

## The main party manifestos scored against our eight policy statements for more community-led affordable homes

- 1. Funding:** We call for additional levels of grant, including a renewal of the Community Housing Fund to bring forward community-led affordable housing projects at all stages. No political parties have grasped the funding shortfall that exists in delivering the number of genuinely affordable homes needed. The Resolution Foundation says a new government "will struggle to hit these stretching targets [c. 300,000 homes/year] without significantly more funding in place to boost affordable house building".<sup>1</sup>

**Scores: C2/8. L2/8. LD0/8. G2/8.**

The Conservatives pledge to build 1.6m new homes in the next parliament; Labour 1.5m; Lib Dems 1.9m; Greens don't quantify. But no party sets out how they will fund these housing targets and no party mentions renewing the Community Housing Fund.

The **Conservatives** say they will renew the Affordable Homes Programme. But this applies post-planning; no funding is pledged pre-planning – an essential stage for community-led homes. **Labour** promises "the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation" but again, doesn't tackle how it will fund this beyond pledging "changes to the Affordable Homes Programme to...deliver more homes from existing funding". Sounds challenging. **Lib Dems** give no detail re. funding. **Greens** estimate the additional public expenditure needed, but only to fund its "social housing" manifesto pledges over five years; this starts at £2.2bn in 2026, rising to £10.5bn.
- 2. Affordability:** Affordability in housing has become a meaningless word. Besides social housing for rent, all intermediate affordable homes should be genuinely affordable to those on average median incomes as defined by ONS data, and be affordable in perpetuity. Shared ownership has failed<sup>2</sup> – leaving people economically trapped paying both rents and mortgages. We call for unaffordable shared ownership to be scrapped and changed to be a genuinely affordable Community Land Trust model with homes priced linked to local incomes.

**Scores: 0/8 for all**

No party addresses this rethink or makes the link between genuine & permanent affordability based on average local incomes, or identifies the failure of shared ownership.
- 3. Housing as infrastructure:** Housing is both a human right and part of our critical infrastructure. Recognition of this could unlock long-term infrastructure investment and encourage a more integrated national approach to development. Not seeing it as such has secondary costs to the NHS, the economy, council budgets, achieving net zero...

**Scores: 1/8 for all**

No big-picture thinking to be seen. All the parties connect new homes to local infrastructure of GPs, schools etc but none consider housing part of critical national infrastructure alongside transport, energy,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/press-releases/britain-has-a-welcome-new-policy-consensus-on-housing-but-it-also-needs-new-cash-to-make-a-lasting-difference/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/17/levelling-up-housing-and-communities-committee/news/200679/shared-ownership-is-failing-to-deliver-an-affordable-route-to-homeownership-say-mps/>

communications etc. This prevents a strategic review of housing in the bigger national picture, for instance in terms of costs to the NHS. In Nov 2023, a GLA report estimated that the total health costs of poor housing in London was £100m/yr and annual savings to the NHS of repairing all hazards would be £100.1m. While the total cost to repair was £1.2bn, that would be repaid in savings within 12 yrs.<sup>3</sup>

- 4. Oversight:** We call for an independent national commission for housing – to objectively oversee the current housing crisis, guide long-term solutions, set long-term targets, and champion realistic budgets and grant support.

**Scores: 0/5 for all**

Disappointing. No party suggests a cross-party independent body.

- 5. Planning:** We call for structural reform of planning, and appropriate investment support, so that planning can become more proactive and less reactive, leading to reduced risk and faster decision-making. We also call for a specific use class for community-led genuinely affordable housing to bring forward sites that benefit the local community.

**Scores: C1/8. L5/8. LD4/8. G4/8.**

No party suggests a specific use class for community-led housing. **Labour** gets points for funding more planning officers; restoring mandatory housing targets in the NPPF and stronger planning obligations to ensure new developments provide more affordable homes. The **Lib Dems** pledge to “properly fund local planning depts” and score for introducing use-it-or-lose-it planning permission for developers who refuse to build. **Greens** include a proactive pledge of a land-use planning policy framework to inform local decisions.

- 6. Policy:** Given that housing delivery targets are never met through the private sector alone, alternative delivery partners are required including Housing Associations and Local Authorities. We believe there is also considerable scope for community-led development as evidenced through the recent State of the Community Land Trust Sector report, showing that with the right policy and industry support, there is potential for up to 278,000 additional homes across England and Wales through Community Land Trust delivery.

**Scores: C3/8. L3/8. LD6/8. G5/8.**

All the parties nod towards local community involvement to shape housebuilding in their areas. The **Lib Dems** go further and mention “community-led development of cities and towns” and **Greens** will “require LAs to spread small developments across their areas”. Right to Buy is widely acknowledged to have caused the sell-off of social housing stock; while Labour will review Right to Buy, the Lib Dems and Greens will end it; Conservatives don’t mention this.

- 7. Land reform:** We ask for councils to support community-led development through the transfer of development sites, including a first refusal on land that councils are unable to develop. Councils are at capacity and development is stalling; a community right to buy would speed this up and create community wealth building. We support developing brownfield/grey belt sites and new garden city developments – however they must always have genuine community input and

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/housing/research-notes/hrn-11-2023-the-cost-of-poor-housing-in-london/>

support, long-term community wealth building and land stewardship and locked-in affordability.

**Scores: C3/8. L4/8. LD4/8. G3/5.**

Points to the **Conservatives** for requiring councils to set land aside for smaller builders. The party is focused on urban density and building “a record number of homes each year on brownfield land”, especially in London. But it also emphasises greenbelt protections. **Labour** commits to brownfield/grey belt first, and gains a point for taking “a more strategic approach to greenbelt”. **Lib Dems** pledge brownfield development that includes affordable and social housing. **Greens** will introduce a community right to buy for some property but won't budge on existing greenbelt protections.

- 8. Net zero:** Community-led development often builds to higher standards and for the long term because a community cares about its future. We support new projects that are net zero, regenerative and lead to biodiversity gain. We support projects that positively transform neighbourhoods and follow circular economy principles.

**Scores: C2/8. L6/8. LD6/8. G8/8.**

The Conservatives fail to mention net zero or biodiversity in terms of new homes and pledge to balance cutting “EU environmental red-tape” to speed up planning, while protecting nature. **Labour** and **Lib Dems** score for sustainable homes, promoting nature recovery and biodiversity. **Greens** impress by pledging Passivhaus standards.