LOCALIS | THE HOUSING & FINANCE INSTITUTE

AN ESSAY COLLECTION

Valuing Housing, Improving Lives.

Contents

Introduction

Natalie Elphicke OBE MP

This paper, the first such paper of the new intake of 2019 Conservative Members of Parliament, sets out 10 viewpoints with new ideas for housing over the next decade.

A radical and exciting agenda for housing has been led and delivered over the last decade under Conservative leadership. Record amounts of public sector support has been put into housing – over £40bn. The results are striking:

- A near record delivery of additional homes, more than 240,000, which is higher than the previous high point of 223,530 before the financial crash of 2007/08;
- Continued high number of planning permissions granted by district planning authorities;
- A financially strong and robust social housing sector;
- A revival in the role of the council in securing the right homes in the right places for their areas; and
- A national first in the statutory commitment to eradicate homelessness.

Much has been done – yet there is more to do to ensure that this housing agenda goes further in the years to come.

Housing has a fundamental social and economic role. It is a cornerstone of the safety net of the welfare state. It provides the ladders of opportunity and prosperity. Building homes is not just about bricks and mortar, it is about building the very fabric of successful and sustainable communities.

This is a collection of individual essays, an essay by each author that is their own and not to be assumed to be the views of any other. This collection of essays sets out thoughts on how we can more fully embed the value and benefits of housing in our national finances and local government, as well as exploring the vital role of housing in building sustainable communities and supporting lives.

This paper is divided into three parts:

- Part A: The Role of Housing in Supporting the Most Vulnerable in Society
- Part B: The Role of Housing in Promoting Opportunity and Prosperity for All
- Part C: The Role of Planning in Creating Successful and Sustainable Communities.

PART A

The Role of Housing in Supporting the Most Vulnerable in Society.

The first part of this collection of essays is from Nickie Aiken MP (Cities of London and Westminster); Dean Russell MP (Watford), Joy Morrissey MP (Beaconsfield) and Robin Millar MP (Aberconwy). These four essays explore some challenges in meeting the needs of vulnerable people, including people who are homeless, who are in complex need or who have been subject to domestic abuse, and the opportunities for prevention as well as supportive pathways to help those most in need.

Themes include:

- **Preservation of Life**: a new 'preservation of life' act should be considered. This would prohibit a 'walk on by'/'live and let die' response to rough sleeping, with new responsibilities and powers, as well as funded support services.
- **From broken lives to new beginnings:** families who have suffered domestic abuse should be prioritised for re-housing so that those affected can move forward from the strongest foundation, a safe and stable home. A new focus on the 'housed vulnerable' is needed to give greater protection for people targeted in their homes by gangs and organised crime, such as county lines.
- **Housing First, Prevention First:** 'Housing First', a programme that tailors services, such as mental health and addiction support, around a stable new home, is highly effective at helping vulnerable people. This approach should be extended to a 'Prevention First' system which funds additional front line and preventative services to tackle root causes that lead to destitution and homelessness in order to build a stronger, healthier and happier society.

Live or Let Die: Time for a Bold, Brave and Caring Approach to Rough Sleeping.

Nickie Aiken MP
Member of Parliament for Cities of London and Westminster

John* sits hunched up on Victoria Street, Central London, with a traffic cone which he uses to as a trumpet to play *When the Saints Go Marching In.*

You can see him most workdays between 8-9am. Prime commuter travelling time.

Thousands of workers rushing up from the station on their way to their desks. Smiles spread over their faces when they hear John's rendition. They toss a silver or sometimes a gold coin into the pot lying next to him. A warm feeling may pass over them as they consider the help they've given the chap trying to make a living through his unusual busking style.

But take a closer look. John's body tells a very different tale. His body ravaged by years, perhaps decades of drug abuse. Glimpse at his feet. What is left of them. Poor veins because of what he has injected into them. Time ticking away before there is no option but to amputate one or both of his feet.

Do those generous people give a passing thought to what John will spend his takings on? Breakfast? A bed for that night?

No.

John isn't a rough sleeper.

The money he will raise this morning, like every morning, will be gathered up and then given to one of his regular dealers who are only a quick call away. They in turn will send one of their teenagers over on their bike to provide him with his fixes for the day.

Debbie* sits outside a nearby Pret. She looks like death. I have known her for over five years. She appears every few months. Looking worse on each visit. She looks over fifty, but I suspect she is nearer 35. She sits begging for money. Coffee cups and sandwiches strewn all around her. Offerings from kindhearted souls popping in to Pret to purchase their own breakfast or lunch. Debbie may look as if she has slept rough for months, years even. The truth is she has a hostel over the river which provides a host of holistic services and support to help her overcome her heroin addiction. But she regularly leaves the safety of the hostel to sleep rough in Victoria to beg to pay for her drugs. She will sleep on the street for a week or two. Then she will be persuaded by a council outreach worker to reconnect with her hostel. It is a regular cycle I and my neighbours have witnessed for years.

These real life examples may make shocking reading. Sadly, John and Debbie's stories are repeated every day on the streets of London and other

major UK cities and towns.

The causes of rough sleeping are complex. They can range from people experiencing mental health issues and substance abuse to being victims of human trafficking. People are often forced to be part of organised begging networks by criminal gangs. However, it is always very challenging to prove a crime is committed as they often operate in close-knit family groups – increasing the complexity of helping people in these circumstances.

The new Conservative Government has ambitious plans to eradicate rough sleeping by 2024 which I fully support.

The much heralded Rough Sleeping Strategy Review to be launched in March 2020 is an opportunity for Government to begin reforming the current system. To really look into effect real groundbreaking reforms that will transform people's lives, save lives. Local authorities like Westminster, where 35% of London's rough sleeping happens, must be at the heart of the new polices that will be introduced.

As most people who live or work in the centre of London can see, Westminster has more people sleeping rough than any other council in the country. Tonight, you can expect to find more than 300 people sleeping rough - in doorways, parks, and increasingly so inside tents. Ironically this is fewer than the 400 who regularly used to sleep rough in Trafalgar Square in the 1860s.

Rough sleeping is getting worse and is claiming lives on regularly basis. More than 30 rough sleepers have died in Westminster in the past year, and there will be more fatalities. The average life of a rough sleeper is just 47; the streets are no place for anyone to live, the life they deserve or should expect. Those who won't accept help from the authorities risk a life fraught with menace, a world where sexual assault and drug use are rife on the streets and in tents.

Why?

My eight years as the politician responsible for rough sleeping services in Westminster, has taught me that there is no easy solution. It is not just about building more homes or providing more hostel places. Though new homes are always welcome in the capital there are no ready-made solutions. This is largely because the number of people wanting or needing to sleep on the streets is driven by a poisonous cocktail of societal issues from addiction to mental and marriage breakdown. Rough sleeping is the symptom, not the cause of deep- seated personal problems.

If we are going to reduce the numbers of those sleeping on the streets, a complete overhaul of the present approach is required. The current legislative system local authorities and police have to use to help rough sleepers is vastly ineffective. The best example being the 1824 Vagrancy Act, an archaic piece of legislation designed to deal with soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars. A law introduced to react to very different issues in a very different era.

We can no longer rely on 19th century piece of legislation to cope with what is a defining problem of 21st century inner cities.

We need to begin by repealing the Vagrancy Act, which criminalises rough sleeping and adopting a Preservation of Life approach.

Equally important is the need to greatly increase funding for poorly-resourced mental health and drug treatment teams which are struggling to deal with the ever increasing complex problems on our streets.

Westminster Council is doing more than any other local authority to get

people off the streets and into accommodation. The council is spending over £7 million every year, commissioning 415 supported housing bed spaces, an assessment centre which can sleep up to a further 40 people, a night centre which can support up to 80 people, with access to a further 40 emergency bed spaces. More beds than official statistics show for the numbers sleeping on Westminster's streets each night.

Where rough sleepers will and are able to talk to outreach workers, the majority are helped off the streets in just a couple of days. But there are some who need extensive wrap-around support to be persuaded to come indoors and seek the help they need – accommodation, health services, job training and more. Working with partners such as St Mungo's and The Passage.

However, councils cannot solve this systemic crisis alone.

We need a cross-government approach that takes a completely different perspective focusing not on criminalisation but on Preservation of Life. This needs four things:

- Legislation and proper funding for a housing first approach. This has been proven to work across Europe in places such as Finland, where the introduction of a national housing first model, with new homes being built, led to a 35% decrease in long-term homelessness.
- Adequate funding to properly resource mental health and drug treatment teams which are struggling to deal with the scale and complexity of the problems on our streets.
- Public education to explain that donations should be channelled into organisations that can help in practice, instead of giving cash for a short-term fix.
- The right powers and resources for the police to tackle any associated anti-social and criminal behaviour when it occurs – be that drug dealing or violent behaviour.

These changes could either be introduced as amendments to current legislation or as a new package of measures – Preservation of Life measures that highlight the true complexity of the issue and involve public health, housing, welfare support and when necessary, enforcement.

Government agrees that eradicating rough sleeping is one of the most challenging and important issues our country is facing. But we must recognise that if we are to halve it by 2024, action is needed, and it is needed now. We mustn't walk by and leave people suffering on the streets.

For the sake of John, Debbie and the thousands of others on the streets across UK we need to act now, we need a new bold, brave and caring approach – one that values every life, a new Preservation of Life Approach.

Nickie Aiken is the Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster.

*Names have been changed to John and Debbie for this essay.

Cuckoo in the Nest: From Vulnerable Homeless to Vulnerable 'Homed'.

Dean Russell MP
Member of Parliament for Watford

In the entire year of 2019, the word 'cuckooing' was not mentioned once in the House of Commons – yet cuckooing is fast becoming the beating heart that is enabling county lines drug supply to exploit the most vulnerable in our society; especially homeless people who are attempting to get their lives on track.

Despite cuckooing featuring in a subplot of the popular BBC television drama 'The Line of Duty' several years ago, the term has only recently started to gain some traction in the media and amongst law enforcement. Cuckooing is not only becoming more prevalent but also shines a light on a worryingly growing connection between criminality, transport, housing and homelessness.

Firstly, let's define 'cuckooing'. According to the National Crime Agency it is where (usually) drug dealers or gangs "take over a local property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person, and use it to operate their criminal activity from.". The name is an analogy to how Cuckoo birds parasitically make use of another bird's nest. In this instance it means vulnerable people ranging from former homeless individuals through to isolated older people are taken advantage of with criminals taking over their homes for nefarious purposes. This can range from storing drugs and weapons through to operating temporary bases for county lines activities with multiple people occupying the home of a vulnerable individual.

The key word to focus on for this topic is "vulnerable". That is because homeless people – especially rough sleepers – continue to be vulnerable even after they find accommodation. In fact, the rise in cuckooing is potentially making them even more vulnerable because they are callously becoming targets for criminal activity once they have accommodation.

The pattern that is emerging is both cyclical and cruel. A homeless individual is offered space at a hostel, then over time is provided with accommodation typically their own flat. Over this time, they are befriended by a member of a gang, for example a young woman may befriend a vulnerable older man. Over a short period of time, the friend will go from having a chat and a coffee to asking for small favours. For example, asking if they can leave a bag at the flat, then drugs or a weapon. For addicts, or former addicts, this favour might come with a reward of free drugs or alcohol. Before too long, they find the gang move into their residence, using it as a

base for criminal activities usually including drug dealing. The victim becomes trapped, unable to escape their situation as their home becomes trashed and after a short period of time, they find themselves evicted and back on the streets. However, this time they are at the back of the queue for support.

In many ways, cuckooing highlights the risks of what happens when the dots are not joined for the vulnerable who are attempting to get themselves back on their feet but fall between the cracks of multiple departments or organisations attempting to support them. The topic also indicates only a transformative approach to how we look at the topic of housing vulnerable individuals in society will enable us to pre-empt and protect them from the gruesome threat of organised crime.

Perhaps the most vulnerable in our society are homeless people, with rough sleepers at the extreme end of this. Homelessness is a very complex issue, and understandably comes with many assumptions and emotions attached for all involved – from those affected, to the charities, and government organisations attempting to tackle the complex challenges and eradicate the issue. There is a rarely a one-size fits all approach that everyone can agree on, but at the very simplest level, ensuring homeless people have a place to stay is at the core of any solution – and is tightly linked to the wider issues around housing and crime.

What we do know is there has been a 75% increase in vulnerable groups becoming homeless over the past decade, with 40% of all deaths of those homeless related to drug poisoning. It is time to look at this challenge with a different lens. This latter point is key.

The Big Issue predicted in December 2019 there were 320,000 people homeless in the UK. That will range between those who are rough sleeping on our streets (estimated between 4,600-5000 in England), those in temporary accommodation to those 'sofa-surfing'. Whilst homelessness can be caused by a huge variation and complexity of issues (commonly mental health problems, family breakdowns, addiction and unemployment), the ultimate question to solving these issues is, what pathways are being offered to these individuals?

Too often, despite valiant attempts from charities and local authorities, the pathways offered to homeless people can be quite disjointed. As they are passed from one charity, department or team like a baton in a 4x4 relay race the cracks begin to appear for gangs to target them for their own purposes. This can mean they don't so much get lost in the system but lost through the system. As they move from street to hostel to accommodation they are not just coping with a change of environment – which is daunting in itself – but may also be learning new skills around financial management, job hunting, dealing with mental health issues through to coping with addiction. In other words, along with finding a physical space for individuals to survive, there also needs to be support to help them get into the right headspace to thrive.

Any deep-rooted Conservative adheres to the value of evidence-based analysis on change. So, when looking at the successes from the UK and abroad there seems to be a common theme; the principle of 'Housing First'.

Housing first is a system in which those vulnerable get access to permanent housing. Importantly, this approach first ensures the most vulnerable groups (young women, those with mental health problems or disabilities) have not just a roof over their head, but access to services. The latter is the part which is potentially the most difficult but the most important,

because this is where connecting the dots is critical.

The best proof of the solution working is in Finland. They haven't completely solved homelessness, but they are coming close. In 1987, there were around 18,000 homeless people in Finland. In 2017, there were 7,112 homeless people, of which only 415 were living on the streets or in emergency shelters. Over just seven years between 2008 and 2015, the number of people experiencing long-term homelessness dropped by 35 percent.

What worked was Finland's approach to homelessness as "as a housing problem and a violation of fundamental rights, both solvable, and not as an inevitable social problem resulting from personal issues," said an analysis from Feantsa, a European network that focuses on homelessness.

In the UK this system isn't a straight-forward one though- especially in highly populated areas like London and especially with the growth of County Lines across the UK. However, if we want to alter our policy on homelessness, we need to change the culture around homelessness also. In Finland, they have the concept of 'Nimi Ovessa' which means 'your name on the door'. It promotes the feeling of ownership. If the UK were to adopt a housing first policy, we stress that this isn't temporary accommodation, it's their home. Those exploited by County Lines gangs are stripped of enjoying independence. Permanent accommodation can inspire confidence amongst those who have become used to having so little.

Much can also be learned from Plymouth City Council who have been 'bucking the trend' on homelessness. With increased funding, a new partnership was established bringing together a range of charities. With this new alliance, under one umbrella, provision of services to the most vulnerable became more effective and efficient.

Finland spent €250m creating these new homes and hiring 300 extra support workers. However, a recent study showed the savings in emergency healthcare, social services and the justice system amounted to €15,000 a year for every homeless person in properly supported housing.

Therefore, a housing first strategy that provides permanent homes, alongside intensely coordinated social work that operates directly around these homes, could ensure the Government reaches its target to 'make homelessness a thing of the past' by 2027. Whilst some may talk about the 'expense' of housing first, one should acknowledge the cost of the current broken system. Inside Housing research showed temporary accommodation cost English councils almost £1 billion in 2017/18. Indeed, a 2019 Government report which identified re-offenders in 2016, found re-offending cost the taxpayer £18.1 billion in 12-month period. So there is also a strong economic, as well as moral and policy case, for being bold on sorting these crisis.

In conclusion, cuckooing is not just an isolated issue, it is a symptom of a disconnected system which is enabling criminal gangs to take advantage of the most disadvantaged. Combining a housing first approach with supported pathways will enable more stability for vulnerable homeless people and ensure they will not end up back where they started. The goal should be to provide permanent accommodation immediately, without preconditions, where it is social workers, not gangs, who are on the doorstep. With long-term strategic thinking, we can provide long-term decisive solutions.

Dean Russell is the Member of Parliament for Watford.

From Broken Lives to New Beginnings.

Joy Morrissey MP
Member of Parliament for Beaconsfield

One of the great challenges of public policy in the 2020s will be the various aspects of the housing crisis. Many feel that they understand this issue but it goes far deeper than most policy makers expect. One of the areas where we can see the most devastating effects of this mismatch of expectation and understanding is in the link between domestic abuse and homelessness.

The most obvious element is that abuse happens within the home, meaning that one of the first and most fundamental barriers for someone trying to escape domestic abuse is that in doing so they may be making themselves immediately homeless.

We can see this in the figures for homelessness where last year 23,430 families and individuals who were homeless or on the brink of homelessness had experienced, or were at risk of, domestic abuse. The charity Crisis reports that one in five of their female clients attribute domestic abuse as the direct cause of them becoming homeless.

It has been very encouraging to see the measures laid out in the Domestic Abuse Bill, something Conservative MPs can be very proud to support. This opportunity to protect and support victims and survivors of domestic abuse is one that should be seized, but it must be done correctly and sensitively.

If we are to step up and tackle the horrors of domestic abuse we cannot flinch away from taking the measures that are necessary to protect victims. To do this we must close the gap between survivors and proper provision of safe, secure accommodation during their time of crisis. This is a necessary step to ensuring that no-one is forced to return to a dangerous situation for them and their family in order to avoid homelessness.

This choice, faced by so many that find themselves in this horrifying position, is unacceptable as we go into the 2020s. The answer is to make sure that domestic abuse is automatically considered a priority need for settled housing. To make sure that those who find themselves homeless due to domestic abuse are automatically in priority need for the full homelessness duty.

As it currently stands, victims and survivors are put in the unenviable position of having to prove they are "significantly more vulnerable" than others facing homelessness, placing the burden on those who are most vulnerable in their most challenging circumstances. Given the pressures

that survivors already face it is often impossible for them to do so, even the attempt compounding the traumatic situation in which they find themselves.

In many cases, under the current system, the ways in which people are expected to demonstrate their vulnerability are difficult, insulting and often impossible. Survivors being asked to provide a Criminal Reference Number is often cited, meaning that the victim has to have been subjected to a criminal level of violence before a safe environment is even considered. In the very worst cases victims have even been asked to provide a letter from their abuser admitting their guilt before proper assistance is rendered. These practices belong to a different age and we must bring the UK into the 21st century on this issue.

Anyone who is homeless as a result of domestic violence is, by definition, significantly more vulnerable than the vast majority of other applicants for housing. Making this consideration an automatic step will only speed what should already be an inevitable decision to act in support of victims. Indeed, Wales is leading the way in this matter with changes already made, through the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order (2001) to place survivors in the automatic priority need category.

While we have taken some positive steps, in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, to prevent and alleviate homelessness, there are still gaps in the system. The APPG for Ending Homelessness found last year that nearly 2,000 survivors are not having their needs met every single year. This proposed measure would help find refuge for these people who, at the time of their greatest need, are currently being let down by the system.

Similarly, the Government's commitment to placing a duty on local authorities to commission accommodation-based support services for survivors of abuse is very much welcomed and a very visible sign of the Conservative Party's commitment to supporting and protecting victims of domestic abuse. However, if we do not take the right steps, that commitment will appear cosmetic and shallow as there would still be no legal requirement for local authorities to provide these services for people who are not considered to have priority need.

The solution to this is to amend homelessness legislation to ensure the legal right to rehousing for survivors of domestic abuse. This would include providing a comprehensive package for preventing homelessness for survivors – allowing us to fulfil the Government's ambition to protect against domestic abuse in all circumstances. This would be accomplished by amending the Housing Act 1996 so that victims of domestic abuse are moved on to the list of groups automatically granted priority need for the full homelessness duty, alongside the funding to support this.

The upcoming Budget provides the Government the perfect opportunity to commit to delivering this legislative change by securing the funding to support it. This will make clear that our intention to keep victims and survivors safe is broad and deep, and that our commitment is not open to challenge.

Potential indicative costs on local authorities if this change was implemented range from £3,617 to £11,434 for each household supported, depending upon the type and duration of support provided to help them secure permanent accommodation. An estimate based on local authority data suggests an additional 490 households would be owed the main homelessness duty each quarter if automatic priority need was extended.

This is a very manageable cost for local authorities and as such it would

not require a significant call on the Treasury to provide this additional funding alongside the additional funding being allocated to accommodation-based support services. The small investment we would have to make would yield a significant dividend, meaning that survivors would no longer be left with the unacceptable choice of either facing homelessness or returning home to face violence or abuse. This is the time for us to show that we will not shirk our responsibilities but will stand against domestic abuse in every way we can.

Joy Morrissey is the Member of Parliament for Beaconsfield.

On Housing, Health and Happiness.

Robin Millar MP
Member of Parliament for Aberconwy

Calls for more housing are an attractive but simplistic response to the problems of homelessness and rough sleeping. The traditional levers of legislation and spending available to politicians cannot address the complexity of the human condition alone. The developments we need are not just of houses but in the way we think about people, problems and our approach to public services.

Many things confront a new MP on entering Westminster. The grandeur, history and traditions of the Palace fill the senses. Form filling, process and bureaucracy clamour for the attention of the mind. But one thing cutting through all this, reminding new MPs of why we are here, is found on the streets and in the subways immediately outside the Palace gates.

On top of make-do mattresses, underneath cardboard boxes and across our paths lie the homeless, the lost and the broken. Destitution has its own distinctive sounds. Quiet appeals for spare change rise alongside polite requests for something hot to eat or drink. The laughter of companions is heard with the groans that come with the nightmares of sleep – or a waking rage against unseen tormentors. Each one is an untold story of tragedy – of bad choices or perhaps bad company and bad luck – desperate to be told, wanting to be heard. Breaking the surface and interrupting, just for a moment, a less troubled existence around them.

Life on the streets is dangerous and hard. It is an unhappy state. On the street, rough sleepers are seventeen times more likely to be victims of violence. Their life expectancy, about 44 years, is roughly half of the national average. On average two people will die every day on UK streets.

Such a life is not only unsafe; it is also unhealthy. Whether rough sleeping, sofa surfing with strangers or moving between hostels a person who is homeless is at least thirty times more likely to have tuberculosis, twelve times more likely to have epilepsy, six times more likely to have heart disease and five times more likely to have a stroke. They are also six times more likely to attend A&E, are admitted to hospital four times more often and remain there three times longer when they are.

No one sets out to be homeless or a rough sleeper. It is not a lifestyle chosen from a range of more positive options.

There are significant and diverse cohorts within the homeless population, each with different characteristics. Rough sleepers, sofa surfers, migrants,

displaced families, ex-offenders on release and more. Take young people: of the thousands of young people that are homeless across the UK, a quarter have been in care and fifteen percent have a history of youth offending. But almost all of them (97%) have experienced an Adverse Childhood Experience and almost 90% self-report a mental health problem. Resilience is therefore a key concern. Amongst women poor health is indicated as both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Access to good health care therefore becomes an important consideration for both prevention and assistance.

Similar but distinct patterns can be identified, whether for veterans, or immigrants, or the abused, or families out of work. All describe different pathways into homelessness. This is a complex hinterland to the problems that lie before us. In many respects, providing a solution like housing to the problems of homelessness is an easier challenge than understanding this complexity. But if the drivers that lead to homelessness are rarely bricks and mortar – why would we assume housing is the principal solution or disconnected from other considerations?

Housing certainly provides shelter from the elements and a safety, of sorts, against those who would prey upon the weak. But shelter is no panacea; there are limits. Housing does not by itself bring release from addiction, relief from internal struggle or a solution to the problems of mental health. A roof over our head cannot restore trust where it has been broken, nor can it reconcile estranged family members. Four walls and central heating offers relief, but does not rebuild a broken life.

In truth, the *moral imperative* of re-building lives is more complicated, and less reliably achieved than building another house. Housing is just one stage on a pathway – even one to health and happiness. It is neither the beginning, nor the end. It is certainly important – but most definitely not the whole picture.

The target of zero homelessness provides the *political imperative* to look again at these pathways to homelessness, and better design public services around individual life journeys, rather than institutional convenience. And whether homelessness is a consequence or a choice, the *policy imperative* is ensuring that support, actions and interventions are in place along that pathway. The onset of personal troubles or situations should not lead inevitably to homelessness or rough sleeping.

The traditional levers that the politician pulls on to solve problems are few and crude. Legislation, tax and spending shape and scale our public services. And yet it is sometimes these services themselves that contribute to the problem or do not have their intended impact. For example, public services are often not trusted by those who are most vulnerable because they are perceived as a threat: they can remove access to children, benefits and, yes, housing. Or they may not offer the recovery services an addict craves.

Creating a public services response that can better support the complexity of life, its grey areas and sharp edges, is not simple. People do not conform to efficient, standardized moulds. How many lives have been lost in the gaps between the great public service institutions formed after WWII?

Much good work has been done to address these through 'joined up government' initiatives. As recently as the late nineties and early noughties, the Labour government tried "wiring" together the different departments around different objectives. A noble effort, abandoned when the objectives multiplied, bureaucracy mushroomed and ownership was lost in the hopeless

complexity created. Power was consolidated back at the Treasury and then in No 10 in the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. The Coalition Government of 2010 continued the theme of inter-departmental working with its Implementation Unit (2012) and its task, to bring together delivery with the vexed task of public service reforms. Eight years later and attention now turns to the agility of the civil service and the adaptability of its culture as a way of unlocking greater effectiveness.

Yet can any central government or department, however configured, really cover all of life's texture and nuance? Even those things best understood and more easily defined like finance, health, addiction or redundancy? Never mind the intimacy, intricacy and complexity of the life's ups and downs? Centrism cannot cope with infinite local variety. Every problem cannot be dealt with in the same way. What works in Westminster almost certainly will not work in Suffolk, where I was a councillor for twenty years, or indeed my home, Aberconwy. where I am the MP now. The problems are as different as the drivers within the lives of individuals. What helps James in Carlisle does not necessarily help Jamal in Coventry or Ioan in Conwy.

But that is not to say that there isn't a way, that we can't adapt and learn. The Localism Act (2011) and the Comprehensive Spending Review sought to drive innovation, better local decision making and foster stronger communities.

Sometimes insight – and success – comes from analysing and reframing the problem. It was seeing knife crime in Glasgow not as a policing matter but a public health problem that unlocked the approach that reduced knife crime. As one senior officer observed, he would rather have "a hundred more social workers" than police officers. The lesson for homelessness and rough sleeping? Learning (and resourcing) to prevent the harm, not simply responding to it when it occurs.

Another approach is to take big, unsolvable problems and break them into several smaller problems. While difficult, these may be more easily solved with what is available. That means that the new politician must think differently. Entering parliament, we should not just be fresh reinforcements taking the same weapons from weary hands, repeating the same words and arguments with more energy and vigour, imagining that "one more heave" will win a debate and change the nation.

But more than these, we must also question the deterministic assumptions upon which traditional approaches have been built.

People are not just a list of problems to find, fix and fund. Nor are they disconnected and autonomous. Their differences should not simply be corralled into the physical or figurative communities we have built for our own convenience. They are not parts of a process – even ones optimised for efficiency.

Helping the homeless starts by seeing them in a different way, enabled and empowered; with dignity, qualities and ability. People are not passive players within their own stories. Restoring agency, recognising identity and fostering belonging are essential elements of their approach.

These are precisely the principles that shape and underpin solutions that are working today – developed and delivered by charities, communities, informal groups and individuals across the country. Groups like the Mustard Tree in Manchester, working with the most vulnerable and seeing lives transformed for a quarter of a century in some of the most difficult

circumstances.

To be effective in the problems that confront us, public services that are helpful must be reimagined. Services that work differently in a different places, in different ways.

The duty on public services and professionals to "refer" those at risk of homelessness (a policy deployed first in Wales) has been a significant step forward – over 130,000 families have been prevented from falling into homelessness to date. Thinking about prevention of cause, not just palliative treatment or elusive cure is requiring a change in ways of working, thinking and yes, culture. But there is a long way to go to finish that transformation.

Working with people, not a well-intentioned "doing to" them asks new Members of Parliament to have the courage to step back, not rush forward. This is the next development in public services and a critical challenge for the new generation of politicians. To unlock and enable – not conscript and deploy – our communities to work with individuals. To encourage a responsibility for action and consequence, not simply entitlement, dependency and rights. The role of the politician – making sense of events and circumstances – is central in exploring such a refreshed social contract.

Housing, health and happiness describe a pathway, not only out of dependency but the journey of our own life. We should not view these stages as separate and disconnected, anymore than we regard lives are stalled along that pathway as the consequence of separate and disconnected problems.

Robin Millar is the Member of Parliament for Aberconwy.

PART B

The Role of Housing in Promoting Opportunity and Prosperity for All.

The second part of this collection of essays is from Simon Fell (Barrow & Furness), Natalie Elphicke MP (Dover & Deal) and David Simmonds MP (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner). These three essays explore the role of housing in promoting opportunity and prosperity, for individuals, for families and for communities.

Themes include:

- **Coastal and Growth Funding:** Recognising the role that housing has in supporting economic success as well as strengthening post-industrial and coastal communities. Greater weighting could be given to the economic, social, regeneration and delivery certainty returns in such communities. In particular funding to support bringing brownfield and factory/warehousing land back into use, as has happened in central London.
- **Levelling up the housing market:** Over the last 15 years more than 2 million homes and around 6 million people have been displaced into private rented housing from the traditional tenures of home ownership and social rent/ affordable housing. The next decade is likely to need a rebalancing towards home ownership, with social and affordable housing continuing to be an important part of the tenure mix.
- **Making rent fair:** It is time to look again at how rents are assessed and set in areas with a higher concentration of poor quality private rented housing so that tenants and taxpayers alike pay a fair, and not excessive, price for rented property.
- **Creative use of public land and resources:** Examples from the London Borough of Hillingdon show that public land can be used much more creatively and economically – for example, a library that is re-built to provide a modern library with housing above provides new facilities, additional housing, and funding to pay for the library and other services. It's time to use all land creatively, to meet local needs and fund services too.

Housing to Build Growth: Using New Homes to Transform the Fortunes of a Coastal Community.

Simon Fell MP
Member of Parliament for Barrow & Furness

It is timely to quote Sir Roger Scruton's view, in the recent Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission report, of what housing should be. With characteristic clarity, he states that we should 'ask for beauty' and 'promote stewardship.'

In my own constituency of Barrow & Furness, there has never been a more welcome, or timely, sentiment.

Journeying into Barrow-in-Furness, a coastal industrial town, one is struck by the almost-grand boulevard that stems from its Victorian birth, rolling as it does from the red stone of a destroyed Cistercian monastery to the docks which are the town's beating heat.

Barrow's past can be seen in its housing. Thoughtful Tudor-revival homes overlook the channel from the island of Walney to the shipyards in Barrow, designed for yard managers, while terraced housing stands in proud rows, designed for the workers.

Barrow suffers from many of the issues that blight coastal communities: our population is both falling and ageing; we face a brain drain to the big cities; stubborn and severe pockets of poverty remain despite a strong local economy; our transport infrastructure is woeful, and our high street is struggling.

But for all that, Barrow is strikingly beautiful, on the up with a booming job market, and is rightly proud of its industrial heritage, and of its industrial future.

As an MP you circle the issues which hold your area back with the quiet determination of a shark, looking to take the bite that will bring your prey down. And for Barrow, and the laundry list of issues which I've listed above, the one change that may well precipitate a shift in the others, is recasting the nature of our housing offering.

As a shipbuilding town, we face into the Irish Sea. Our history as a producer of iron ore, shipbuilder, and smelter has left us with significant docks and often contaminated land. That same land now affords us the opportunity for a new start.

At the end of Buccleuch Dock, on that same toxic land, there is an chance to truly transform Barrow with as few as 450 mixed-use homes. Facing across from the recently-opened Submarine Academy (all glass and steel), housing on this site would be deliberately targeted to shipyard workers, first time buyers, and young families.

Barrow is responsible for the delivery of Britain's fleet of nuclear submarines, with a program of work that will keep it occupied until the 2050s, placing it at the centre of UK shipbuilding and innovation.

But the prosperity that should flow from this is cut off. A significant proportion of the shipyard workforce stay in Barrow mid-week and return to main residences at the weekend. This poses issues of retention and recruitment and propagates the very issues outlined above. It also presents a challenge for local employers of retaining skilled staff while attempting to deliver a National Endeavour on time, and to budget.

While a cottage industry of serviced accommodation and hotels now thrives, with each room booked, there is a missed opportunity not just for Barrow's present, but also its future.

And so, housing holds the key to turning this around.

Building a mix of good housing, directly opposite the shipyard, would be the cornerstone of a regeneration project which would drive investment in a neglected part of the town, make a university campus in Barrow viable, and begin the process of town centre regeneration. In plans, it is attractively called the Marina Village project.

From a relatively simple project flows the opportunity to stop the slow bleed of young people from our area, and the prize of attracting new ones. The retail economy would gain a much needed fillip, and the entertainment sector would grow and thrive. Glimpse up, and you may think that you see the stars aligning.

So important is the Marina Village project that our cash-strapped local authority has invested heavily in it. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been allocated from its capital programme to progress critical works. Recognising that the window to make this work is brief, critical ecological, ground water and programming work are currently ongoing. And all this follows millions in investment on site assembly and access infrastructure.

So, what holds this project back?

In truth, it balances precariously between success and failure. At the pivot point between the two is a review of the rules around what Homes England is able to fund.

Government has an absolute responsibility to ensure that money is spent well and that, when invested, taxpayers' money delivers returns, be they monetary or societal.

And that is the key point. Homes England's established funding criteria is simply not designed to consider the impact to UK national security and public finances in creating these homes.

Given that an improved housing offer will boost recruitment in Barrow and thus make a positive contribution to the timely delivery of the Dreadnought programme, it is essential that this project is supported.

If we wish to see a regeneration of coastal community towns, the retention of jobs and creation of new ones, then the criteria by which funding decisions are made simply has to change.

Projects like this are not just about value for money (although this one is), but also social value and national value.

Whitehall and its siloed departments may not link a relatively small housing offer to the timely and cost-effective delivery of a £100bn+ nuclear deterrent, but the reality is that the two go hand-in-hand. As does the further regeneration of the town.

By reframing funding rules, the industrial heartlands of the UK can be unleashed. There can be no better demonstration of good stewardship by the government than that.

Simon Fell is the Member of Parliament for Barrow & Furness.

Levelling Up Housing: The Case for Public Finance Intervention to Drive Both Home Ownership and Social Renting.

Mrs Natalie Elphicke OBE MP
Member of Parliament for Dover & Deal

A good home is the foundation stone for life. Family stability, opportunity, education, productivity, better health, financial resilience – all are supported by good quality, stable and affordable housing. This is well understood. As such, providing everyone with a good home should be a public policy priority. Public finance and tax incentives should be directed to encourage the greater proportion of good homes, and fewer homes that do not support good outcomes.

There is compelling evidence[1] that there are only two tenures - social housing and home ownership – that have the legal and financial structure to provide good homes, where positive outcomes and wellbeing of people are supported consistently and effectively. Indeed there is compelling, almost overwhelming, evidence of the harm that has been caused by the over-expansion of the private rented sector across all generations.

Up to 2004, around 90% of homes were either social renting or owner occupation. But by 2017, around 1 in 5 people were in private rented accommodation. It is the equivalent to each and every single new household over that period having been created in the private rented sector, a change affecting more than 2.6 million homes and around 6 million people.

This explosive growth in the number of people living in private rented accommodation has changed the tenure landscape of the country and trapped millions of people in a near-permanent state of private rented housing. The length of time over which this redistribution of housing stock has occurred also means that renting is not a 'generation' rent issue but already a 'nation rent'[2] issue – with families in their 30s and 40s stuck in rented housing.

While every region has been affected by this massive tenure displacement, its effects are more marked in some regions than in others.

1 A Time for Good Homes, The Housing & Finance Institute/Radian Group, 2018

2 'Nation Rent', Million Homes, Million Lives N. Elphicke and C. Mercer 2004

2003/2004 to 2018/2019 (English Housing Survey)

Region	Home Ownership Change	Social Rent Change	Private Rent Change
London	-11	-3	14
North East	-7	-4	11
North West	-8	-3	11
East Midlands	-8	-2	10
West Midlands	-7	-3	10
South East	-9	0	9
Yorkshire and the Humber	-5	-3	9
South West	-8	-1	8
East of England	-7	0	7

London and the South East have experienced the largest falls in home ownership, with every region of England having had a significant fall in the percentage of owner occupation.

The North East saw the greatest fall in the percentage of social housing, closely followed by London, Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands, the North West. Only the South East and East of England saw no change in the percentage of social housing.

In every region there was a much greater fall in the rates of home ownership than decline of social rented housing. In every region there was a surge in private rented housing, with the largest increases seen in London, the North East and North West.

What does this mean for housing policy?

At its simplest, to 'level up' housing means that public policy for housing should be incentivising home ownership, investing in social housing and improving the quality and value for money of private rented housing. That will require putting in place a long term plan for housing through a funded programme for at least a decade. That means a different approach to the private rented sector as well as building and managing homes.

So what can be done to level up housing tenure?

First in respect of housebuilding, the increasingly interventionalist role for Homes England, the Government's national housing delivery body, could be expanded further. Homes England already has a successful track record in securing land, commissioning direct housing and working with development partners through a 'whole of market' approach, building every type of housing required, including social housing. This could be expanded to ensure that homes are being delivered at a pace and scale that secures value for public money, and attracts substantial institutional investment alongside enabling fast, high quality modular housing.

Secondly, Government has had a critical role in reversing the decline in home ownership since the credit crunch with the Help to Buy family of

products. It is highly likely that some such additional support for new home owners will be required in the near term, as well as ensuring that the right tenures of homes can be delivered through the Government's new First Homes scheme which supports discounted home ownership.

In addition, there should be new pathways between renting and buying so that graduated home ownership and part-ownership are more commonplace, at all stages including later life.

Home ownership also promotes savings and financial resilience. Such an important function has long been underpinned by public policy, through mortgage support, tax relief or cheaper government loans. Such underpinning is important to ensure that families can have greater confidence in making the choice to own their own home, knowing that there is some form of safety net and support.

Thirdly, local authorities also have a key role in delivering the environment for housing that is needed for their areas and delivering homes.[3] There has been a step-change in the appetite and activity of councils in their roles as Housing Delivery Enablers. Additional skills and capacity training together with some specific enabling funding could help councils accelerate their contribution to creating the environment for homes that support the best outcomes for their communities.

Fourthly, improving the quality and cost of the private rented sector. Too much rented housing is poor quality, perhaps as much as a third of it. Such poor quality housing is too often concentrated in areas with other deprivation or social challenges, exacerbating the adverse social, life opportunity and financial consequences of bad housing. Where private housing is underwritten by taxpayers through housing benefit, such poor quality rented housing is exceptionally poor value for taxpayer and tenant alike. Recent pilot area studies suggest that housing benefit could be billions of pounds more expensive than it should be, compared to similar market 'fair value' comparisons.[4] This raises questions about how rents are assessed and set in such areas so that tenants and taxpayers alike pay a fair, and not excessive, price for rented property.

There is so much to be positive about when we consider what has been achieved since 2010. There is now an opportunity to consider how tenure type supports better outcomes. Housing plays a central role in everyone's life and can unlock greater opportunity and prosperity across the nation.

Natalie Elphicke is the Member of Parliament for Dover & Deal.

3 The Elphicke-House Report, HM Government 2015

4 Financial assessments for the Jaywick Sands Project, the Housing & Finance Institute/Tendring District Council

Councils and Housing — A Key Strategic Relationship.

Cllr David Simmonds CBE MP
Member of Parliament for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner

No discussion about how to meet housing need lasts long without touching on the role of local authorities. At Westminster, this usually revolves around the planning system, which is often blamed as a constraint on supply. However, with over a million consented homes in England with construction not yet started, it is clear to anyone with a passing acquaintance with the facts that council involvement and their pace of decision-making in planning are not acting as a block to getting homes built. However, they have proven historically to be a critical part of housing delivery and the only time when the UK has consistently met its house building targets has been when councils have been major builders of housing.

Local authority housing policy falls broadly into two categories of activity. Traditional 'council housing' sits within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), one of the ring-fenced local authority budgets to which funds may be added from council taxpayers, but from which funds may not be vired for other purposes. The HRA derives its income from the rents paid by tenants of the council, and its expenditure is the management and maintenance of its estates, which in the London Borough of Hillingdon comprises around 12,000 homes including tower blocks, traditional houses and farms as well as the associated land and services such as bin stores, lifts, and parks and green space on housing estates. The HRA has been the subject of action at a national level in recent decades. The last Labour government had pursued a policy of growing council-house rents, with a view to boosting the funds available to improve housing stocks. Given this bill was substantially met by housing and other benefits, the incoming Conservative government took the opposite view and HRA rents have been reduced recently. The most recent development recognised that many HRAs earned more in rents than they spent on management and maintenance, and this 'headroom' – if it were a private business, 'profit' – was the subject of a relaxation of rules so it could be used to fund borrowing to develop more homes. This was after a long campaign by local authorities against the numerous constraints that inhibit them as developers of new homes. As a consequence, many councils are beginning to use this to fund the borrowing needed to develop new council homes, including projects such as the redevelopment of redundant garage sites on housing estates, and the wholesale redevelopment of estates where modern methods and constrained land supply demand a much higher density

of homes than when the estates were first developed.

The second, and more controversial, role of local authorities is that of housing developers in their own right. This is hardly a surprising development as many organisations both in the public and private sector look to sweat their assets and the benefit to the local taxpayer is obvious when councils become developers. My experience in Hillingdon offers some interesting lessons about how this can be approached with residents and how valuable it can be in supporting other local services. This relates mainly to developing homes outside of the HRA – so the council is acting as a private developer would, but with the benefit accruing to local taxpayers.

Firstly, many local authorities are significant landowners in their own right. Traditional house builders tended to operate on the financial model of one third land cost, one third construction cost, one third profit, so building on land you already own reduces the cost of delivering homes and often speeds up the process dramatically. There are often parcels of land of varying size that offer a development opportunity, and the question about whether to sell them to a developer or take the profit directly for local taxpayers is a key one.

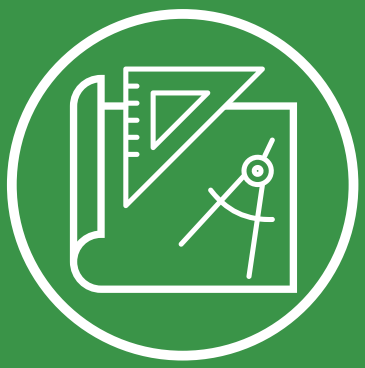
Secondly, developing directly affords more control over what gets built and how it looks, so residents tend to find council-led developments much more acceptable than some private sector ones. As a democratic organisation, a council is more likely to respond to alterations to design that would make development more acceptable to residents whose opposition is often a significant factor in planning delays.

Thirdly, local authorities, many of whom have credit ratings the equal or better than national government, can access finance at low cost and the return goes to the local taxpayer. This means that the cost of delivering the homes is less than to a private developer seeking to maximise their return over a relatively short period.

Having established the overwhelming case for council involvement in house building, it is worth looking at some of the policies which councils apply that make these developments more acceptable to local residents. Two examples I cite from Hillingdon are the use of the proceeds to fund the development of new local facilities, and the application of local connection requirements to the sale of the properties. In the case of Hillingdon, the council identified that there were a number of library sites which had the potential for increased density of development. The construction of flatted blocks incorporating new libraries was a key local policy that used the capital receipts from the sale of the flats to fund the rebuild programme for libraries.

All politicians will be familiar with the concerns raised by residents that the housing market is unfavourable to younger local people who are struggling to get on the housing ladder. Hillingdon placed a 30% discount to market value for purchasers who had to demonstrate a 10-year local residency which applied to all the new developments, with the same requirement applying to all subsequent purchasers of the property. For economically-active residents who found getting on the property ladder a struggle, this was a valuable benefit and also addressed the political concern of residents that new housing was only for incomers so there was no benefit to the established community.

David Simmonds is the Member of Parliament for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner.



PART C

The Role of Planning in Creating Successful and Sustainable Communities.

The third part of this collection of essays is from Jane Hunt MP (Loughborough), Jerome Mayhew MP (Broadland) and Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury). These three essays explore the role of the planning system in creating successful and sustainable communities.

Themes include:

- **Pay Green to go Brown:** too often the green belt is being used to make up for shortfalls in cities and towns. A green belt levy with additional funding directed at brownfield city and town sites could help address the towns' deficiency and ensure that more homes were built within towns and cities to meet their identified housing needs.
- **Powering up strategic planning, sharing the value of growth:** in order to grow communities and regions holistically it is important that there is integrated spatial and infrastructure modelling supported by regional spatial planning. Such planning and modelling needs to be directed by local community engagement, with more of the land value uplift from planning gain being directed for the benefit of community infrastructure.
- **Delivering infrastructure at the right time:** it is not enough securing funding or commitments to delivering infrastructure, the infrastructure needs to be actually delivered at the right time. That means schools, doctors, roads and rail delivered on time and in line with growth. That isn't always happening now and that means that some communities who have grown are becoming resistant to further housing growth. It doesn't need to be that way if infrastructure can be delivered at the right time and in the right way.

Paying Green, Funding Brown — Planning for the Future.

Jane Hunt MP
Member of Parliament for Loughborough

There are a number of different aspects to housing policy in England, covering issues such as: homelessness and social housing; supported living and temporary accommodation; and affordability. In this paper, however, I have decided to address planning and development for future growth.

By way of background, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expects strategic policy-making authorities to follow a standard method when accessing local housing need. This involves using the Government's household projections to determine the baseline level of projected population growth per year, and adjusting it to take account of house price affordability in the area. A cap is then applied which limits the increases that a local authority can face using this method.

Once the local housing need has been determined, a Local Planning Authority (LPA) will create a primary development plan, known as a 'Core Strategy'. This Core Strategy will then form the basis of a Local Plan, which provides a framework for the future development of an area and how housing need will be met. There is a statutory requirement for LPAs to review their Local Plan at least every five years to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community.

However, there are instances - particularly in cities - where local authorities are unable to meet their housing needs within their own administrative area. This is called unmet need. The responsibility for meeting this need then falls to other local authorities under the same county council.

This is the case in Leicestershire where my own constituency, Loughborough, is located. Charnwood is the largest district in the county and around 40% of its workforce commute into the nearest city, Leicester, every day. This is due, in part, to the lack of housing in the city. Indeed, Leicester City Council has recently stated that its unmet housing need is 7,813 dwellings up to 2036.

However, at the same time, there are large areas of derelict and semi-derelict land and buildings within the council's administrative area which are classed as brownfield sites, sixty-nine of which are currently listed on the Brownfield Land Registry as they are considered to be appropriate for residential development.

Meanwhile, towns and villages in the surrounding countryside are being developed to meet both the housing need of their own district as well as the unmet need of the city. This is largely because the cost of developing residential properties on brownfield land is higher and, in some cases, prohibitive to developers. Whilst the NPPF goes some way to encourage effective use of land, more must be done to incentivise the building of residential properties on brownfield sites.

I believe that one way to do this would be to introduce a levy for each property built on a greenfield site. This would be in addition to Section 106 monies and the Community Infrastructure Levy, and would be paid directly to the council with the unmet need to be used solely for the remediation of brownfield sites in their area. The number of houses built on the greenfield site would be deducted from the overall total number of properties that need to be developed in the district and added to the city total so that the overall target would be met, but the unmet need would reduce.

The ripple effect back towards the cities would help maintain green wedges and areas of separation in surrounding districts as well as ensure that there are more areas in the county for farming use. It would also help reduce the environmental impact of commuting and provide a boost to businesses in city centres. Overall, it would create a far fairer system as each district would only be responsible for meeting its own housing need.

I recognise that the challenge to this argument is the need to ensure continued viability of sites i.e. ensure that the value generated by a development is more than the cost of developing it. Clearly a balance needs to be drawn between the need for development to take place to meet future housing need and the ability of private business to develop sites at a commercial rate.

Viability of sites is, however, influenced by a number of factors, not least price of land and the length of time it takes to for a planning application to be approved. If the responsibility for meeting unmet need was not shifted to neighbouring councils, local residents would be more understanding of developments in their area as they would be supporting local need. As a result, there would be less objection to planning applications and planning decisions could be made more quickly, causing less problems and delay for developers and councils alike.

Jane Hunt is the Member of Parliament for Loughborough.

Strong and Beautiful Local Communities are the Key to Building One Nation.

Jerome Mayhew MP
Member of Parliament for Broadland

Introduction

The breakthrough in support for the Conservative Party in the North of the country requires an acceleration of thinking about what 'One Nation' Conservatism means in policy and project terms. The immediate response post-election has been to promise a 'levelling up' of parts of the country beyond the M25. This essay urges colleagues to bring forward a new approach to regeneration and growth that will deliver the seemingly unachievable: the right amount and type of housing growth, in the right locations, on a sustainable and popular basis, reversing the recent decline in home ownership.

The Problem

The experience of canvassing in the last election highlighted the spread of anonymous-looking urban extensions that were identical to any town, anywhere, all displaying the following characteristics:

- Lack of reference to their historic and environmental surroundings;
- No sense of place other than as a suburb of somewhere else;
- Putting additional strains on local facilities without being seen as providing net benefits to the community; and
- Being heavily dependent on the use of transport, normally cars, to access local shops and employment.
- It is hardly surprising that these new developments are constructed in the teeth of local opposition.

All of the above is a consequence of a numbers-only approach to planning policy. Without giving equal weight to the **strategic planning of *place and environment*** as is given to housing numbers, the creation of unwelcome eyesores and dysfunctional communities will continue and accelerate as we work to address the housing shortage and deliver affordable homes. We see the

social consequences of places which lack amenity, community and opportunity, affecting the mental health and wellbeing of too many, wasting lives and blighting communities. One of the principal causes, moreover, of the public health crisis facing the country - at massive cost to the public purse - is the very low level of exercise that is built in to most people's daily lives, with car dependence hard-wired into the footprint of our cities, towns and villages.

All of this represents waste - of opportunity, time and money. Fix this issue and the effectiveness of future developments can be transformed. Here is how we can do it.

The solution

This is not about elaborate architecture, nor extravagant public building, welcome though these would be. It is a planning process that is structured to identify and appreciate the assets and spirit of a place and enable local people to determine the best measures for its 'place potential' to be secured. This includes identifying locally sensitised infrastructure priorities through strong local engagement, and a land release model that supports sustainable movement and healthy, vibrant settlements and prevents value leakage as sites are traded onward having acquired planning permission. In this way we will be able to deliver growth that makes places that are economically successful[1], sustainable, accessible, healthy and walkable. The right homes, in the right place - which are genuinely affordable - will flow from this.

The good news is that on a global basis it is such places - with a strong character, culture and life-style offer - that are attracting the smart investment, businesses and people.[2] And these competitive places also provide satisfying and healthy environments for committed local residents to build lives and businesses, bringing together the benefits and dynamic of the global *and* local economies to support good growth, good lives and opportunity for all.[3]

In the East of England we can observe this effect in action. Cambridge is growing at one of the fastest rates of any town in Europe. The challenge for us in Norfolk is to consider how we can optimise our proximity to the Cambridge growth phenomenon, to capture economic benefits and *good growth* for the county, while resisting the forces of development that would kill the golden goose: the beauty of our unspoilt countryside, and to steward well it's productivity and biodiversity. In addition to mobile and digital connectivity we can bring high quality education, training and commercial opportunity into the grasp of more people without displacing them from their family networks and the places they love.

We can learn much from the process of planning that underpinned parts of the rapid growth of Cambridge. A number of high quality developments have emerged around the city on a planned basis. At Eddington in north west Cambridge, a partnership between the university and developers has led to the rapid construction of a high quality mixed use new city quarter with a range of facilities. Similarly, to the south of the city a large scale urban extension has delivered high quality housing to a range of tenures together with local facilities. This wave of development at Cambridge was preceded by extended stakeholder and community engagement by Cambridgeshire

1 www.duchyofcornwall.org/assets/images/Poundbury_Impact_June_2018_update.pdf

2 www.monocle.com/film/affairs/quality-of-life-survey-top-25-cities-2019

3 *Walkable City: how downtown can save America, one step at a Time,* Speck J., North Point Press 2013

Horizons[4], together with technical modelling to create a growth plan. A strategic team oversaw infrastructure and spatial planning arrangements across a wide, city-region, geography. The growth model was then systematically tested through computer modelling.[5] It has been shown[6] that while an extended period - compared with other locations - was spent in the preplanning phase, once development was permissioned, it progressed at a pace.

In my constituency, in contrast, we have just seen plans emerge in one part (covered by one planning authority) for the additional expansion of one of our beautiful market towns by over 500 houses, while at the other end (covered by a different planning authority) we have a market town in need of regenerative development which has a stalled permissioned development capacity for over a thousand homes. The present process of local authority land allocation - which fails to look across sufficiently strategic geographies to balance options and coordinate infrastructure – lacks rigour. Too often this places residents in a position of opposition when, through a more rational process, a more logical growth proposition might emerge with public support.

These observations raise some critical areas for policy development to support our commitment to deliver regenerative development and growth for the whole UK:

- If we adopt the use of **integrated spatial and infrastructure modelling**, already developed and increasingly commercially available[7] we can identify the *right* areas for land release and infrastructure prioritisation, support informed impact, value for money and option testing as well as undertake better project due diligence. There is an urgent need for the Government's Geo-Spatial Commission to agree an over-arching information architecture, made available to all arms of government, to bring together key data and assist decision-making. This is an obvious and crucial first step to the reform of our future planning and growth strategy.
- This is cheap in infrastructure terms, requiring circa £5m investment to cover the initial implementation, and the training of regional spatial modelling teams, but the benefit to decision-making that will flow from it will be enormous: identifying '*the right development in the right place*' and will assist a more rapid progress towards development.
- We need to agree to plan more strategically, informed by the vastly improved access to data (see above) if we are to deliver healthy, sustainable, resilient, competitive and productive places *as well as* housing numbers. A set of principles to sustainable growth should be set out to guide strategic scale decision-making in the next iteration of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). Strategic planning decisions need to be taken at a regional level rather than a district level. This fits well with the growing move towards unitary authorities and regional mayoralties. Once the strategic level has been set development proposals then need to

4 www.linkedin.com/company/cambridgeshire-horizons/about/

5 www.carltd.com/news/cambridge-futures

6 Start To Finish, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners November 2016, see P6 Fig 3.

7 In the US - www.urbanfootprint.com; iAustralia – Melbourne Innovation District www.mid.org.aul in the UK eg. www.spacesyntax.com; Bartlett Centre for advanced Spatial Analysis www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/casa/research/current-projects.

continue to be tested, improved and adopted locally.

- We need to give **equal weight to the design of *place***, including the environment, as to *housing need*. This should be explicitly required in the NPPF. This will ensure higher quality design that complements existing communities and increases the likelihood of sympathetic growth that is accepted locally.
- We need to plan and invest for the longer term to match the timeframe of effective place making, **removing the requirement for a five year land supply**.[8]
- Once the necessary strategic work has been done development speed will be increased as developers and investors value the certainty offered and communities are constructed, rather than estates, leading to greater and quicker acceptance by existing populations.
- We need to **develop the skillset within the public and private sectors** to manage large scale planning, place making and regenerative, locally-appropriate growth. This requires an initial investment to create a **national centre of excellence in a leading university** to support strategic planning policy, fund places to attract the highest calibre candidate and to create exemplar regional planning bodies from which best practice can develop and spread.
- We need to **set conditions against the commitment of public funds and disposal of public land** that support the early adoption of this new approach.

Conclusion

If we make these changes, and do so rapidly, we will create a new framework for good growth such that regenerative, sustainable, popular development becomes the inevitable outcome. This will change government's relationship with the development sector and will change the general public's perception of development. *The public must be allowed to expect that change will be for the better.*

We can build the political and administrative structures to achieve the common goal of Good Lives, Good Work and Great Places. If we are to work collectively, as One Nation, towards the goals of true prosperity, sustainability, happiness, health and well being for all, we must grasp this challenge.

Jerome Mayhew is the Member of Parliament for Broadland.

8 Whilst not the subject of this essay further work needs to be done within the taxation system to encourage patient capital within the development market.

Infrastructure Before Housing: Reforming S106 to Bring Communities on Board.

Rob Butler MP
Member of Parliament for Aylesbury

The idea of infrastructure before development is not new. The City of New York Commissioners set out the basic grid system of roads on Manhattan Island in 1811. This foresight by the Commissioners meant that the estimated sevenfold increase in the population of New York in the 50 years after that decision was taken was more easily accommodated.[1] This article considers the need to invert the current relationship in England between housing and infrastructure, calling for reform of the Planning Obligations system, using my own constituency as a case study.

Whilst most urban development in the UK is not on the scale of 19th Century New York, many of our towns and cities are experiencing significant growth, especially in the form of housing development, and a perennial resultant complaint from residents and businesses is that local infrastructure, be it schools, healthcare facilities or roads, cannot cope.

Aylesbury developed rapidly in the 20th Century, experiencing several waves of growth as a result of being designated as an overspill town for London in the 1940s. Since 2000, housing development has accelerated. Several new developments such as Berryfields, Buckingham Park and Fairford Leys have added thousands of homes to the north of Aylesbury. This growth in the number of homes has meant that since 2013, the population of Aylesbury Vale has increased by 10.3%. This is the eighth highest rate of growth among the 371 local authorities in Great Britain and the 20th highest in absolute growth, ahead of the core cities of Manchester, Liverpool and Nottingham.[2] Much of this population growth has been concentrated around the town of Aylesbury itself; the comparative figures for the rest of Buckinghamshire show that on average the other districts have only seen a 1.7% increase over the same period.[3] This pattern is only going to increase over the next few years. Although the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) has not yet been adopted,

1 John Collier, Edward Glaeser, Tony Venables, Michael Blake, Priya Manwaring. 2019. "Informal settlements and housing markets." *International Growth Centre.* Jan 18.

2 Buckinghamshire Business First. 2019. "Buckinghamshire; demography 2018"; *Buckinghamshire Business First.* July 16. Accessed 02 18, 2020.

3 Ibid.

in draft form it includes an additional 33,000 houses in the Vale, 16,500 of them in Aylesbury itself.[4]

This level of development is where the problems begin for residents, businesses and their elected representatives because infrastructure has simply not kept up with housing growth. As an aspiring MP on the doorstep during the General Election campaign, I spoke to hundreds of residents, from whom the broad refrain was 'too many houses are being built, but there aren't the roads to cope, and I can't get a school place or a doctor's appointment'. This experience has meant that local communities are hostile to new developments. Their complaints are often dismissed as NIMBYism, but in fact, their concerns frequently have a basis in a significant amount of truth.

Planning Obligations at present

Local authorities have the power to mitigate the negative effects of housing development in the form of Planning Obligations, commonly called 'Section 106 Agreement'.[5] Planning Obligations are legally binding agreements between a 'developer' and a local authority. However, to qualify for a s106 agreement, the development must pass three key tests as outlined by Paragraphs 54 and 56 of the National Planning Policy Formula 2019.[6][7] These are

a. necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;

b. directly related to the development; and

c. fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Most of the large-scale developments in Aylesbury meet these criteria and as such the local authority negotiates with the developers to reach s106 agreements. This has enabled new schools, GP surgeries and shops to be built benefiting not just the new residents but the existing community. However, as we have seen in Aylesbury, the s106 agreements and construction lead times often mean that the agreed infrastructure is completed after most of the housing has been constructed. In the case of Berryfields, a new school was built using a s106 agreement, but it was immediately full due to the existing demand, leaving newer residents obliged to find school places elsewhere

Whilst local authorities have the right to request money upfront, it is difficult to get developers to agree to such proposals, since the current system provides no incentive for them to do so. In practice, the standard s106 agreement usually requires a proportion of the houses on a development to be sold before any mitigation work begins, thus only delivering the necessary infrastructure much later. In the meantime, the new houses are inhabited, with all the associated demands on local services, yet without new facilities being provided. It is this situation that builds resentment amongst the established communities, entrenches opposition to development and makes it much harder for local authorities to deliver the housing growth needed to address the housing affordability crisis.

4 Aylesbury Vale District Council. 2020. "VALP Main Modifications." *Aylesbury Vale District Council.* Accessed Feb 20, 2020.

5 HM Government. 1990. *Town and Country Planning Act Section 106.*

6 HM Government. 2010. "Regulation 122, The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations."

7 HM Government. 2019. "National Planning Policy Framework 2019."

Conclusions

The solution to this problem is to invert the relationship between housing first, infrastructure and amenities second. By amending the National Planning Policy Framework and s106 agreement regulations, local authorities could insist on the delivery of mitigation before a single house is built. This will require developers to take on more responsibility for the impact of their construction, but ultimately there may also be a greater role for central government in ensuring the provision of the infrastructure needed to support housing development. The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to put infrastructure first, stating "We will amend planning rules so that the infrastructure – roads, schools, GP surgeries – comes before people move into new homes. And our new £10 billion Single Housing Infrastructure Fund will help deliver it faster."[8] thus highlighting a recognition of the challenge and a willingness by Government to tackle it.

If local communities could see that development brings tangible benefits such as a new relief road, a new school or a new GP surgery; opposition to new housing is likely to lessen. There are no quick fixes when it comes to planning reform, however, and like the City of New York Commissioners we must be farsighted in our development plans to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is in place at the right time if we are to build the houses our country so desperately needs.

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8 Conservative Party. 2019. "Conservative Party Manifesto 2019."

About Localis

Who we are

We are a leading, independent think tank that was established in 2001. Our work promotes neo-localist ideas through research, events and commentary, covering a range of local and national domestic policy issues.

Neo-localism

Our research and policy programme is guided by the concept of neo-localism. Neo-localism is about giving places and people more control over the effects of globalisation. It is positive about promoting economic prosperity, but also enhancing other aspects of people's lives such as family and culture. It is not anti-globalisation, but wants to bend the mainstream of social and economic policy so that place is put at the centre of political thinking.

In particular our work is focused on four areas:

- **Reshaping our economy.** How places can take control of their economies and drive local growth.
- **Culture, tradition and beauty.** Crafting policy to help our heritage, physical environment and cultural life continue to enrich our lives.
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We publish research throughout the year, from extensive reports to shorter pamphlets, on a diverse range of policy areas. We run a broad events programme, including roundtable discussions, panel events and an extensive party conference programme. We also run a membership network of local authorities and corporate fellows.

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Who we are

The Housing & Finance Institute was established in 2015 with the support of UK Government, businesses and councils. Its creation was a recommendation of the Elphicke-House Report 2015. The HFI is a not-for-profit organisation.

What we do

The Housing & Finance Institute acts as an accelerator hub, to increase knowledge and capacity in order to speed up and increase the number of new homes financed, built and managed across all tenures.

How do we work

At the HFI, we do the following:

- share best practice through workshops, networking and our landmark 'Housing Business Ready' programmes, that support capacity building in councils to explore the housing their communities want and need
- publish policy papers
- engage across a range of stakeholders.

We are not politically affiliated with a particular party or business/industry.

The composition of our board of directors and stakeholder groups reflects this balanced and diverse approach.

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