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What you need to know about the Labour party manifesto pledges on housing

July 2024



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The Labour party secured a majority at the general election in July 2024. Prior to the election, CIH published a guide on the housing pledges made by the main political parties (available [here](#)). In this guide we have provided some more detail on the [pledges made by the Labour party](#), which they are now in a position to implement in government.

Key pledges

- 1.5 million target for new homes over five years, through new towns, local authority development, and mandatory housing targets including affordable and social housing.
- Reform planning rules with cross-boundary strategic planning and £35 million funding for local planning officers (via increases in stamp duty for non-UK residents). This includes fast-tracking brownfield development, use of “grey belt” and CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) reform.
- Changing the Affordable Homes Programme to allow for more homes from existing funding.
- ‘Freedom to Buy’ - help for first-time buyers in making the current mortgage guarantee scheme permanent, aiming to help 800,000 young people onto the housing ladder.
- Review Right to Buy discounts and increase protections on newly built social housing.
- Renters reform - ban no-fault evictions, leasehold reform and implementation of Law Commission proposals on enfranchisement, right to manage and commonhold.
- Building safety - review how to better protect leaseholders from costs and take steps to accelerate pace of remediation.
- ‘Ending Homelessness Unit’ for cross-departmental strategies.
- 10-year infrastructure strategy for rail, road and homes and more regional devolution.
- End hotel use for asylum seekers by clearing backlog with more staff to process claims.
- Warm Homes Plan - decarbonisation funding for homes to be doubled an extra £6.6 billion over next five years.
- Create a National Care Service to support social care and older people.



Detailed pledges

Building more homes

Labour have pledged to 'Get Britain Building Again'. Building more homes is central to their manifesto and to their plan to 'kickstart economic growth', and their main pledge is to build 1.5 million new homes over this Parliament. Almost all of the pledges were committed to prior to the publication of the manifesto, but it reiterates a strong set of measures to reform the planning system and release more land for development. The main measures included are:

- Immediately updating the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to restore mandatory housing targets, reverse changes made by the previous government, and issue new National Policy Statements.
- Ensuring planning authorities have up-to-date local plans and strengthen the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Funding additional planning officers (stated [elsewhere](#) to be an extra 300).
- Taking a brownfield-first approach to fast-track brownfield land, as well as a 'strategic' approach to greenbelt land designation that reviews and prioritises releasing low-quality 'grey belt' sites for development.
- Implementing new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning and requiring all Combined Mayoral Authorities (CMAs) to strategically plan for housing in their areas.
- Building several new towns (the locations of which will be decided by the end of its first year), alongside urban connections, and undertaking regeneration projects. This will be supplemented by the development of 'golden rules' to ensure development benefits communities.
- Reforming Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) compensation rules to improve land assembly and speed up site delivery.
- Taking steps to ensure that for some developments, landowners get fair compensation rather than inflated prices (i.e. reforming 'hope' value).

Although there is no reference to a previous commitment for 40 per cent of new developments to be affordable housing, Labour's manifesto also included some specific measures to boost social housing. They have pledged to strengthen planning obligations to ensure developments have more affordable homes and make changes to the Affordable Homes Programme to ensure it delivers more homes from existing funding. CIH has also urged Labour to review the whole of the DLUHC capital programme, potentially redirecting resources from supporting the private market towards building affordable homes.

There are also pledges to support councils and housing associations to develop capacity, and commitments to prevent the loss of social homes to the private sector by reviewing Right to Buy (RTB) discounts and increasing protections on new build social homes.

In addition, Labour have placed an emphasis on sustainability and sustainable development, pledging to build sustainable homes and create places that increase climate resilience. They have also committed to unlock developments previously affected by nutrient neutrality rules without weakening environmental protections, although how this will be done is left unsaid.

To support homebuyers, the manifesto commits to introduce the so-called 'first dubs' policy, which will give local first-time buyers the initial opportunity to buy local homes, make the current mortgage guarantee scheme permanent, and increase the rate of the stamp duty surcharge paid by non-domiciled residents. There are issues about how this will work, given that many 'first-time' buyers are former owners returning to the market.

More widely, Labour says they will deliver a multi-year funding settlement for local authorities, deepen devolution settlements to give local areas more control over the tools they need for housing, and create a new statutory requirement for Local Growth Plans that cover towns and cities across the country.

Net zero and decarbonisation

Labour's manifesto explicitly frames the climate crisis as the greatest long-term threat facing the world. As previously announced, their main pledge on improving the energy efficiency of our homes is doubling the previous government's capital commitment to approximately £13.2 billion by introducing the Warm Homes Plan.

There is still no detail on what this plan will contain, only that it will aim to upgrade five million homes by offering grants and low-interest loans to support insulation and the installation of low-carbon technologies. They also pledge to work with the private sector, especially banks and building societies, to incentivise home upgrades, and tighten energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector.

Relatedly, Labour have also committed to introducing a tougher system of regulation that puts consumers first and cuts bills. Detail on how this will be delivered is not provided, but they do pledge to work with the energy regulator Ofgem to reduce standing charges and better hold suppliers to account.

More widely, one of Labour's main 'missions' is to deliver clean energy by 2030 by decarbonising the electricity grid. Whether this is possible or not is debatable, but it is accompanied by the long-touted establishment of GB Energy, a publicly owned clean power company that will make strategic investments to accelerate decarbonisation. They pledge to double onshore wind, triple solar power, and quadruple offshore wind by 2030, saying that this will lead to lower bills and make the country less exposed to volatile global gas markets.

One of the first pieces of new primary legislation we will see from Labour is likely to be an 'Energy Independence Act', which will lay the legislative groundwork for many of these changes.

Building safety and leasehold

The manifesto includes some references to building safety and leasehold reform. The previous government passed the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill in 'wash up' before the dissolution of Parliament, but Labour have pledged to reexamine some of the issues facing leaseholders.

Specifically, they have pledged to review how to protect leaseholders from the costs of building safety remediation, and to enact the package of Law Commission proposals on leasehold, banning it in flats as well as homes and ensuring commonhold is the default tenure. They have also committed to tackling high ground rent charges, ending unfair maintenance costs and so-called 'fleecehold' private housing estates.

On wider building safety issues, there is little detail, beyond a commitment to tightening regulation and a statement that "those responsible for the building safety crisis" will be the ones to pay for it. There is no commitment to open government building safety remediation funding to social landlords, and Labour pledge only to respond to - not to fully accept and implement - the findings of the Grenfell Inquiry.



Homelessness

Aside from necessary commitments to build new homes, Labour's headline pledge to tackle homelessness is to develop a new cross-government strategy alongside elected Mayors and councils. However, there is no mention in the manifesto of Housing First approaches, which had previously been trailed as being under consideration for inclusion, and no target to end rough sleeping (as the previous government had sought but failed to do).

Social security

Labour's commitments on social security are found primarily in the section of the manifesto on breaking down barriers to opportunity. Much of this section focuses on employment and education. However, they do commit to reviewing universal credit (UC) "so that it makes work pay and tackles poverty." The document referenced the record of the last Labour government in taking children and pensioners out of poverty; this was done through targeted support in tax credits and pension credit, which suggests a similar strategy could be a possibility in the medium to long-term.

They will also develop a child poverty strategy, although there is no mention of the benefit cap or two-child limit, which CIH has advocated for the removal of. Labour will "reform employment support", which suggests changes to the work-capability assessment in UC and employment and support allowance. Lastly, they pledge to introduce free breakfast clubs in every primary school, expand the childcare and early-years education system, and reforming the Mineworker's Pension Scheme.

Private rented sector reforms

In contrast to the primary legislation covering leasehold, the Renters Reform Bill was not passed before the dissolution of Parliament. Labour have long pledged to abolish Section 21 'no-fault' evictions, and in the manifesto have reiterated their commitment to this as one of the first things they will prioritise. The reintroduction of the [Renters Reform Bill](#) seems likely to be one of their first legislative measures but with some of the provisions strengthened relating to preventing discrimination against renters on social security or with children and to empower renters "to challenge unreasonable rent increases, and take steps to decisively raise standards, including extending 'Awaab's Law' to the private sector."

Migration and asylum

Labour promises to reduce net migration and to revise the points-based system for work-related migration. Net migration is projected to fall in any event, and it does have a direct impact on population growth but less so on housing demand. There are concerns about labour shortages in sectors such as construction and social care which are heavily dependent on migrant workers: while Labour promises 'workforce and training plans' to address the gaps, short-term shortages need to be addressed.

Labour have also pledged to 'restore order' to the asylum system, clear the claims backlog, and end the use of hotels for asylum accommodation. These measures are welcome, but there is also concern about the use of unconventional accommodation such as



army barracks and barges. There is further concern about rising homelessness among refugees and resulting pressures on temporary accommodation and rough sleeper services, with CIH and other bodies calling for refugees to have a longer, 56-day grace period as they leave asylum accommodation.

Other notable pledges

Other commitments of note in Labour's manifesto include:

- Promising to create a public duty of candour for public servants and authorities, partially in response to the Grenfell Tower investigation and inquiry.
- Improving resilience to climate change by working across central government, local authorities, communities, and emergency services (although it is not immediately clear how this will include homes).
- Creating a new Industrial Strategy, with an Industrial Strategy Council on a statutory footing, and developing a 10-year infrastructure strategy and National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority.
- Committing to one major fiscal event per year and strengthening the role of the Office for Budget Responsibility to scrutinise them.
- Introducing a £7.3 billion National Wealth Fund to create high quality jobs, as well as a British Jobs Bonus to incentivise firms to build supply chains. It is conceivable this could include measures to boost green jobs in crucial supply chains for new homes and improving existing homes.
- Pledging to provide a boost for sustainability and biodiversity by creating new national river works, establishing new forests, and expanding important carbon sinks such as peatlands and wetlands.

Summary and assessment

Labour's manifesto contains a strong set of pledges that appear to address the scale of the housing challenge, setting out the practical steps CIH and our sector have been calling for. As always, we will need to see the detail (and the funding), but it is welcome to see social housing given the focus it needs, alongside commitments on rental reform. More broadly, it is also good

to see Labour recognising the importance of the climate crisis and placing action on this and housing at the heart of their plan for economic growth.

As is always the case with party manifestos, there are some omissions. Labour's commitment to additional funding for energy efficiency in existing homes is welcome, but it is far less than their initially mooted £6 billion per year, and there is very little detail on how it will be delivered. While it was welcome to see a commitment to enhancing energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector, it is nonetheless disappointing that this wasn't mirrored by equivalent commitments on an updated Decent Homes Standard in the social rented sector.

Furthermore, the lack of mention of Housing First to tackle homelessness was disappointing, as was the decision not to include abolition of the benefit cap and two-child limit. There was also no mention of Local Housing Allowance. Together, the squeezing of social security that has taken place through a lack of long-term action on these policies continues to be a significant contributory factor to housing unaffordability, and we continue to call for a review of the social security system. We would also have liked to see more on accessible and supported housing, and more recognition of the scale of the task when it comes to building safety remediation (beyond leaseholders) and ensuring homes are fit for now and the future.

Lastly, it is still not clear how many of the commitments in Labour's manifesto will be paid for. Its commitment to fiscal responsibility remains ironclad, and meeting all the commitments summarised in this guide will be challenging given the current fiscal context.



What is CIH calling for?

CIH continues to support the establishment of a long-term plan for housing, backed by targets to meet housing needs, and with transparency and accountability for how it will be delivered. We set out our proposals in our [Homes at the Heart strategy](#) and [10-point plan](#), published last autumn, and we are committed to working with the new government - as well as representatives of all political parties - to support improvements in housing.

More homes

- 1 Invest in more social homes**
- 2 Reduce homelessness and use of temporary accommodation**
- 3 Improve the planning process to speed up new homes**
- 4 Invest in more supported housing to reduce burden on health services**
- 5 Invest in affordable home ownership**

Better homes

- 6 Provide sustainable funding for landlords to maintain decent homes**
- 7 Improve security and standards for private renters**
- 8 Accelerate a fair and equitable transition to net zero homes**
- 9 Prioritise building safety**
- 10 Strengthen the social security safety net.**

We will continue to monitor developments and progress across the coming Parliament, keeping members informed. For further information please contact policyandpractice@cih.org.

