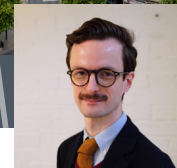


Roundtable on Planning and Development in the next Parliament with Chris Worrall and Anthony Breach



Chris Worrall



Anthony Breach

Introduction

This roundtable meeting of the PLG hosted Chris Worrall, Member of the Labour Housing Group Executive Committee and editor of the Fabian Society's Homes for Britain: Planning for Growth report and Anthony Breach, an Associate Director at Centre for Cities, leading on housing, planning, devolution, and local finance. This meeting aimed to delve into planning and development in the next Parliament, with a strong emphasis on what planning might look like under a Labour Government. Discussions placed focus on the Westminster Hall debate on planning which took place on the 13th of March, and the details seen thus far with regards to the Labour Party's housing and planning pledges.

Key Takeaways

- Participants noted that there has been a refreshing shift within the past year or so with regards to the political understanding of the need for meaningful change of the planning system in order to tackle some of the economic challenges that the country faces - a fervour that has been carried by the Labour Party front benches.
- However, participants noted that whilst a large-scale revamp of the planning system in the form of a zonal or regional system could serve as a potential long-term solution to slow delivery, this would likely create more problems than it would solve in the short term. Given the current backlog of planning applications and decades of under-delivery of British homes, an incoming Government should aim to build



on small victories, such as giving housing targets more enforceability, providing guidance for local planning authorities (LPAs) on greenbelt policies, and streamlining the process significantly.

- Participants praised the Labour Party's willingness to consider a strategic approach to the release of greenbelt land. In order to tackle the country's housing crisis, the Government must be willing to consider building on sites other than brownfield land, which often struggles to accommodate affordable housing due to the high costs involved with remediation and decontamination.

Issues raised

- Discussions emphasised that the current Government's continued increase of the number of areas in which the planning system contends with is detrimentally impacting the system's ability to effectively process applications. Each time the planning system has been reformed under the current Government, LPAs have been expected to contend with new planning elements, for example BNG and beauty. These changes have not been accompanied with sufficient guidance or clarity, and LPAs have not been provided with the funding or training needed to take on these new aspects.
- The meeting placed focus on the role of arm's-length bodies within the next Parliament. Participants felt that in their current form, bodies such as Natural England and Heritage England hold too much power when halting development. Potential changes could include setting time frames upon which bodies must respond when assessing applications.

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

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