the difference between a private landlord saying yes and saying no, and for someone who is homeless, between an offer of a home and another closed door.

Housing First as a programme needs to be scaled up nationally, as the best-evidenced intervention for people sleeping rough with additional support needs.

And entitlement to homelessness assistance has to be addressed. It is a strange national mission in which someone sleeping rough can ask a council for help and be told they do not qualify.

None of this is easy. But as the Prime Minister himself has said, accepting rough sleeping as a reality of our society is intolerable, most of all for the people forced into an experience this traumatic and all-consuming. With political will, radical thinking and determination, this can be the start of something that lasts.

ESSAY TWO

Ending Rough Sleeping in England – lessons from the frontline

FIONA COLLEY, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL CHANGE, HOMELESS LINK AND DUNCAN SHRUBSOLE,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS CHARITY

“I will soon go through that door behind me and issue my first instruction: to end rough sleeping in our country.”

Some people working in homelessness genuinely had tears in their eyes as Andy Burnham said this on entering Downing Street on 20th July.

For decades we have argued that political leadership is the missing jigsaw piece in government efforts to end homelessness, and now it looks like we have finally got it.

In England, there are 35,000 people working in homelessness and a further 15,000 volunteers. Whether in council Housing Options offices, in outreach teams or in voluntary sector services and accommodation, they are the frontline of preventing and resolving homelessness. Our workforce has the knowledge, skills and experience to work with every individual and support them out of homelessness. These frontline workers know what needs to be done to deliver on the new PM’s pledge. But

for too long policies and systems have held us and them back, getting in the way, not enabling change.

So, can Andy Burnham’s commitment really deliver the systemic change that not only ends rough sleeping, but prevents and ends homelessness for everyone, for good?

The scale of the challenge

4,793 people were officially estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in November 2025 – the highest level since the counts began.

However, this is just a one-night snapshot. It misses many people whose rough sleeping is less visible (particularly women), or is intermittent: sometimes on the street, sometimes on a sofa.

In 2025–26 London’s outreach workers alone recorded 13,000 people who they saw sleeping rough one or more times – a record high.

In this context the new £442m Rough Sleeping Programme, which includes an offer of a route off the streets by Christmas for everyone, is a very welcome step. However, currently the programme only commits to funding 1,000 extra settled homes. Clearly this is insufficient to meet the scale of need.

The 'Everyone In' initiative during the pandemic rightly showed what is possible when the state decides that rough sleeping is genuinely unacceptable. But just five years later, rough sleeping is at record levels. This demonstrates that without providing sufficient affordable, secure homes and the support people need to stay in those homes, progress can quickly evaporate.

Housing first, but not housing alone

So the 'everyone in by Christmas' pledge – even if successful – is not a complete answer. We need longer-term, holistic solutions.

The Prime Minister has set out his ambition to end homelessness by creating a 'national housing first philosophy', an understanding that everything in life starts with a good home: health, education, and the ability to thrive in communities.

Providing a good home means more than a bed in a shelter; it means permanent housing for everyone who needs it. Making this possible will require a significant and rapid increase in social and supported housing.

But for many experiencing rough sleeping, housing is only part of the problem and only part of the solution. Just as important is the

provision of specialist, intensive and long-term wraparound support to help people resolve the issues they face. Without this, many people risk a return to rough sleeping. But this long-term support provision is also what the Government has failed to consistently and adequately fund for almost 20 years.

Creating a preventative state means real policy change

The Prime Minister has also promised to create a 'preventative state'. This must mean a coordinated cross-government response to tackle the root causes of homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Government must make concrete changes to policies that drive homelessness and rough sleeping, like reforming insufficient Local Housing Allowance rates and short asylum accommodation move-on periods. This needs to include ensuring that people leaving hospital, prison, care, or asylum accommodation do not end up on the streets.

We also need strong early prevention measures, including educational institutions and local healthcare systems doing more to identify people at risk of homelessness and refer them to support.

Partnership with the frontline

For many people who sleep rough, the key to ending their homelessness is the development of trusting relationships with support workers who can provide consistent,

flexible and personalised support to address their needs and battle the system on their behalf.

Most people doing this support work are driven by a strong sense of purpose. For many, their expertise also draws on their own experience of homelessness. But while 85% of frontline workers report that demand for their services has risen, too often they can't access the housing and other support needed by those they are working with. Meanwhile, more than half of workers reported their role was negatively impacting their wellbeing and many were facing burnout.

Short-term commissioning rounds and contract value freezes create job insecurity and low pay, which then negatively impact staff retention. This means we risk losing staff expertise, and the critical trust between people using services and staff members which is so vital if we are to end rough sleeping.

We now have the leadership we need right at the top of Government. This needs to be backed by investing in homelessness services and those working in them on the ground. They know what needs to be done. If we listen to, empower, value and resource frontline workers, then together Government, the homelessness sector and its workforce can end rough sleeping and wider homelessness.

ESSAY THREE

Temporary Accommodation should be a bridge, not a destination

BRANWEN EVANS, DIRECTOR OF GROUP POLICY AT PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Temporary Accommodation is becoming a de facto tenure for too many households. To change that, national and local policy must focus on how people move through the system: preventing homelessness earlier, reducing time households spend in temporary accommodation, and integrating support.

We need more homes. We also need better flow.

The supply of homes remains fundamental, with Places for People continuing to build during challenging times – 2,509 homes in 2025/26 and a five-year pipeline of 13,000. Quicker to construct, we are also exploring modern methods of construction which scales housing up further while maintaining quality. Together, different delivery methods interact to accelerate flows across the system, easing pressure. But more homes will not solve the problem if households continue to enter accommodation at a faster rate than we can build, or find themselves in unsustainable routes out.

1. Stop the crisis earlier

The quickest way to reduce demand for temporary accommodation is to stop so many people needing it. Homelessness is not only a supply problem. It is shaped by financial insecurity, poor health, unemployment, digital exclusion and isolation. A national strategy must focus more sharply on moments when households are likely to tip into crisis.

This is work housing providers already do. PfP supports around 10,000 customers each year with money advice, wellbeing, employment and practical help. Last year, almost 4,000 customers accessed over £4.6 million in additional income, grants and household savings. 663 households were helped to clear almost £250,000 of arrears. Over the past four years, more than £1.35 million in emergency food and fuel vouchers went to households facing pressure.

The first year of a tenancy is often when risk is highest. Last year, PfP provided move-in support, furniture and white goods

assistance to almost 1,000 households and supported 125 with free flooring. These are practical interventions which matter. They close small gaps that can otherwise become big failures.

While organisations like ours can help people in our homes, there are many more people who would benefit. Partnerships can help extend that reach. Our recent collaboration with LandAid will support up to 100 young people through mentoring and early intervention. The point is simple: if we want fewer households entering temporary accommodation, we need more investment upstream.

2. Make move-on the measure

We need much more discipline about routes out of temporary accommodation.

Households need more than a temporary roof; they need a pathway. The test should be both whether the system is reducing time in temporary accommodation and lowering risk of people cycling back into crisis. PfP's experience with 5,700 supported housing homes shows that intensive, person-centred support helps people stabilise, build independence and move towards settled accommodation.

That pathway must be designed around need, not around a generic model of homelessness. Mental health, trauma, substance misuse, employment, family circumstances and affordability shape what sustainable move-on looks like.

Government, local authorities and providers should agree clearer cohorts and tailored routes out of temporary accommodation, so support is targeted to make the biggest difference.

This is where housing providers have practical knowledge to bring. PfP works with families, young people, young parents, single people with complex needs and refugees. Their routes to independence differ, but the principle is the same: consistent support, delivered with local authorities and voluntary sector partners, helps people move on and stay moved on.

3. Join the system around the household

Finally, integration. Support in temporary accommodation and move-on activity cannot be treated separately. They are one system. Experience across housing supply, specialist accommodation, tenancy sustainment and community investment shows that the answer is not one intervention, but a connected offer.

This is not a unique PfP view. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance emphasises coordinated access, multidisciplinary provision and support across transitions. The Centre for Homelessness Impact highlights that families in temporary accommodation need targeted support from local authorities, health services, national government and voluntary and community organisations, alongside wider action at both the individual and system level. The government's own homelessness strategy similarly points to collaboration across public services, recognising that homelessness transcends departmental boundaries.

The spiralling numbers of households in temporary accommodation is a wicked problem. It will not be solved if approaches are siloed, and if no concurrent action across the system is taken. We can change outcomes by acting earlier, supporting households better while they are in temporary placements, and creating clearer routes back into settled housing. That requires housing, employment, health and support services to work around the household, not within organisational boundaries.

So, measures of success should change. Not just a reduction in the numbers who need temporary accommodation, but also how short their stay is and how sustainably they move on. Beyond numbers, it is also important to understand that behind every statistic is a family, as our recently launched Space to Start campaign demonstrates.

Temporary accommodation must be a bridge to stability, not a place where families get stuck.

ESSAY FOUR

The future of supported housing: Building a more preventative state so we can help more people to thrive

PAUL DOLAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF RIVERSIDE AND KATE HENDERSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE NATIONAL HOUSING FEDERATION

Standing outside Downing Street during his first speech as Prime Minister, Andy Burnham uttered the words: “We will help people to live well, building a more preventative state, investing in people’s success, rather than paying for failure.”

As two people who passionately advocate for greater investment in social and supported housing to help more people to live well, these words really resonated. Supported housing is the epitome of a preventative state.

Every year an estimated 50,000 people are able to move into their own home and receive the specialist support to begin to live independently again thanks to supported housing. This is equivalent to the entire population of a city the size of Durham.

Without it, rough sleepers are left to live on our streets, adults with learning disabilities are placed into residential psychiatric care

or hospitals, and women who have experienced domestic abuse are left to live in a hotel, unsuitable temporary accommodation or even back with an abusive partner – all of which produces worse outcomes for people and costs taxpayers more money.

Last year, analysis by Riverside showed that collectively councils have spent more than £10bn on temporary accommodation over the past five years and this figure is set to increase again this year.

Every day we see the difference that supported housing makes to people’s lives. One such resident was Freya, a mum of three who was supported by Riverside to move into a new family home after fleeing domestic violence and having spent months living in temporary accommodation.

Freya was worried about how she would cope on her own. She told us: “I was emotional when we moved in because it’s such a nice house. But I also worried: ‘How am I going to make this a home after everything we’ve been through?’”

However, with the support provided by her support worker at Riverside and access to a supported home, she was able to get back on her feet and build a new life.

Sadly, supported housing is not well understood – too few are aware of the transformational impact it has on people’s lives – and, at a time when need has never been greater, these homes are becoming increasingly scarce, as the supported housing sector faces an ongoing financial crisis.

This crisis, driven by severe cuts to council funding for housing related support combined with rising inflation and operating costs in recent years, has created a perfect storm of financial pressures on providers.

National Housing Federation research shows that as a result, one in three not-for-profit supported housing providers have been forced to shut schemes in recent years and a further 50,000 supported homes – equivalent to one in 10 – are at imminent risk of closure.

To protect supported housing for future generations, the National Housing Federation has embarked on an ambitious new project – the Future of Supported Housing – in partnership with think tank, New Local. This project will develop ambitious, yet practical, recommendations

to create a supported housing system that is financially sustainable, investable and better able to meet people’s needs.

To help shape this work, the NHF has convened a Future of Supported Housing Advisory Board, chaired by Terrie Alafat CBE, which brings together leaders from housing, homelessness, local government, the NHS, care and wider public services, helping take a system-wide view of supported housing while ensuring the experiences of residents and providers remain at the heart of its work.

The timing of this project is crucial. A string of major policy developments have created a significant window of opportunity to reshape how supported housing services are commissioned and funded – including the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, the Mental Health Act, Renters Rights Act and wider reforms in health, social care, local government, as well as the Treasury’s review of homelessness and supported housing.

Labour has a proud history of leadership in our sector with the Labour government of the 2000s halving homelessness, almost eradicating rough sleeping and delivering the dedicated £1.6bn ‘Supporting People’ grant which transformed supported housing services at the time.

The current funding crisis facing the supported housing sector is more acute than we have ever known. However, the value in an invest-to-save approach is huge, as properly funded services will help reduce pressure on NHS hospitals, acute

psychiatric settings and the justice system.

By bringing together evidence, lived experience and expertise from across sectors, we can build a more preventative state and a stronger shared vision for the future of supported housing that enables more people like Freya to access the homes and support they need for decades to come.

We hope you'll be able to join us at our panel session with Labour Housing Group at Labour Party Conference and help make this happen.

*This customer's name has been changed to Freya to conceal their identity

ESSAY FIVE

New regulation means social housing tenants should be heard and respected – the reality is different for many tenants

KAI JACKSON, SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP PROJECT LEAD AT TPAS

When Maria first reported the mould spreading across her children's bedroom walls, she believed help would come quickly. She had done everything tenants are told to do. She filled in the forms. She called repeatedly. She sent photographs. Weeks turned into months. The smell worsened. Her youngest son's asthma became harder to manage. Eventually, she stopped believing anyone was really listening.

On another estate, a housing officer leaves a community meeting shaken after being subjected to racist abuse while trying to explain local housing allocation rules. Online rumours had spread through the neighbourhood claiming migrant families were being "given homes first." Facts no longer mattered. Frustration had already found a target.

These stories are uncomfortable because they are not unusual.

Across the UK housing sector, conversations about race, equality and inclusion are no longer optional extras.

They are becoming central to regulation, tenant trust and the future legitimacy of housing providers themselves.

Yet for many ethnic minority tenants and staff, everyday experiences still feel disconnected from the promises organisations make publicly.

Housing has always been deeply personal. It shapes health, safety, identity and opportunity. When people feel ignored, excluded or stereotyped within housing systems, the impact reaches far beyond bricks and mortar.

Economic pressure, housing shortages and political division are creating increasingly tense conditions in many communities. Public conversations around immigration

and social housing have become heavily politicised, often fuelled by misinformation online.

Housing associations and councils now find themselves operating at the centre of wider debates about fairness, belonging and social cohesion.

At the same time, the inequalities experienced by many ethnic minority households remain stark. Research from Shelter continues to show that Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are significantly more likely to experience overcrowding, poor housing conditions and homelessness than white British households.

Government data has repeatedly shown overcrowding rates are substantially higher among Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black households.

But statistics alone do not fully capture the emotional reality behind these experiences.

Feeling consulted, not heard

My report, *Is There a Seat at the Table? Ethnic Minority Voices in Tenant Engagement*, explored these issues through surveys involving hundreds of tenants and staff across 25 housing providers.

What emerged was not simply frustration, but exhaustion. Many respondents described engagement structures that appeared inclusive on paper but failed to create genuine influence in practice. An overwhelming 94% believed their organisations could do more to attract ethnic minority tenants into decision-

making roles. Nearly every tenant agreed that current engagement systems failed to reflect the diversity of their communities.

Again and again, people described feeling consulted rather than heard. That distinction matters.

For many residents, trust in institutions is already fragile. The legacy of the Windrush scandal still shapes how some ethnic minority communities view public services, including housing providers. When organisations fail to communicate clearly, respond fairly or acknowledge lived experiences, mistrust grows quickly.

This places the housing sector at an important crossroads. Providers are no longer judged solely on repairs, rent collection or development targets. Increasingly, they are judged on fairness, transparency and cultural competence.

But regulation alone will not rebuild trust. Engagement itself must evolve.

Too often, tenant involvement becomes performative. Residents are invited into consultations, focus groups and advisory panels, yet key decisions remain unchanged. People quickly recognise when participation is symbolic rather than meaningful. In many cases, tokenistic engagement damages trust more than no engagement at all.

True inclusion requires intentional effort.

It means holding meetings at times working families can actually attend, providing interpreters and translated materials, and recognising barriers such as digital exclusion, childcare responsibilities and

cultural needs. It also means working alongside trusted faith groups and community organisations rather than expecting residents to adapt entirely to institutional systems.

Most importantly, it means sharing power rather than simply collecting opinions.

Misinformation and division

One of the most damaging challenges facing the sector today is the spread of misinformation around housing allocations. The myth that migrants or ethnic minority households unfairly “jump the queue” for social housing has become increasingly common online and in community conversations.

In reality, housing allocations are governed by legal frameworks based on need, vulnerability and local connection – not race or ethnicity. But misinformation spreads faster than policy explanations, particularly on social media platforms designed to reward outrage and division.

The consequences are very real.

Frontline staff experience increased hostility. Tenants become suspicious of one another. Communities already struggling with economic hardship become even more divided. And organisations often find themselves reacting defensively rather than building trust proactively.

Housing providers can no longer afford to remain passive observers in these conversations. Clear communication matters. Explaining allocation systems in plain language matters. Sharing real tenant stories matters. Community-led

conversations are often far more effective than corporate statements because people are more likely to trust lived experience than institutional messaging.

Accountability after Awaab Ishak

The sector also faces a growing accountability challenge. The tragic death of Awaab Ishak in 2020 fundamentally changed the national conversation about housing conditions and tenant safety. The introduction of Awaab’s Law has placed new legal responsibilities on landlords to respond to hazards such as damp and mould within strict timeframes.

This matters enormously because ethnic minority households are statistically more likely to experience overcrowded and poor-quality housing conditions.

Yet many tenants still do not fully understand their rights or feel confident using complaints systems. Language barriers, fear of repercussions and previous negative experiences often discourage people from escalating concerns. For some residents, particularly those from communities with low trust in public institutions, silence can feel safer than complaint.

That silence can become dangerous.

Housing providers therefore have responsibilities that extend beyond legal compliance. They must ensure tenants understand their rights clearly, accessibly and in ways that feel culturally competent. Accountability only works when residents

genuinely believe their voices will lead to action.

The next five years could become a defining period for the housing sector. Stronger consumer regulation, greater scrutiny of equality outcomes and increasing expectations around tenant voice are already reshaping organisational priorities. Conversations around ethnicity pay gaps, workforce diversity and representation at leadership level are becoming harder to avoid.

There are also emerging risks around technology and AI-driven decision-making within housing services. While automation may improve efficiency, poorly designed systems can unintentionally reproduce existing inequalities if bias is not actively monitored and challenged.

Ultimately, however, this conversation comes back to something deeply human.

Housing is about dignity.

It is about whether people feel safe in their homes. Whether they feel respected when they raise concerns. Whether they believe their experiences matter. Whether they feel they truly belong in the communities they live in.

The organisations that succeed over the next decade will not simply be those with the strongest financial performance or largest development pipelines. They will be the organisations that communities trust.

And trust is not built through slogans or strategy documents alone.

It is built slowly, consistently and visibly – when tenants feel heard, protected, respected and represented every single day.

ESSAY SIX

Labour's housing policy must keep women safe from domestic violence

NAHAR CHOUDHURY, CEO OF SOLACE WOMEN'S AID

Too often, housing policy is designed in silos, separated from work addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). Yet, for women experiencing domestic abuse, access to safe and suitable housing can be critical to their ability to escape violence and rebuild their lives. At Solace, London's largest domestic abuse and sexual violence charity, we see, every day, the inextricable links between housing and VAWG. Two-thirds of the women we support have a housing need. For a woman experiencing domestic abuse, access to safe, suitable housing can be the difference between being able to leave a perpetrator and remaining trapped with them; leaving may mean unsafe temporary accommodation or facing homelessness.

Labour's housing policy therefore has a critical role to play in delivering its wider ambitions on halving both long-term rough sleeping and VAWG. One cannot be achieved without addressing the other.

Domestic abuse is the leading cause of women's homelessness. Since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021, it has been the second most common reason local authorities have had to provide a homelessness relief duty, accounting for more than 15% of applications. And still, this only tells one part of the story. Solace's annual Women's Rough Sleeping Census has identified as many as ten times more women sleeping rough in some areas than official government counts identified. We cannot solve a problem we cannot properly see: if women's homelessness continues to be underrepresented in official statistics, policy and services will inevitably fail to reflect its true scale.

Yet being recognised does not necessarily mean being helped. Our 2025 report *Where Will I Go?* found persistent barriers and gatekeeping preventing survivors from accessing the housing they need, despite being categorised as high priority for support. Most concerning, almost a quarter (23%) of our frontline staff reported

survivors had been asked to provide proof of physical abuse as part of their housing applications, while 10% reported that housing processes had even involved contacting perpetrators to corroborate this evidence. For a woman trying to escape an abusive relationship, these are not minor administrative hurdles. They can delay or prevent a safe escape and, in the most serious cases, place survivors at further risk. A housing system that requires women to prove their abuse risks making safety conditional on evidence that survivors may be unable to provide.

The issue doesn't end there. Overcoming these barriers still does not always result in finding safety. Half of the survivors we interviewed reported feeling unsafe in their temporary accommodation for reasons ranging from being placed in mixed-sex hostels or among people experiencing drug dependency, while 30% moved into properties without basic necessities such as electricity or heating. The scarcity of suitable and safe forms of accommodation for women, including emergency homelessness provision, has contributed to an epidemic of women forced into precarious forms of living. While shortages of accommodation is one part of this, it nonetheless raises serious questions about the quality of support survivors receive, and, as we move power into the hands of local authorities, about the oversight and accountability of the housing departments responsible for providing accommodation for women fleeing abuse.

While there has been positive and important progress since the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, such as removing local connection requirements for temporary

accommodation, legislation and policy commitments only deliver meaningful change when they translate into safe experiences for women on the ground. The question must therefore be not simply whether protections exist, but whether women fleeing violence can actually access them.

Housing policy must also ensure sufficient support for survivors of all forms of abuse such as rape and serious sexual violence, who are ineligible for priority need and whose housing options are limited by their lack of exemption from the shared accommodation housing benefit rate. For migrant survivors with no recourse to public funds, not being entitled to housing benefits can make it harder to leave an abusive partner and secure alternative accommodation. These barriers do nothing but increase the risk of harm and homelessness. Safety should not depend on a woman's immigration status, nor her ability to produce evidence of a type of abuse. Preventing and tackling VAWG must apply to all women and girls.

If Labour wants to build a housing system that works for women, it must put the experiences and safety of women fleeing abuse at its centre. That means accurately measuring women's homelessness, removing inappropriate barriers and gatekeeping within its housing services, ensuring that temporary accommodation is genuinely safe and suitable, strengthening accountability for survivor support and

ensuring all survivors have somewhere safe to go.

Local authorities currently face a shortage of all forms of accommodation with an incredibly challenging financial landscape. As we move towards greater devolution, one

point must be made clear by the Government: housing is not peripheral to tackling violence against women and girls; it is one of the most important conditions that makes safety, escape and recovery possible.

ESSAY SEVEN

Why landlords should help renters onto the housing ladder

PALMA OXLEY, RESEARCHER AT THE FABIAN SOCIETY, WORKING AT THE FABIAN HOUSING CENTRE

More and more young people are locked out of homeownership as they struggle to save for a deposit. The Government must look at all options to support them, and landlords must play their part too.

With house prices increasing, the average deposit has grown by 38 per cent in real terms over the past decade. The average first-time buyer would need to save 50 per cent of their income after essentials for over 12 years to afford the average new build deposit in England. In London, this would take 30 years.

High rents and student loan repayments, alongside stagnating wages and the cost-of-living crisis make saving even harder. Young renters especially have little disposable income to put towards a deposit.

As a result, young people are more reliant on support from their family to become homeowners. Those without support are simply left behind. By age 35, people whose parents are highly educated and own their own home are 10 times more likely to be homeowners than those who have parents

who rent and are less well-educated.

This cannot be an acceptable outcome – parental wealth should not dictate life chances.

The government should support those without family wealth to become homeowners, so more people can access the benefits of owning the roof over their head. The priority should be helping those renters who, in previous generations, would have already been able to buy their first home. Building more homes will help, but the Government can do more.

That's why the Government should introduce a renter savings scheme. It would be modelled on the workplace pension scheme many of us are familiar with. And it would ask landlords to partner with their tenants and the state to expand homeownership, encouraging long-term saving and fundamentally changing the way we rent. Renting would become more productive, helping people get onto the property ladder rather than acting as a

barrier.

The scheme should combine contributions from tenants, landlords and the government. First, tenants should be given the option to pay an additional 5 per cent on top of their monthly rent which would be put into a ring-fenced savings account. Second, landlords should have to match this 5 per cent contribution, paying into the same ring-fenced savings account – this could be income-tax deductible to reduce the financial impact. Third, the government would contribute – savings would accumulate in the government’s proposed first-time buyer ISA, with a 25 per cent bonus on all contributions at the point of purchasing a home.

Previous Labour Governments embraced the idea of partnership between employees, employers, and the state to deliver decent workplace pensions. This Labour government can expand that idea to help people with the largest financial decision they’ll make before retirement: homeownership.

Of course, no single policy can tackle the collapse in homeownership rates amongst young people. But a renter savings scheme could ensure that years spent in the private rented sector are not wasted. It would rebalance the rights and responsibilities of renters, landlords, and the state, while giving more people without family wealth a credible route towards owning a home of their own.

ESSAY EIGHT

Making home ownership work

ANGELA HESKETH, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AT PEXA

For too many people, buying a home is much harder than it should be. Housing affordability and supply rightly dominate the debate, but the process doesn't end once a buyer's offer has been accepted.

The slow, opaque process between offer acceptance and moving day receives far less attention. PEXA's 2026 Home Moving Experience Report shows the impact on consumers: more than 95% of buyers encountered unexpected costs, while only 7% completed without delays. First-time buyers are particularly exposed, with limited visibility, duplicated processes and avoidable costs making an already demanding experience harder.

The Government's Home Buying and Selling Reform Roadmap is therefore a very welcome opportunity to improve one of the most overlooked parts of the housing affordability debate. The complete home-moving journey can take seven or eight months, while roughly one in three transactions fall through. This shouldn't be accepted as the norm, and for many buyers, the consequences can be significant. Failed transactions and delays create

unnecessary financial and personal costs for buyers, from lost fees to disrupted work and family arrangements.

The roadmap helps shift the debate from diagnosis to delivery. Better upfront information, shared data, earlier binding agreements and digital property logbooks could make transactions faster, more transparent and more reliable. Almost 93% of buyers say greater access to verified property information would improve confidence, while earlier identification of issues would reduce failed sales and unnecessary duplication for professionals. Crucially, a failed property transaction costs consumers an average of £1,240 in direct expenses, hitting first-time buyers worst.

The Government's measures will help surface problems earlier, reduce failed sales and limit unnecessary duplication across the transaction. Together, they'll give buyers greater confidence that an accepted offer will lead to a completed purchase.

Changes must include the whole process: from listing to registration

The roadmap rightly adopts a whole-system approach, but its delivery priorities do not yet give secure funds movement, legal completion and registration the same prominence as the earlier stages of the transaction. These final stages must be central to the reforms: digitising the front end while leaving the last mile fragmented and manual does not remove the bottleneck; it simply moves it.

Although most of our day-to-day financial transactions are online, conveyancers still move money manually across generic payment rails and lodge title changes separately. Data is re-entered, checks repeated and disconnected systems must be reconciled at the moment when certainty matters most.

Financial settlement and the lodgement of documents for registration should instead be co-ordinated through secure, connected digital infrastructure, providing greater certainty that money and legal ownership move as intended. Government should set clear outcomes and interoperability standards that enable trusted systems to work together across the entire journey, including completion and registration.

This is not technology for its own sake. Families should be able to plan their house move with confidence. Funds should be harder to divert, and progress easier to track.

The reforms set out in the roadmap will only deliver their full promise if the certainty created at the outset continues through to completion and registration.

Making reform support wider ownership

As Government develops sales packs, digital identities, binding agreements and data standards, each measure should face one test: does it make the whole journey more affordable, secure and certain for buyers?

That means giving completion and registration a clear place within the digital framework and ensuring the benefits are accessible to smaller firms as well as larger participants.

PEXA shows what end-to-end digital completion can deliver. In Australia, the platform supports more than 90% of residential property settlements and processes tens of thousands of transactions each week; the digitally enabled process typically takes four to six weeks, compared with seven to eight months in Britain. PEXA completed the UK's first fully digital property purchase in June 2025, demonstrating in practice how connected settlement, funds transfer and registration can reduce friction, improve security and give buyers greater certainty.

The roadmap is an ambitious and welcome start. Industry feedback reinforces that consumers want fewer surprises, clearer communication, less duplication and greater certainty. Connecting these reforms to secure digital completion and registration would help create a connected process that reduces the avoidable costs and uncertainty that can push home ownership further out of reach. PEXA stands ready to help Government translate that ambition into delivery.

ESSAY NINE

A pipeline is not a house

HANAD DARWISH, HEAD OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, LAND, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT FEDERATION

Labour has done the hard work of reforming planning, but the small builders who would deliver much of the housing are collapsing, and the buyers who would live in the homes are frozen out.

We must give this government its due. Reforming the planning system is thankless work involving lengthy preparation and consultation for a reward that arrives, if at all, long after the next election. Ministers took it on, and the ambition to put council housing back at the centre of supply is also an admirable one. But a planning permission is not a house. It is permission to build one, handed to someone who must then find the money, the buyer and the nerve to proceed. On all three counts, the people we are relying on are running short.

Consider who builds across the country. In the 1980s, SME builders put up around two in every five new homes. Since 1995 their number has fallen by 60%, and today they account for barely a tenth of the development pipeline. The market has instead consolidated around fewer, larger builders, whose pace on any site is set by how fast homes sell without softening local prices as the Letwin review identified. That is

a rational response, it ties supply to what the market will bear but a market with more builders is a market that builds faster. According to recent research from Savills commissioned by the LPDF, restoring SME capacity alone could add around 70,000 homes a year.

Yet the conditions facing these firms are the worst since the financial crisis. Construction costs have risen 14% since late 2022 while average house prices have barely moved; new regulation and levies have added around £37,000 to the cost of an average home, with policy measures piling on a further £39,000. Profit on a typical three-bedroom house has slipped to about 13% of value, well below the 20% a builder needs to shoulder the risk. Small firms feel it first and worst, lacking the balance sheets that let bigger players ride it out. Little wonder national delivery has fallen to 205,000 homes a year and is forecast to fall further.

The danger is that the pipeline drains before the reforms can fill it. SMEs and land

promoters between them control 1.1 million plots. Nearly half of small builders say they will buy less land this year; a fall of just a fifth in their activity would stall the progress of some 57,000 plots. Free up the planning system all you like but if the firms meant to walk the cleared path turn back at the gate, the permissions sit on paper.

So what would help? Two levers that both sit comfortably with Labour's instincts.

The first is demand, and here the honest framing is not "help developers" but "help renters escape a rented sector they can no longer afford." The wall facing a first-time buyer is no longer chiefly the mortgage rate; it is the deposit, and in the South a stamp-duty bill now routinely above £10,000. A targeted equity loan scheme, aimed at the roughly 375,000 renting families with the income but not the savings to buy, could support up to 85,000 additional homes by 2029 and add nearly £24 billion to GDP. It is a route out of the private rented sector for people the market has abandoned.

The second is affordable housing, which can do now what it did after 2008: hold the line while private demand recovers. Registered providers have quietly begun buying land again with unspent grant, giving builders a pipeline in a weak market – the counter-

cyclical instinct that a Labour government should be backing, not frustrating with unpredictable changes to when and how grant is paid. Greater flexibility on Section 106 would compound the effect: letting grant part-fund obligations and permitting tenures such as Discounted Market Sale that unlock ownership at less public cost, would clear the backlog of unsold affordable homes and get stalled sites moving. It must be stated that none of this competes with Andy's council housing drive, it simply complements it.

Underneath both sits the issue of viability, so the National Housing Bank should also widen its short-term lending to smaller firms, and up-front public money for the utility connections and access roads that routinely stall sites would repay itself in homes.

But the central point is political, not technical. Labour has done the difficult, unglamorous half of the job. The other half is making sure there is a diverse, resilient sector left to build, small firms, affordable providers and councils alike, and buyers able to move into what they build. 1.5 million homes is a fine ambition; it will not be reached by clearing the way for builders heading for the exit and families who can't get through the door.

ESSAY TEN

Devolution can deliver good growth for the fifty percent who live in towns – but only with partners and a plan

MARK WASHER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SNG

The PM's agenda for "good growth in every postcode" acknowledges that too many people don't feel that they live in a successful place. This is especially true for those of us who live in towns, as well as those that work in them.

More high street shops are closing than opening, around one in seven sits empty. Jobs growth in towns over the last 20 years pales in comparison to cities, especially London. You're more likely to be a NEET if you live in a town not a city, and ambitious young people from towns leave for brighter lights elsewhere, if they can afford to. Where new homes are built, they usually form a doughnut on the edge of town, so anyone who doesn't have access to a car cannot access work or services. It's no surprise, then, that people in towns think the place they live is getting worse, not better. This is a day-to-day reality that holds the country back and offers fertile ground for division.

Governments of all colours have recognised this problem, but little progress has been made. Now though, through its commitment to devolution, this government has a once in a generation opportunity to shift momentum for towns so they can be regenerated to be the economic powerhouses they once were and superb places to live for generations of people.

The consultancy, Lichfields, found that in the south of England, alone, there is the potential for 200,000 new homes in regenerated towns, delivering £24bn GVA for the economy. We see amazing opportunity in places like Swindon, a hub for railway engineering; Farnborough, world famous for aviation innovation; Slough, sometimes maligned but superbly located for global trade and a centre for invention and industry for centuries; and many more. There is no reason why these towns, with good planning and regional transport through the vision of mayoral authorities,

can't come together to build agglomeration to rival cities, driving innovation and growth.

Established towns are where they are for a reason. Most are in excellent strategic locations with infrastructure, and connections within communities that support an invaluable social fabric. But what once made towns so great – cohesive and connected housing, thriving high streets and reliable public transport systems – has diminished through decades of disjointed thinking and investment.

This is where devolution could mark a sea change in the success of towns and the people who live in them. A new vision, rooted in regional and local plans for holistically regenerated towns would end the piecemeal thinking and lack of investment that has accelerated the decline of towns. Easily accessible homes on the high street would launch local jobs and opportunity while bringing people together through social spaces. Post-war estates coming to the end of their useful life can be regenerated to be better connected to town centres and provide the routes for sustainable transport for new estates on the outside so that the town is the centre of activity, not the A-roads and motorways around.

To make this change and turn towns' potential into prosperity will not be easy or quick and will need sharp focus, leadership and vision that goes beyond the political cycle and focusses on legacy. Mayors and local authorities must be given the powers and incentives to lead, but they cannot do it alone.

SNG has spent over two years working with a coalition that includes local authorities, developers and investors to create a model for New Towns in Old Towns to deliver regional agglomeration alongside town specific plans for growth and regeneration. Our clear finding through this is that partnership is by far the most effective approach. Mayors and local authorities should work alongside housing associations that have similar place-based, long-term, stewardship drivers and bring learnings and experience from other areas, as well as private developers of housing and commercial property, institutional funders like pension funds. Alongside this, there remains a critical role for central government as an enabler.

As devolution evolves, I have no doubts that the most successful mayors will be those who can partner effectively with housing associations, retail providers and the community to develop a long-term vision and a plan for their area that will be delivered over the decades that follow, through changes in political wind.

While the potential of mayors is huge, in some areas it will take a long time for authorities to be established, and we cannot leave people without the homes they need, so in the interim we must continue to drive forward with the structures that we have.

This is the time for towns, and for the half of the population that live in them, it cannot come too soon.

ESSAY ELEVEN

Devolution could give local leaders the tools to build the homes and workforce Britain needs

DR VICTORIA HILLS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF BUILDING (CIOB)

If Britain is serious about getting building again, we need to think differently about how we develop the people who will make that ambition possible.

The scale of the challenge is significant. CITB's latest Construction Workforce Outlook estimates that an average of 41,200 additional workers will be needed each year between 2026 and 2030 – around 206,000 people over the five-year period. That is equivalent to 1.6% of the 2025 construction workforce every year.

Yet the challenge is not simply about numbers. We also need to ask whether we are connecting people with construction careers effectively enough.

CIOB's research into attitudes towards construction conducted earlier this year found that 66% of the 2,000 young people surveyed have a positive view of careers in the sector. But only 30% would actively consider pursuing one. One reason is clear: 45% said construction careers were not

discussed as part of the careers guidance they received during education. Awareness of the pathways into construction is also limited, with just 38% aware of Construction T Levels and awareness of Skills Bootcamps, Homebuilding Skills Hubs and Technical Excellence Colleges significantly lower.

This suggests there is a considerable pool of potential talent, but we are not doing enough to connect young people with the opportunities available.

For too long, skills, housing, planning and economic development have been treated as separate policy issues. But on the ground, they are inseparable. A new housing development needs planners, designers, surveyors, project managers, tradespeople and a whole host of other professionals. If those people are not there, ambitions on paper do not become homes on the ground.

We have tried a largely centralised

approach to skills policy for decades. Yet skills gaps persist, employers continue to struggle to recruit and too many young people remain outside education, employment or training. We should not be afraid to admit that the current model is not delivering everything we need it to. A more radical approach is required, and devolution could be part of the answer.

Fiscal and policy devolution could give local leaders greater power to bring together housing, economic development, employment and skills, working with local businesses, employers and education providers to create training and employment opportunities. Local leaders are often best placed to understand the needs of their communities and respond to them. Workforce development could become an integral part of how places plan for growth and deliver major programmes of housing, infrastructure and regeneration.

For construction, this is particularly important. The workforce required to deliver new homes, infrastructure, retrofit and building safety will not appear overnight. Training takes time and developing professional competence takes longer still. If we wait until demand is already here, we will already be behind.

This is where Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) have an important role to play. They can help ensure that training reflects the needs of local employers and economies. But they should not operate in isolation from national workforce priorities. Devolution provides an opportunity to turbo-charge LSIPs by giving local leaders greater control

over funding and powers, while ensuring local priorities contribute to the wider objectives of the Industrial Strategy.

Skills England and LSIPs need stronger coordination, with consistent labour market intelligence and better collaboration between neighbouring areas where workforce challenges overlap. Local priorities should contribute to national objectives, rather than compete with them.

There is an important caveat, however. As enthusiasm for devolution grows, so too are concerns about the possibility of a postcode lottery for skills. Those concerns should not be dismissed. Local flexibility must not come at the expense of national consistency.

Local authorities and strategic authorities should have the freedom to tailor provision to their economies, but there must be consistency in standards, quality and ambition. This is particularly important for construction, where employers operate across regional boundaries and workers are often mobile. The demand for skilled people to deliver housing and infrastructure is also a national one.

Professional bodies and employers have an important role to play in getting this balance right. Those closest to the industry can help ensure that skills planning reflects not only the vacancies employers are struggling to fill today, but the capabilities that will be required five, ten or twenty years from now. They should have a meaningful role in shaping local skills priorities, alongside education and training providers.

Ultimately, devolution should not simply be

about moving responsibility from one level of government to another. It should be about giving places the tools to respond to their own circumstances, while connecting those decisions to a clear national ambition.

If we get that balance right, devolution could help us build stronger local talent pipelines, give young people a clearer route

into rewarding careers and give employers greater confidence that the workforce they need will be there.

These are the conversations we are keen to bring to Labour Conference and beyond.

The ambition to get Britain building again is a national one. The opportunity to make it happen may be local.

ESSAY TWELVE

Housing-led regeneration in Rotherham town centre is essential to improve opportunities, health and quality of life

CHRIS READ, LEADER OF ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

The regeneration of Rotherham town centre is one of the top priorities that residents set for us. Like many places, residents here have greeted the decline of the high street, the withdrawal of major shopping brands and decaying public realm with a foreboding sense of permanent decline.

In our case, the downward trajectory probably started earlier than for many others, with our neighbouring centres at Meadowhall, the out-of-town centre at Parkgate, Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield and Worksop town centre all within easy driving distance of many of our residents – and this was even before Amazon arrived.

The Council has been successful in securing significant central Government investment over recent years, strengthening the interventions that the Council has been able to make. We've brought cinema back into Rotherham for the first time in thirty years as part of our flagship Forge Island leisure

development. Our markets complex is undergoing a £40+ million redevelopment, which will also bring our central library back into the heart of the town. Our public spaces are being upgraded, our events programme boosted, and we're putting in place additional support for traders and local businesses.

Rebuilding the Town Centre Community

But making all that investment sustainable requires more people to live in and around our town centre – in what we've begun to call our town centre community.

Our town centre is already home to approximately 3,500 people. Incomes are relatively modest, households are younger than the borough average, and most households live in private or social rented accommodation.

The introduction of additional residential accommodation is a key component in supporting the continued diversification and long-term vitality of the town centre. Increasing the resident population within the centre will help to generate sustained footfall and local expenditure, which are widely recognised as key factors in supporting the viability of high streets and town centres.

A greater level of town centre living will also contribute to activity beyond traditional trading hours, helping to support the evening economy and a broader mix of uses, including leisure, food and beverage, and community services. This in turn supports a more resilient and vibrant town centre, reducing reliance on traditional retail and aligning with national trends which identify housing-led regeneration as a key driver in the revitalisation of town centres.

Why Council Leadership Matters

In 2023, the Council built the first new affordable homes in decades in the town centre. This Council investment has delivered 171 new homes across three Council-owned sites at key gateways to the town centre.

The focus of this investment was to deliver mixed tenure communities – and whilst the majority of these homes were for council rent or Shared Ownership (forming part of our wider commitment to the delivery of new council homes), we also delivered a small number of homes for private market sale.

The delivery of Council-led housing in Rotherham town centre has required overcoming a number of challenges, including development viability in a relatively low-value market, the complexity of bringing forward brownfield sites, and the need to create a new residential market within a traditionally retail-focused centre. Success has depended on significant public sector investment, strong project management and complementary investment in leisure, culture and public realm to create an attractive and sustainable place to live.

Without the Council taking on the risks associated with site assembly, viability gaps and placemaking, much of the town centre residential offer that now exists would be unlikely to have come forward through the market alone. The market wasn't failing because nobody wanted regeneration. It was failing because nobody could take the first step.

The Next Phase of Regeneration

Rotherham town centre is now entering a new phase of transformation, with significant opportunities emerging through the delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan and the Council's programme of Strategic Sites. Building on substantial public sector investment already made across the town centre, the focus is now shifting towards creating an even stronger residential offer that complements new employment, leisure and cultural opportunities. It's an approach that also helps to reduce the pressure on green belt development, given our National Planning Policy Framework housing delivery

target has effectively been doubled.

A key driver of future growth will be the proposed Rotherham Gateway mainline station and the wider regeneration corridor that surrounds it. The station will reconnect Rotherham directly to national rail services, acting as a catalyst for investment, new jobs, commercial development and housing growth. Its strategic location between the town centre and the planned Bassingthorpe Farm development creates a unique opportunity to link a major new residential community with the town centre, supporting demand for new homes and reinforcing the role of the town centre as a key destination for living, working and leisure.

It's in this context that the work being done by the Northern Housing Consortium's Renew project is so important. Their recent

report found that housing-led regeneration can unlock at least 500,000 good quality homes across the North of England, but only with the right support. In communities like mine, new sustainable housing developments are key to long-term regeneration – not just putting a lick of paint on existing infrastructure. That means that viability gaps will have to be filled. The state must be actively involved if the market is going to be able to deliver. We need advocates in national Government to fill the gap left by the last Government.

For Rotherham, investment in the town centre is not just a vital place-based regeneration programme, but also a catalyst for improving opportunities, health and quality of life across the surrounding neighbourhoods.

