

Dear Colleague letter – LONG TERM PLAN FOR HOUSING

13 February 2024

Dear Colleague,

Today, we are taking the next step in our long-term plan for housing, announcing a package of measures to ensure more homes get built where they are needed most – in our inner cities – helping protect the Green Belt and countryside.

We have a strong record of housing delivery. We are on track to meet the manifesto commitment to build one million homes this Parliament, and to have delivered over 2.5 million more homes since 2010. This includes almost 696,000 affordable homes, and supporting over 876,000 households into home ownership. Over this Parliament, we have delivered the highest number of new homes for over thirty years, with the greatest number of first-time buyers in a single year for two decades.

The changes we made to national planning policy in December were designed to support delivery by addressing legitimate concerns about weaknesses in the planning system, which in turn led to frustrations about the nature of development. That is why we moved to protect the Green Belt, clarify how housing targets should be set, safeguard the character of suburbs, and ensure urban authorities play their proper part in meeting housing need. The further targeted action we are announcing today builds on those changes by making it easier to pursue the right kind of development on brownfield land – because we want to see more new housing in the hearts of our cities, rather than the unnecessary tarmacking over of the countryside.

Brownfield development

Last summer, I used my speech setting out our Long-Term Plan for Housing to draw attention to the particularly poor record of housing delivery in London, where housing affordability challenges are most acute. Only 35,000 new homes were delivered in the capital last year, which amounts to just over half the 66,000 homes the Mayor of London's own plan identifies as needed each year. That is why I urged the Mayor to take urgent action, and when he failed to do so, commissioned an independent review of the London Plan led by Christopher Katkowski KC.

This review, which we are publishing today, reveals the problems plaguing delivery in London – concluding that “the combined effect of the multiplicity of policies in the London Plan now works to frustrate rather than facilitate the delivery of new homes” and “four years into [the] ten-year [London Plan]...there has been an undersupply of more than 60,000 homes, more than a year of equivalent supply”. It recommends that to tackle this under delivery, a presumption in favour of brownfield development is introduced into the London Plan.

The Government intends to deliver the spirit of this recommendation – but believes it is important to tackle under delivery not just in London, but in our other major towns and cities that serve as engines of jobs and growth. We are therefore proposing to introduce a new ‘brownfield presumption’ in the twenty most populous cities and urban centres in the country, where housing delivery has dropped below expected levels. These twenty places, which include London, are the ones to which an ‘urban uplift’ already applies when determining the need for homes. This new presumption will make it easier to get permission to build on brownfield land where an authority is underdelivering, by raising the bar for refusing applications – ultimately helping more young families to find a home.

We also want to support brownfield development more widely, by making clear to every local authority in England that they need to be more flexible in approving planning applications on brownfield land. To make this happen, we are proposing a change to national planning policy that would require councils to give significant weight to the benefits of delivering as many homes as possible where there is a shortage of land for homes. This change would also tell councils that they need to be pragmatic in applying policies on the internal layout of developments – cutting through what can sometimes prove too complex a web of constraints that misses the prize of building new homes.

I want to note that neither proposed change affects the definition of previously developed land in national policy and so would not alter existing protections, including for residential gardens, nor amend other relevant policies on the character of suburban neighbourhoods. A consultation on these two proposals launches today, and will close on 26 March. Subject to that consultation, we will introduce these changes as soon as possible, through an update to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Permitted development rights

Complementing these changes on brownfield development, we are also helping developers overcome tiresome bureaucracy by slashing red tape that stops appropriate commercial buildings being turned into new homes. Following a consultation last year, the relevant secondary legislation will be laid in Parliament today to extend current Permitted Development Rights such that commercial buildings of any size will have the freedom to be converted into new homes – this means shops, offices, and other buildings all quickly repurposed, resulting in thousands of quality new homes by 2030.

In parallel, we are launching a further consultation on proposals to support millions of homeowners to extend their homes outwards and upwards, freeing new extensions or large loft conversions from the arduous process of receiving planning permission, while ensuring continuing protection for neighbours’ local amenity. Our proposals will also allow homeowners greater freedoms on installing heat pumps and Electric Vehicle charging points, ensuring these rights deliver what people want for their homes.

London delivery

These planning reforms are important, but our changes to policy come alongside additional funding too. We are announcing £50 million of investment to unlock new homes and improve the quality of life for existing residents through estate regeneration in London. Working closely with the London Borough of Camden, we are establishing a new Euston Housing Delivery Group to explore maximum regeneration and housing backed by £4 million. We are also announcing £125 million loan funding from the Home Building Fund Infrastructure Loans portfolio and Long-Term Fund for sites in East and South London which will unlock 8,000 new homes – and to help tackle undersupply in the medium-term, we are announcing our intention to legislate at the earliest opportunity to remove the current block on Homes England’s role in London.

Support for SMEs

It is right that we do what we can to unleash the capability of housebuilders across the housing sector. SME housebuilders play a vital role in our communities, and we are already backing them through our £1.5 billion Levelling Up Home Building Fund and £1 billion ENABLE Build guarantee programme. Today we are going further by expanding the ENABLE Build scheme to cover more lenders and increase the availability of SME finance to the sector. To support access to land for building, we will also introduce SME-only sales of Homes England land, with pilots starting this year in the Southeast and Midlands. We will also update the Community Infrastructure Levy guidance to discourage higher rates being charged on smaller sites, responding to feedback from the sector.

Public sector land

It is also crucial for Government to play its part to release more land directly. That is why we are working with the three main landowning departments – the Department for Transport, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Health and Social Care, as well as Homes England – which have pledged to set aside suitable unused or unwanted land for housing. So far departments have pledged to release Government owned land for at least 15,000 homes before March 2025, and we have set up a ministerial Taskforce to assure and accelerate delivery over the longer term.

Second staircases guidance

Finally, our focus is of course not just on building more but building safely. I have already announced my intent for second staircases in new buildings above 18 meters, and the associated transitional arrangements that will allow projects that are already underway to continue as planned. The Building Safety Regulator will publish detailed guidance to support a second staircase by the end of March, and this guidance will set out that the second staircase will not come with additional provisions such as evacuation lifts, providing housebuilders with the clarity they need to progress developments.

I would welcome your support as we take the next step in our long-term plan for housing that will ensure more safe, warm, affordable homes get built in the places that need them most.

With every good wish

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP

Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

California Crossroads The Council fails to listen .

There is huge local anger about the decision to spend vast sums on disrupting the California crossroads junction which works fine.

Residents should not take it out on the workers undertaking the contract. They should continue with strong legal protests against the Council. We told them well in advance not to mess with this junction. We told them not to waste an astonishing £5.5 million of taxpayers money. The current MP for this part of the Borough disagrees with this scheme.

People are incensed by the Council's costly anti driver agenda. People need to use vehicles to get to work, to take children to school, to do the weekly shop and to get to sport and leisure activities. It is heartless of the Council to block roads, put in endless temporary traffic lights, and create more dangerous spaces where there once were clear roads and pavements. This long building project will do plenty of damage to local businesses who will lose customers over it.

Why does the Council hate us so much? Why do they delight in making busy lives more difficult?

The costs of net zero policies

Labour's decision to abandon most of its planned £28 bn a year extra investment programme for net zero has served to highlight the costs of the policy. It should also lead Labour to ask how they could both afford and achieve their wish to accelerate the UK's progress to net zero compared to very exacting existing government targets. Under Mr Sunak the government has been relaxing some of the requirements, recognising that for the policy to work it has to be undertaken at a pace that people will accept. Much of the investment needs to be made by individuals and by private companies, so it needs to be realistic. The faster the government wants to go the more subsidy and direct public spending it will need to bring it about.

Labour say they are still wedded to the idea of zero carbon electricity generation by 2030. How can this be? That would require the closure and write off of all our gas power stations and the remaining coal ones. If Drax is staying it would require a carbon capture and storage scheme to be up and running at great cost for that facility. It would require a massive expansion of the grid to handle more interruptible power and the planned expansion of electric heating and vehicles. It would need a major further investment in wind and solar power. It would require big battery installations to store power, and probably some new pump storage schemes as well. No-one seriously believes this can be done by 2030. Nor could be it be done for part of a planned £28bn a year let alone without £28 bn a year.

Two of the big areas where net zero requires different conduct by individuals are transport and heating. Labour's faster progress would mean ripping out far more gas boilers far sooner, which most people show no wish to do. It would require a fast replacement of diesel and petrol vehicles with electric. It would require an end to many holidays abroad or a rapid roll out of synthetic fuels for all aeroplanes. It is time interviewers on main media asked these crucial questions of those who advocate faster moves to net zero. It is simply wrong to be told wind energy is cheaper than fossil fuel energy when the figures do not take into account the costs of back up power today from fossil fuel. Nor do they take into account the full costs of extra grid, the costs of battery and pump storage, the costs of smart meters and the costs of rolling out charger points and extra cable capacity into homes for a more comprehensive renewables system.

[South East Lib and Lab Councils get some frosty answers to their survey](#)

The South East Councils asked the public which cuts scenarios they were most concerned about. The public did not express as much concern as the Councils probably hoped in a number of areas. On climate change 61% of Councillors wanted increased public transport but only 32% of the public did. Only 17% of the public wanted more EV charging points which are now making their costly appearance more often. 46% of Councillors wanted more financial assistance for insulating homes but only 32% of the public. Only 14% said they plan to buy or drive an electric vehicle.

In area after area Councillors wanted a higher spending more interventionist model of local government whereas more of the public did not. The survey was a typical one with so many Labour and Lib Dem Councillors on the organisation. It was skewed to wanting more and bigger local government and more spending. There were no reported options to spend less, reduce the number of things Councils do, to reduce executive and admin staffing levels, and to cut down the number of bogus consultations where Councils then ignore

the findings if they do not like them. There was no option to stop the aggressive spending on removing lanes, reducing flows at junctions, narrowing roads and making it very difficult to drive to work or school.

The survey did capture people's frustrations that local government makes important decisions about their lives but the people do not feel part of the process or empowered to stop bad decisions being made. Lib Dem Wokingham is an example of a Council which ignores public opinion after spending a lot on consultant designed schemes and on consultations. It specialises in spending money on trying to get more people to abandon their cars as it follows its anti motorist agenda.

Pharmacy First Programme

Please find below the Dear Colleague that I have received from the Government concerning the Pharmacy First Programme.

Dear Colleague,

Pharmacy First Launch

We all know that pharmacies are an integral part of the fabric of our communities, an easily accessible front door to the NHS, staffed by highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals. Four in five of us can reach our local community pharmacy within a 20-minute walk and there are, on average, twice as many pharmacies in the most deprived communities.

Today we are launching the new Pharmacy First service, making even better use of our highly trained community pharmacists. For the first time ever, community pharmacies in England will be able to offer NHS consultations and supply prescription-only medicines without a prescription from a GP for seven common conditions. The seven conditions are: earache, sinusitis, sore throat, impetigo, infected insect bite, shingles, and uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women (under the age of 65).

In May last year, the Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care announced an investment in community pharmacy of up to £645million to:

- Expand the number of blood pressure checks in community pharmacy by an additional 2.5 million checks by the end of 2024/25 (currently at 900,000 per year), potentially preventing more than 1,350 heart attacks and strokes in 2023/24 as well as reducing the risks for tens of thousands of others.
- Expand the contraception service to include initial oral contraception consultations. This reduces barriers for women in accessing contraception because rather than making a GP appointment, they can simply visit their local pharmacy. NHS England estimate that almost half a million women will be able to access the pill through their pharmacy by 2024/25.
- Introduce a Pharmacy First service.

The Department and NHS England have worked closely with Community Pharmacy England, the representative body of all pharmacy contractors in England, on the detail of the three services. The funding for additional blood pressure checks is already flowing to community pharmacies, with contraception services being expanded from 1 December.

Completing this set of delivery milestones is the launch of Pharmacy First. This builds on existing clinical services already introduced in community pharmacy; such as the ability for GPs, NHS111 and Urgent and Emergency Care to refer patients to a community pharmacist

for a minor illness consultation and NHS111 and Urgent and Emergency Care to refer patients an urgent medicine supply. From today this will become part of the wider Pharmacy First Service.

Over 10,000 community pharmacies (circa 95 percent) have signed up to start offering Pharmacy First to their communities. Patients will be able to walk into a pharmacy to access the service or they may be referred to a community pharmacy by their GP, NHS111 or UEC.

This Government has a clear plan to back the pharmacy workforce. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan commits £2.4 billion to fund additional education and training places over the next five years. This includes an ambition to increase training places for pharmacists across England by nearly 50 percent to around 5,000 by 2031/32, and to grow the number of pharmacy technicians.

NHS England has also invested £15.9 million on pharmacy professional career development. NHS England and the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education offer a range of support to upskill the current workforce with clinical examination skills.

From 2026 all newly qualified pharmacists will be independent prescribers on the day of registration. This will equip pharmacists with the skills and knowledge to provide even more clinical care and expand the clinical role of pharmacists across the NHS including in community pharmacy. I look forward to working with the sector to build further on Pharmacy First to use these new skills to benefit patients.

I have attached a breakdown of the number of pharmacies that have signed up to deliver Pharmacy First in each integrated care system for your information (Annex A).

The Government has a clear vision to support pharmacists to evolve into a more clinically focused role, with members of the public able to take full advantage of their skills and capabilities. Pharmacy First shows we are serious about delivering against this vision.

This is part of our plan to make the NHS and social care system faster, simpler and fairer for us all.

Best wishes,



THE RT HON DAME ANDREA LEADSOM DBE MP

ICB Name	Number of community pharmacies opted into Pharmacy First as of end of 28 January 2023
BUCKS, OXFORDSHIRE & BERKSHIRE WEST ICB	246