



yimby
ALLIANCE



THE YIMBY PLATFORM

ELECTION 2024



PRICEDOUT

PricedOut is the UK's campaign for affordable house prices. We fight for an end to the housing crisis and believe that the only sustainable, long term solution will be building more homes.



YIMBY ALLIANCE

YIMBY Alliance is the national campaign for more housing with the support of local communities.



INTRODUCTION

The next Government will inherit a housing market in deep crisis. For decades we have completely failed to build enough homes, leaving us with acute shortages across the country, harming living standards, reducing opportunities and reducing economic growth. This crisis is a profound injustice leaving millions in substandard, expensive and precarious housing.

House price rises have been a huge barrier to opportunity for low and middle-income workers. The ratio of house prices to household incomes for those in the bottom decile has ballooned: from 12 times average household income in 1988 to over twenty times for FYE 2021. For the highest earners the ratio has only climbed from 3 to 5. This means that many working people are unable to get on the housing ladder, stuck without the security of a property of their own.

Not only is the housing shortage a key driver of inequality, but there are over 100,000 households in temporary accommodation in England, often families stuck in cramped B&Bs. The loss of a private rented home and an inability to afford another is the largest common cause of homelessness. There are too few other affordable private rented homes or council homes. The evidence is clear that one of the biggest drivers of housing insecurity, especially for families, is our high rents caused by a lack of good options.

Given the lead Labour currently commands in the polls, all indications point to Labour forming the next Government. We have therefore prepared this document with that in mind, but we believe these ideas stand on their own merits, and any party is more than welcome to adopt or learn from them.

Housing should be the number one priority for a progressive Labour Government.

Fixing the crisis will be an enormous tangible change for millions of renters and would-be buyers. Building new homes will do more than benefit struggling renters. It will grow the economy to give the Government more firepower to spend on other priorities and improve public services for everyone. The good news is that the future Secretary of State will have a wide array of levers they can pull to get Britain building the homes we so desperately need.

The key for Labour will be speed. They will have just five years to make meaningful progress on housing delivery but building homes takes time. The next Secretary of State should make sure their plans will deliver homes quickly to deliver on election promises and reduce voter frustration. Mega projects that require major upfront infrastructure will take years to deliver even one home. Policies like new towns should be complemented with ideas that can fill that gap and build the homes people need now.

Delivery on housing and growth will be crucial when Labour is up for re-election in five years. Voters will not be impressed with suggestions for a new Government to have a suite of commissions, lengthy consultations and vast amounts spent on private sector consultants. Local residents want minimal disruption and quick timelines. Renters want to see affordable rents. Prospective parents want a new home soon. People want to see homes delivered.

In high-demand areas, the price a new house will sell for is much higher than the cost of building it. That means building can generate enormous value to be spent on other priorities. Some Labour councils call this ability to use new housing to finance new council homes and other community assets their “North Sea Oil Strategy”. First,

this uplift can be put towards building a new generation of high quality social housing as well as ensuring that sufficient new stock is affordable to local residents. This value can, and should, also be used to ensure that nearby residents see benefits from the new homes. This can be clearly seen in London where many new council homes are provided by private builders using the profits from new development. New

infrastructure, public realm improvements and upgrades to public services could be funded by unleashing building across the country.

We have prepared this manifesto to help Labour hit the ground running and start delivering houses on day one.

DELIVERING NEW TOWNS QUICKLY

The cornerstone of Labour's commitment to back the builders is a generation of new towns for the 21st century. The ambition here is clear: a tide of new homes, in attractive, well planned, new communities. Britain has a long tradition of new settlements being built to meet housing demand so we have many lessons we can draw on to make sure that Labour's policy works as well as possible.

One challenge with new towns is the significant up-front cost. Before you can build a single home, roads must be laid, water and sewerage provisioned, electricity connected and services and amenities provided. In addition, for a town to be attractive to new residents it generally needs to be commutable to good jobs. This can mean upgrading or even building entirely new train connections. Of course, there is a huge payoff at the end – thousands of new homes – but it can be expensive and slow to get there.

Many of the best new towns, both in British and European experience, have come as urban extensions to existing cities. From Edinburgh's New Town way back in the 1800s and Barcelona's Eixample to the more modern Butte-Rouge outside Paris, cities across the UK and Europe have often grown through well-planned additions.

Because these are much closer to existing jobs, infrastructure and amenities, houses can be delivered much more quickly. By focusing early efforts on expanding the most unaffordable cities like York, Oxford and Cambridge, Labour could see the fruits much earlier.

Being close to existing employment centres will also help new towns succeed on their own terms. It can take decades for new settlements to develop their own economic gravity, and some never do. A successful town will need to be near jobs for its residents to avoid lumbering residents with extra long, and carbon intensive, commutes.

There is also an opportunity to make the most of existing transport connections to ensure that new towns work for residents from day one. Projects like the Elizabeth Line in London show how much can be delivered through smart planning and effective upgrades. Placing new towns on train links to existing cities, whilst improving those services, means that new homes are accessible more quickly than if chosen locations need a whole new line.

Building close to economic hubs or on existing transport corridors will give residents access to the best opportunities and set new towns up for success.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE 'GREY BELT'

Rent rises and house prices in cities have locked many young people out of the places where the best opportunities are. Many of these cities are surrounded by poor quality areas of the green belt. Keir Starmer has dubbed this 'grey belt' for the lack of any actual green space. We completely support his ambition to make it easier to release low-quality green belt for homes.

The green belt might more accurately be termed an 'urban containment boundary'. It is a policy designed to keep our major cities from growing outwards. Whilst much of it is green, some parts are simply disused brownfield land that is now barred from being developed. Often the land has no environmental or societal benefit as the

land is in private hands and is poor grade land.

A wider conversation needs to be had about how Britain ensures that its 'green and pleasant land' is best preserved, as well as made truly accessible to people who live in nature deprived communities. But whilst that is happening, Labour should rapidly produce an NDMP that allows, and encourages, councils to release any 'grey belt' land for housing and community use. This would enable crucial housing projects to come forwards without compromising any environmentally valuable land or treasured community open space.



A garage near Tottenham Hale, designated as green belt

USING THE POWERS ON THE BOOKS

Labour should make the most use of existing powers to deliver houses in a progressive way. This has the advantage of not requiring any further Parliamentary time and delivering help now to the renters and priced out who need it, whilst also giving Labour the power to shape how these policies are implemented.

Labour should use National Development Management Policies to streamline and modernise planning. Currently most local plans duplicate the same policies, covering anything from heat pumps to embodied carbon. Not only does having to write these policies slow down councils and cost them significant resources when writing their plans, the small but consequential variation between planning authorities raises costs for builders who are unable to standardise. Moving these development policies to a national level would give Labour the ability to set standards nationwide, whilst providing consistency for builders. Councils would be then given the space to use local plans for their intended purpose: allocating land.

The Levelling-up Act also provides for exciting new possibilities that Labour should try out. [Community Land Auctions](#) would give councils the power to capture much more uplift from development, which they could spend on critical local priorities. Labour should commence with trials as quickly as possible. Labour should also complete the roll out of the [street votes](#) rules that could help communities deliver homes quickly and where they are most needed.

More generally Labour should focus on using the many underused powers that already sit on the statute book to kickstart their ambitious house building agenda.



Regeneration in South Kilburn

ESTATE RENEWAL

One of Labour's proudest legacies was the rebuilding of Britain after WW2, which included a revolutionary swathe of council homes that continued well into the 1970s. With this project of national renewal Britain still has one of the highest percentages of residents living in council or HA owned housing.

However some of these estates are coming up on seventy years old. Buildings thrown up in a national emergency are no longer fit for purpose. Shocking levels of neglect have left tenants in cramped, draughty, damp and sometimes mould infested flats. Fixing conditions in our existing stock must also be at the top of any future Government agenda. Estate renewal offers a way forward that delivers better homes for existing council tenants and new council houses to help bring down waiting lists whilst being paid for through cross-subsidy from private homes.

The model is simple and proven effective: replace old estates with modern blocks at higher density. Existing tenants are offered a new flat, and the extra units are either sold to pay for the project, or become new social homes. The income from selling some of the flats means the cost to a fiscally constrained future Labour Government is dramatically reduced. In exceptionally high cost areas, where the crisis is worst, these schemes can even pay for themselves.

A key component, introduced by Mayor Sadiq Khan in London, is to require a tenant ballot before any project can go forward. It is crucial that social residents are in control of their future and don't fear their home being knocked down without their consent. Requiring a ballot means that housing associations have to listen to tenants, and their offer must be informed by the needs of real people, not the bottom line. Tenant

ballots in London have been a huge success with 30 out of 31 passing on the very first vote, often with huge margins.

Labour should help councils bring forward schemes more quickly, as well as use NDMPs to give estate renewal a presumption in favour of development. Crucially, this presumption must be predicated on a successful ballot.

Some housing associations are letting down their tenants, failing to maintain their properties well. We should follow Labour's successful policy on academies and allow tenants to collectively choose to replace their housing association with another social landlord. That should help to impel underperforming housing associations to improve.

IMPROVE & SIMPLIFY VALUE CAPTURE

When land receives planning permission it jumps in value. For greenfield land in the most expensive areas, prices can rise by a factor of up to 100. Mechanisms to capture this windfall have been broken in Britain for decades. The most commonly utilised way to capture this value is through a Section 106 agreement that adds a condition to planning permission. In London, this is commonly a condition to provide social homes. The s106 negotiation process is slow and unpredictable, often devolving into a protracted fight about how commercially viable a project is with the added conditions.

Labour should move to a system that taxes uplift in a simple, predictable and fair manner - and distributes that money to the planning authority. This would mean that areas that allow homes to be built see real community benefits, a proper chunk of the profits that would otherwise accrue to land owners. It will ensure that local councils can get the most out of new development and avoid being out-negotiated by much more experienced developers.



Upward extension in Tottenham

UPWARD EXTENSION

Whilst the first priority for a Labour Government has to be more homes, there are countless families for whom their current home is simply too small. Cramped and overcrowded family homes can often affect immigrant and minority communities worst, so policies that enable homeowners to expand as they need more space are especially welcome.

The Labour Party should encourage sensitive upward extension, adding additional storeys to existing homes, through national policy. Forward thinking Labour councils like Haringey have already shown how well this idea can work. There the Labour leadership collaborated with the local community to allow upward extensions in Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing. These extensions allow homeowners to add one to two extra stories while maintaining the architectural integrity of the streetscape. The initiative has been successful in providing additional living space without the need for new land, helping to alleviate overcrowding and meet the needs of growing families. Over 200 households in South Tottenham, an area with a significant Hasidic community, have benefited from this policy, demonstrating the potential for broader application.

Other councils, such as Wandsworth and Richmond, have followed suit with streamlined planning rules to facilitate upward extensions. This approach has proven effective in easing overcrowding and providing additional housing capacity. For instance, Manchester City Council supports the addition of extra storeys in suburban areas, showcasing the adaptability of this policy across different regions and housing types. The key to success is the enforcement of design codes that ensure any extensions are harmonious with existing buildings, maintaining the

visual and structural integrity of neighbourhoods.

Upward extensions offer several community and environmental benefits. They promote urban density, which supports sustainable lifestyles by reducing reliance on cars and enhancing public transport viability. The policy also facilitates environmental retrofitting, such as better insulation and solar panels, further contributing to the fight against the climate crisis. By allowing families to expand their homes without relocating, upward extensions help maintain community ties and continuity, making cities more resilient and adaptable to future needs.

CONCLUSION

For so many, this election will be about housing. From the cost of rent to the price to buy, people are feeling the severe effects of the housing shortage. Keir Starmer and his team have realised that the only way to solve this crisis is to build more homes. Starmer himself has declared himself a 'YIMBY' and expressed incredible ambition on the housing crisis.

We encourage Labour to focus on delivering its target of 1.5 million homes where they are most needed and will

produce the most benefits. And 300,000 homes a year should be seen as a minimum. Bidwells estimated that we need more like 550,000 homes a year to catch up with the shortfall.

Making that ambition a reality will be the toughest part. We hope that this set of policies will enable the next Labour Government to move quickly, letting homes get built early on in their term.

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