

# Roundtable on Planning Reform

Recent developments and future outlooks with Baroness Taylor Shadow Levelling Up, Housing, Communities and Local Government Spokesperson

Parliamentary estate and online via zoom



## Introduction

The PLG convened a meeting hosting Baroness Taylor for a roundtable discussion delving into housing and the current state of the planning system, with a particular focus on recent developments under the current Government and changes that could be implemented should the Labour Party form the next Government. Specifically, the meeting explored Labour's vision for new towns as a driving force for housing delivery and placemaking, as well as provision for affordable housing, a strategic review of the greenbelt, and innovation in the development sector.

## Key Takeaways

- The discussion noted that the key to the success of Labour's housing policy, specifically in relation to the development of new towns, is addressing the capacity problems of important infrastructure such as the National Grid. Participants highlighted that this problem is evidence of a recent lack of political will to build in Britain, a problem that the Labour Party will have to overcome first and foremost.
- Participants noted that the housing industry needs support from the Government to survive, the speed in which developers can build is affecting their ability to stay profitable, especially when it comes to SMEs. Innovative methods such as Modern Methods of Construction were presented as a solution to this dilemma, however despite receiving millions of pounds of funding from the Government, a lack of a robust strategy in its implementation has left the sector in limbo.



- Participants also voiced their willingness to engage in public-private sector partnerships, noting that the capital and talent needed to properly address the housing crisis is available and ready for use within the private sector. The barrier to these partnerships being harnessed is a negative view of private sector actors, which has in turn led to stringent regulations on development. To address this, the Government must work with the industry to facilitate robust community engagement and foster meaningful dialogue.
- The Baroness noted that a measured strategic review of the greenbelt, specifically one that seeks to declassify 'grey' areas of the greenbelt, could lead to a large increase in land available for development. This will form a key facet of the Labour Party's land reform policy.

## Issues raised

- The meeting shed light on the imposing dilemma that the country conducts development in a devolved plan-led system, however, 80% of local authorities have an out-of-date local plan. The Baroness responded by welcoming the Government's intervention in Local Authorities who have attempted to avoid addressing housing needs by not developing local plans and indicated that a Labour Government would make full use of both a 'carrot and stick' approach in working with Local Authorities to properly address housing needs.
- Participants noted that despite the Labour Party's indication that it would reintroduce enforceable housing targets, the number of homes promised by the Government should be one that effectively addresses the housing needs of the country. This number is much higher than the 300,000 homes currently promised annually by the Government for the current term, and the 1.5 million homes Labour promised during its next term should it form Government. More work is needed to be done to identify a housing target based on the actual statistical housing need.

We would like to thank the members of our Advisory Board for their contributions and continuing support.

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