



APPG HOUSING IN THE NORTH NORTHERN HOUSING PRIORITIES 2024 MEETING NOTES

Tuesday 5th March 2024 | 17:30 - 18:15 | Committee Room 7 - Palace of Westminster

APPG

Attendance	Apologies
<p>Ian Mearns MP, Chair, APPG for Housing in the North Lord Stunell, Vice Chair, APPG for Housing in the North Liz Twist MP Lord Bishop Manchester Lord Shipley</p> <p>Derek Long, Senior Vice President (Global), Affordable Housing Institute, Author of the Northern Housing Monitor Dr Tom Simcock, Research Fellow, University of Huddersfield</p> <p>Ben Cooper, Research Manager, Fabian Society Robin van Wonderen, Data Analyst, Arc4</p> <p>Tracy Harrison, Chief Executive, Northern Housing Consortium Patrick Murray, Executive Director (Policy & Public Affairs), Northern Housing Consortium Liam Gregson, Member Engagement Manager, Northern Housing Consortium Joe Bews, Policy & Public Affairs Support Officer, Northern Housing Consortium</p>	<p>Andrew Gwynne MP Andrew Western MP James Grundy MP Lord Best Peter Dowd MP Peter Gibson MP</p> <p>Charlie Norman, Group Chief Executive, MSV, & Northern Housing Consortium Vice Chair</p>

Northern Housing Priorities 2024

Ian Mearns MP

For nearly a decade the APPG has provided a forum to Parliamentarians of both Houses to discuss and advance housing and related policy across the three northern regions – working together to put forward the needs and ambitions of northern communities in the development of national housing policy.

With housing high on the agenda, 2024 will be a crucial year for the APPG to continue its important discussions and ensure our communities have a voice on housing matters in Parliament.

The APPG's first session of 2024 is the Parliamentary launch of the latest edition of the Northern Housing Monitor – a document that supports the very purpose of the APPG.

Tracy Harrison

This is the third edition of the Monitor – the Northern Housing Consortium's "Northern Housing Bible".

Our intention is for this 'State of the Region' housing report to be published annually and each edition will provide the 'go-to' analysis for housing in the north.

The Monitor is part of the NHC's commitment to building an evidence base which will build over time with each annual publication.

The latest edition being shared with you today has key sections which focus on supply of housing and land, rental affordability in the North, the journey to Net Zero and the impact of levelling up on the North.

Presentations

The Cost-of-Living Crisis and Poor-Quality Housing - Dr Tom Simcock, Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield

The Northern Housing Monitor: Key trends and developments - Derek Long, author of the Northern Housing Monitor

Presentation slides can be found [HERE](#).

Discussion:

Lord Shipley

Northern Housing Monitor outlines a range of regional issues, and the degree to which each region is impacted. Are we able to identify place-based priorities for investment?

Derek Long / Dr Tom Simcock

The Northern Housing Monitor is a useful resource for regional specific data to be used in that way, but also in presenting this data around the root causes of the housing crisis as felt in the region.

Generally, the priorities for northern areas are:

- Build social housing as the most fiscally effective way of making housing affordable.

The Monitor outlines how northern regions are impacted by rising rents and sale prices, as displayed in rising demand for social housing, reflected in waiting lists.

Shelter and the National Housing Federation have recently published a report outlining the [economic and social benefits of building 90,000 new social rented homes](#).

There is a need to think differently about how northern-specific challenges can be addressed to contribute to this overall figure.

- Address the supply and quality of PRS with targeted measures.

The Monitor is clear on the systemic unaffordability of the PRS across the North. 93.1% of properties are advertised at or above the relevant LHA rate.

Decision to peg Local Housing Allowance in cash terms will squeeze households with a £1,240 a year shortfall, and not addressing Section 21 means a bigger timebomb of rent evictions is coming.

- Resource brownfield remediation effectively.

Brownfield land remediation in the North is made complex by viability challenges, with sites at risk of falling out of government funding programmes due to tight approval conditions.

If the funds are truly devolved and structured in the right way, they can empower local leaders and communities to get homes built on sites that make sense in the context of local economic opportunities.

Tracy Harrison

Devolution should also be seen as a priority.

Lord Shipley will remember the work of the [Commission for Housing in the North](#), which underlined how the North is not homogenous, but made up of different regions equally made up of diverse areas with their own priorities.

Devolving budgets so decision makers can address place-based challenges with flexibility will go some way to addressing the challenges we're discussing.

Lord Bishop of Manchester

Striking is the data on the number of owner-occupied homes with a category 1 hazard. Not a new issue, thinking back to previous research featured at the APPG for Housing in the North - [The Hidden Costs Of Poor Quality Housing In The North](#) – which highlighted this a particular issue for older property owners.

Derek Long

Tailored investment could bring real world beneficial outcomes. We need to think about how this could be targeted, looking at disrepair and maintenance issues across tenure and generations.

Lord Bishop of Manchester

There is an issue around funding and policy certainty. We've had a number of schemes recently particularly targeted at energy efficiency – insulation / heating technology, but we're not yet close to transformational change.

Tracy Harrison

A challenge is that the supply chain is not developed to support retrofit at scale.

Whilst we can see that owner occupied homes are worse than social housing in terms of disrepair and energy efficiency, it is the social housing sector where we're able to invest to create a tipping point where supply chains are able to address other tenures.

Skills is a connected issue, was speaking to a North East business looking to specialise in renewable heating installation, but are still required to train apprentices on gas. They also say that whilst there have been funding streams targeted at home owners or Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords, the quality of information available and how it has been communicated hasn't built trust.

Ian Mearns MP

The PRS is a longstanding issue and focus for the APPG. It was good to see our presentations cover PRS affordability and reform.

Derek Long

It should be noted that the Renter's Reform Bill may look to limit the use of Selective Licensing. In the North concentrations of poor quality PRS are contributing to the collapse of neighbourhoods, it's important that Local Authorities are able to use a variety of tools to address this.

Ian Mearns MP

There is a need to build more social housing but build more thoughtfully than in the past. An issue for Local Authorities is dealing with poor planning and regeneration decisions taken in the 1960's and 70's. Poorly planned housing that is hard to heat.

The previous Labour government has been criticised for not building enough homes, but billions was invested in the Decent Homes Standard, and vitally delivering on the DHS in social housing, without which there would have been more demolitions and fewer homes.

Liz Twist MP

An issue at the constituency level in the North East is housing quality, particularly in the private sector which is having a detrimental impact on people's health.

The discussion on brownfield development has been interesting, this is something we haven't been able to access.

Ian Mearns MP

There was lots of success in previous decades built off the back of funding for land reclamation.

Derek Long

Housing Market Renewal was a conscious targeted investment in the heart of cities.

Lord Stunell

The Northern Housing Monitor deserves careful consideration. Agree that the statistics around PRS affordability are striking – gap between Local Housing Allowance and market rent is a powerful statistic. Yet bridging this gap is not seen as a politically useful way to spend money. How do we address this?

Derek Long

Decision to subsidise market rate PRS goes back decades but rising rents have made this a pressing issue. The decision raising LHA rates during Covid was correct and should be applauded but this has now slipped away.

How to intervene? Investing in social housing is a better way of using public money but should be combined with regulatory intervention in the PRS. This also requires thought; Local Authorities are unaware of the number of landlords they have to deal with in the PRS making regulation a challenge.

Lord Stunell

We should revisit the pinch-points between affordability and access to PRS housing at a future meeting of the APPG, thinking through these issues.

Ian Mearns MP

In many instances housing benefit inflates local market rates, and those who can't access housing benefit also pay this inflated rate. These are older, hard to heat properties and there are 1000's like them across the North. But these are popular properties in areas people want to live.

All aspects of the PRS should be revisited by the APPG as Lord Stunell says.

Derek Long

Housing has been in the 'too hard' column for too long.

Tom Simcock / Lord Shipley

Public money paid through housing benefit should be reconfigured to invest in housing.

How can this be delivered on, has been a common statement for a while. What research can we draw on?

Lord Shipley

This session has raised a number of pressing issues we can use the remainder of Parliament to raise.