

An aerial photograph of a modern, paved plaza featuring several circular water features with small fountains. People are seen sitting on benches, walking, and taking photos. The scene is bright and sunny, with long shadows cast across the brick-paved ground. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the main title.

# Planning with Purpose

## A Values-Based Approach to Planning Reform



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



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The full report is available for download [here](#)

This Report is intended as a basis for discussion. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this report, the authors and/or the Department of Geography and Environment will not be liable for any loss or damage incurred through the use of this report.

# Contents

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Preface                             | 3  |
| Executive Summary                   | 4  |
| Mapping Out Community Participation | 12 |
| Land as a Resource                  | 29 |
| Housing London's Millennials        | 47 |
| Discussion                          | 64 |



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Lastly, we would like to thank a number of industry experts who advised us – particularly at the beginning of our research project. It has been very rewarding to shape the report alongside so many passionate and dedicated individuals.

# Preface

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive study exploring the diverse values circulating within the planning system. It arrives at a time of significant change in the policy landscape – particularly for planning – a product of the shift in government values following the election of the Labour Party in July 2024.

While we closely followed the election timeline and Labour’s first six months in power, our research workshops took place before the recent publication of the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Devolution White Paper, Working Papers on planning committees or strategic nature recovery, amongst others. We have modified our recommendations accordingly. However, we collected our core data from stakeholders from May to October 2024 – our workshop on housing delivery taking place even before the general election. The views expressed by study participants are therefore in anticipation of planning reform rather than a reaction to recent developments. Moreover, the study captures broader insights and perspectives beyond Labour’s Plan for Change that reflect enduring beliefs about community participation, land-use and housing delivery.

Nevertheless, as the government moves forward with planning reform, the values identified through this study make a sound contribution to the ongoing conversations about what really matters for planning policy and governance. Indeed, the enactment and implementation of new legislation and policy will undoubtedly be influenced by the values and interests of diverse stakeholders - playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of the places where we live and work. This reinforces the need for a thoughtful, value-driven approach to reform.



Credit: Lawrence-Chismorie on Unsplash

# Executive Summary

Labour came to power in 2024 placing economic growth at the top of its mission-driven agenda for the next five years. Specifically, the Government is focused on accelerating housing and infrastructure delivery, with planning highlighted as both the lever for transformative change and the main obstacle to progress.

Planning is integral to realising the growth agenda. It is essential for creating economic, social and natural capital in the UK. Its multisectoral nature presents a real opportunity to tackle the complex problems our society is currently facing. However, it is no secret that the current planning system does not deliver the quality and scale of outputs necessary to meet society's needs. Moreover, distrust in planning processes and procedures also inhibits quality development from the get-go.

However, the complexity of planning stems not only from its bureaucratic procedures but from the competing values circulating within the system. They continuously tug at what planning should deliver and how – causing delay and lessening planning's ability to address long-term problems. We suggest that holistic reform must address the values that influence planning culture and governance.

Understanding what matters to key actors and getting them on board is therefore crucial for successful reform. Our Values-Based Approach to Planning embraces the complex and ambiguous nature of value circuits. We do not shy away from the politics of planning but seek to deliver meaningful recommendations for reform by untangling the multiple competing values that circulate within the system.

In this report, we zoom in on three central aspects of the planning lifecycle - Community Participation, Land Use and Housing Delivery – asking two important, yet simple questions: What do we want

from a new generation of planning? And how do we get there? These questions allowed us to draw out broader lessons for the planning system and its governance.

## Methodology

We collected data through desktop research, three multi-stakeholder workshops, and interviews with relevant actors. In total, we actively engaged with 89 experts. By stepping into a multi-sector arena during the research workshops, we hoped to build a shared understanding of the rationales of various groups and actors, to reconcile differences and collaboratively map a way forward for planning reform. Designing the workshops around a Values-Based Approach enabled us to:

**Examine how language shapes policy debates**, determines priorities and defines the framework within which we operate (including who has access to the planning arena).

**Identify and unpack different types of “value”** (e.g. social value), getting to the root of why something is valued and what is at stake for specific stakeholders.

**Recentre people and politics in the decision-making process**, focusing on planning as a key mechanism for collective engagement to achieve shared societal goals.

**Create space to talk about the reality of implementation**, examining how policy is translated into practice by actors according to their varied interests and understandings.

**Paint a systemic picture of different governance areas** across the planning system and the competing values influencing their effective management.

## Key arguments of each chapter:

**Community Participation:** As Labour increasingly frames community participation in planning as an obstacle to progress, we propose reframing it as a valuable democratic arena where “politics happen” - essential for legitimacy. Acknowledging the need to resource and deliver place-based solutions, we seek to explore where and how communities participate in



Credit: Artūras Kokorevas on Pexels

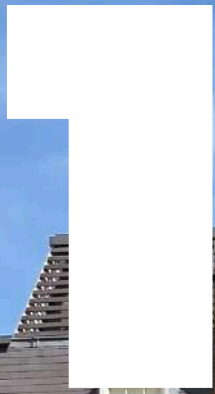
planning and situate successful participation as a critical building block to increase buy-in, uplift communities, and achieve the growth agenda.

**Land Use:** While there is clear ambition from Government to deliver sustainable objectives through effective land use, several gaps remain between their aspirations and the practical policy mechanisms and financial structures in place to achieve them. A deliberate reshaping of the land market must be initiated in collaboration with landowners across sectors, creating an environment that fosters growth through their participation in value creation, capture and sharing.

**Housing Delivery:** A historic shortfall in housing delivery has curtailed national economic output and exacerbated social costs, with younger generations bearing the brunt of the housing crisis. In response, the Labour Government has recently prioritised reforms to the English planning system aimed at increasing housing supply and driving economic growth. Tackling these challenges demands a holistic reimagining of housing and planning policies to promote sustainable growth, advance social equity, and align with the evolving aspirations of younger generations.

**Lessons for the planning system:** Situating the planning system as a mechanism to achieve broader and more holistic place-based solutions is a key opportunity to achieve national renewal. We found a shared desire to work towards a common vision. However, participants cited a lack of clarity, co-ordination, funding and trust as key obstacles to securing positive outcomes for the planning system.

In each chapter, we propose progressive recommendations grounded in the values expressed by study participants. For further details on key recommendations and findings, please see our short form policy briefing and long-form highlights document available [here](#).



# 1



# Introduction

In this chapter, we situate the report within Labour's 2024 planning policy agenda, outline our Values-Based Approach to planning policy and practice, as well as our research methodology. We then introduce our three focus areas: community participation, land use, and housing delivery.

Labour came to power in 2024 placing economic growth at the top of its mission-driven agenda for the next five years. Specifically, the Government is focused on accelerating housing and infrastructure delivery. They have set an ambitious target of delivering 1.5 million homes and 150 major infrastructure projects within five years, with planning highlighted as both the lever for transformative change and the main obstacle to progress. Indeed, Chancellor Rachel Reeves has condemned the current planning system as,<sup>1</sup> "...a barrier to opportunity, a barrier to growth – and a barrier to homeownership too."<sup>2</sup>

## The Value of Planning

Planning is integral to realising the growth agenda. It is essential for creating economic, social and natural capital in the UK. As a practice grounded in place, it also plays a central role in mapping out our values across time and space: it influences local markets, strives to achieve welfare benefits, and seeks to shape behaviour for positive societal outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, planning brings together actors in a diverse ecosystem that stretches beyond its bureaucratic machinery. Its multisectoral nature presents a real opportunity to tackle the complex problems our society is currently facing. As an arena where decisions are made and trade-offs are negotiated, it is inherently political. As our research revealed

*"There are very few public spaces now where politics go on, and this [planning] is one of them... It goes with the territory. It cannot be passed over. And quite the opposite. We need to actually go with it." - Community Group Representative*<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, planning is a valuable activity as it provides cross-sectoral place-based solutions and brings a multitude of actors into the political sphere to influence the future of the places where we live and work.

## Towards reform

The complexity of planning stems, not only from its

bureaucratic procedures but from the competing values circulating within the system. People have different ideas about what and how the planning system should deliver, which ultimately shapes the built environment. This is especially reflected in the discretionary nature of the English planning system, which relies heavily on case-by-case decision-making. It is also demonstrated by the successive planning reforms that continuously reinvent the system before it has had a chance to take root, often fostering inefficiencies, delays, and a lack of long-term planning coherence. Although this complexity poses challenges, understanding "what we value" and "why" can provide a meaningful path forward for the long term.

In this report, we suggest that holistic reform must address the values that influence planning culture and governance. These values are fundamentally related to how we govern: the way we perceive the system and what we value ultimately shape planning policies and practices, which eventually become institutionalised. Indeed, institutions are organised around shared meanings and understandings.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding what matters to key actors and getting them on board is therefore crucial for successful reform. Our values-based approach to planning embraces the complex and ambiguous nature of value circuits. We do not shy away from the politics of planning but seek to deliver meaningful recommendations for reform by untangling the multiple competing values that circulate within the system. In doing so, we hope to foster an increased awareness and understanding amongst key players about what is at stake.

## A Values-Based Approach

A values-based approach to planning policy and practice is therefore a key tool for policymakers and practitioners. We offer a clear framework for investigating the diverse interests at play and reconciling differences to unlock institutional change. We zoom in on three central aspects of the planning lifecycle - Community Participation, Land Use and Housing Delivery – asking two important, yet simple questions: What do we want from a new generation of planning? And how do we get there?

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, we refer specifically to the English planning system

<sup>2</sup> Reeves, R., 2024. Mais Lecture 2024. March 2014. London. <https://labour.org.uk/updates/press-releases/rachel-reeves-mais-lecture/>

<sup>3</sup> Adams, P.D., O'Sullivan, M., 2016. Delivering the Value of Planning. London: RTPI. <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1303/deliveringthevalueofplanning2016.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Workshop participant, October 2024. (Community Group Representative)

<sup>5</sup> Bevir, M., Rhodes, R.A.W., 2006. Interpretive Approaches to British Government and Politics. British Politics. 1, 84–112. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bp.4200001>



Guided by a values-based approach we aim to:

- Draw out the values embedded in planning policy and practice.
- Show how different values are balanced and ultimately shape planning governance.
- Highlight the value-added of planning for a range of stakeholders.
- Pinpoint the gaps between what is desired of the planning system and what is currently in place.
- Close these gaps by delivering progressive policy recommendations to foster long-term public interest in an effective and collaborative manner.

To achieve this:

**Chapter 2** maps out where and how communities participate in planning and situates successful participation as a critical building block for the growth agenda.

**Chapter 3** proposes a nuanced approach to understanding land as a resource, exploring how landowners value their land and how we might best facilitate their participation in value creation and sharing.

**Chapter 4** delves into housing delivery, focusing on what people aged 25 to 45 – commonly referred to as “millennials” – value when addressing solutions to the housing crisis.

**Chapter 5** draws out the common threads that emerged across our three research domains, reflecting on what this might mean for the planning system and its governance as a whole.

Each chapter proposes progressive recommendations grounded in the values expressed by study participants.

## Background

Throughout its history, the planning system’s remit has been highly contested. It has evolved from a socially focused framework, based on the post-World War II welfare state and its social democratic values, to one increasingly influenced by market forces.<sup>6</sup> Tensions between greater regularisation and liberalisation, market intervention and *laissez-faire*, underscore ongoing debates about reform. These

competing values have continuously tugged at what planning should deliver and how.

Numerous planning Acts over decades evidence a widely shared desire to reform the planning system in England, but these waves of legislative change also indicate a lack of consensus on the best way forward. Successive reforms, and at times a revolving door of ministers, have lessened planning’s ability to address long-term problem.<sup>7</sup> As a result, while many previous administrations have pulled the lever marked ‘planning reform,’ many of the anticipated changes, including significantly increased housing delivery, have not happened.

The aggravation of complex or wicked problems, such as climate change, has intensified pressures on a system expected to deliver diverse public goods.<sup>8</sup> These include meeting affordable housing demands, balancing local and central governance, and achieving environmental sustainability.

The nature of wicked problems is reflected in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets the parameters for the planning system. The NPPF emphasises a “presumption in favour of sustainable development” and in particular “sustained economic growth”. However, the very notion of sustainable development is a slippery concept due to the difficulty of balancing often competing ideals and factors. This framework has been criticised for prioritising development and economic values at the expense of other community and environmental interests.

Moreover, austerity measures and an inflationary environment have put strain on a system that is already in tension. The overall result is that trust in the planning system is low due to its perceived inability to fully address the complex and sometimes competing needs of English society. For example, when it comes to large-scale developments, “just 2% of the public trust developers and only 7% trust local authorities”.<sup>9</sup> “Critical junctures” for change occur

<sup>7</sup> “From 2010 to 2018 there has been eight Ministers, serving on average one year, with the last in post for six months.” in Town and Country Planning Association’s Final Report of the Raynsford Review of Planning in England, p. 26. <https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Planning-2020-Raynsford-Review-of-Planning-in-England-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Wicked problems are “complex, involving multiple possible causes and internal dynamics that could not assumed to be linear, and have very negative consequences for society if not addressed properly”. See What is so wicked about wicked problems? A conceptual analysis and a research program. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1361633>

<sup>9</sup> McWilliam, C., 2019. Rebuilding Trust Discussion Paper. London: Grosvenor. <https://www.grosvenor.com/getattachment/8e97e7a8->

<sup>6</sup> Davoudi, S., 2018. Spatial Planning: The promised Land or Rolled-Out Neoliberalism, in: The Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory, Routledge Handbooks. Routledge, New York, pp. 15–27.

when institutions lose legitimacy by failing to address significant issues.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, the Government has pinpointed the current planning system as a “major brake” for the economy.<sup>11</sup> It is seeking to transform the planning system into a driver of economic growth and has published a flurry of new working papers, white papers, policies, and legislation from July to December 2024. However, it is important to note that the majority of these proposals must still be filtered through committees, consultations, and Parliament to be enacted, where they will continue to be shaped by competing values. Furthermore, this is the beginning of Labour’s institutional agenda - more policies may be forthcoming and how these reforms are translated from policy into reality remains to be seen.

Despite these challenges, Labour has a significant opportunity to reimagine the planning system to address today’s pressing challenges. Achieving this requires the buy-in of key stakeholders. Looking at the planning system as an arena for managing a multiplicity of values helps us to explore the tensions surrounding system reform.

## Methodology

We zoom in on three key stages of the planning lifecycle - Community Participation, Land Use and Housing Delivery – to interrogate how stakeholders navigate the current system and its governance. The Government’s milestone for housing delivery can only be achieved through effective public engagement in decision-making and the conscious management of land as a limited resource.

To generate a rich understanding of the values that circulate within the planning system, we acknowledge the diverse and subjective perspectives of policymakers and practitioners. Therefore, in each chapter, we ask a set of relevant stakeholders targeted questions about how we move forward with planning system reform in a specific domain. We explore the rationale of certain actors to better understand their motivations and explore alternative, innovative solutions moving forward.

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<sup>10</sup> Sorensen, A., 2018. New Institutionalism And Planning Theory, in: The Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory, Routledge Handbooks. Routledge. New York. pp. 250–263.

<sup>11</sup> Labour Party. 2024. Change, Labour Party Manifesto 2024. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf>

We collected data through desktop research, three multi-stakeholder workshops, and interviews with relevant actors. In total, we actively engaged with 89 experts. By stepping into a multi-sector arena during the research workshops, we hoped to build a shared understanding of the rationales of various groups and actors, to reconcile differences and collaboratively map a way forward for planning reform.

In this report, we present a sample of the values within the planning system in London and the Wider South East. We do not make the claim to cover all the values within the system. The values presented do not seek to privilege certain voices over others but rather represent a purposive sample of relevant actors within the planning ecosystem. Further research would benefit from an expanded sample of diverse stakeholders. While London and the Wider South East have unique challenges and socio-economic opportunities, we hope to showcase the broad utility and replicability of a values-based approach.

Our recommendations target national level policy makers as this is a key time to propose national recommendations in what is, in general, a highly centralised institution. However, we also speak to practitioners and local councils.

Finally, as we strive to understand the values of our participants, we acknowledge that this report is also shaped by our progressive values as researchers. Values cannot be removed from how we interpret the world, but through rigorous analysis, we actively work towards an empathic understanding of conflicting rationales.

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# 2

## Mapping out Community Participation: Reestablishing Trust

As Labour increasingly frames community participation in planning as an obstacle to progress, we propose reframing it as a valuable democratic arena where “politics happen” - essential for legitimacy. In this chapter, we explore where and how communities participate in planning and situate successful participation as a critical building block to increase buy-in, uplift communities, and achieve the growth agenda.

# Mapping Out Community Participation

By Liz Williams

Labour's Plan for Change identified community participation in planning as a key barrier to achieving their economic growth mission.<sup>1</sup> From their perspective, community participation, whilst a worthy ideal, cannot be prioritised over important economic aims. This position focuses on delivering development outcomes. The dichotomy between speed and community participation has long been a prevalent feature of planning reform with the 2018 Raynsford review noting that "People's involvement in planning is no longer characterised as due process but as 'delay'...none of the reviews of the last 20 years have defined what 'delay' means or how 'unreasonable delay' can be distinguished from the exercise of legitimate community rights."<sup>2</sup>

The Government promises to speed up house building in the upcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill by asking, "How, not if, homes and infrastructure are built".<sup>3</sup> Effectively removing the ability of communities to object to specific sites, Keir Starmer recently sent a message to "the nimbys, the regulators, the blockers and bureaucrats" that "Britain says yes... whether you like it or not".<sup>4</sup> This proclamation comes while simultaneously championing greater community power in the Devolution White Paper.<sup>5</sup> The distinction between "communities" and "nimby's" showcases how

different values seek to position local people, as well as the conflict between idealising their empowerment while systematically reducing their scope of influence.

Various policies and legislation have incorporated community participation into the English planning system. There is a clear presumption in favour of democratic legitimacy. However, community participation in planning has always been subject to competing values and shaped by fundamental contradictions. For example, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 established a discretionary system, granting communities the right to object to applications.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there is a rational motivation to object to protect economic and community value as new developments put pressure on key public services.

The Skeffington Report in the late 1960s highlighted the need for direct democracy (bottom-up citizen power) alongside representative democracy (top-down decisions). The report promoted best practices but lacked enforcement mechanisms and ultimately failed to resolve the tension between top-down and bottom-up democracy in planning. Formal processes to this day often remain tokenistic, with Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) functioning as a "tick-box exercise" as they do not undergo independent examination.<sup>7</sup> More recently, neighbourhood planning has sought to empower communities by giving them more of a say in the development and character of local areas.<sup>8</sup> It was designed to reconcile development and local opposition. However, in practice it did not generate a wave of YIMBYs; neighbourhood plans have been unevenly adopted and have privileged the "usual actors" – people familiar with navigating the planning system.<sup>9</sup>

With a view to resolving such apparent tensions around community participation, in 2020, the then Conservative Government attempted to prioritize "upstream" community participation in the plan-

<sup>1</sup> Change, Labour Party Manifesto 2024, June 2024. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Town and Country Planning Association, 2018. Planning 2020 – Final Report of the Raynsford Review of Planning in England, pp. 22 <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources/the-raynsford-review-of-planning/>

<sup>3</sup> His Majesty King Charles III. 2024. The King's Speech. 17 July 2024. London. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024>

<sup>4</sup> Starmer, K., 2024. PM speech on Plan for Change. 5 December 2024. 10 Downing Street. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-plan-for-change-5-december-2024>

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. English Devolution White Paper. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

<sup>6</sup> Town and Country Planning Association, 2018. Planning 2020 – Final Report of the Raynsford Review of Planning in England. <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources/the-raynsford-review-of-planning/>

<sup>7</sup> UK Government, 2004. Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/18> for statements of community involvement; And UK Government, 2008. Planning Act. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents> for removing the requirement for independent examination

<sup>8</sup> UK Government, 2011. Localism Act. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>

<sup>9</sup> YIMBY: Yes, in My Backyard - a person who supports new development in the area where they live, typically in order to increase the availability of housing

making stage over site-specific decision-making.<sup>10</sup> The current Labour Government's policy to speed up delivery continues along this road, similarly sparking concerns about the erosion of democratic accountability and legitimacy. Acknowledging the need to resource and deliver place-based solutions, we seek to explore where and how communities participate in planning and situate successful participation as a critical building block to increase buy-in, uplift communities, and achieve the growth agenda. We make recommendations grounded in the key concerns and values expressed by a range of stakeholders engaged in the participatory process.

## Methodology

In a workshop, titled *The People: How Will They Participate in Planning?*, we brought together 26 stakeholders in planning. This included members of local, regional, and national government; public and

private sector practitioners; developers and consultants; as well as community groups and community-benefit organisations.<sup>11</sup> The participant makeup aimed to capture the nuanced tensions, perspectives and values across groups that interact in community participation.

Our workshop focused on three themes:

- Participation in Development Management: Key Tensions
- Towards Strategic Participation for Strategic Planning
- Alternative Participatory Futures: A Way Forward

Participants heard expert presentations from a local planner, developer, community group leader, regional strategic planner, participatory programmes think tank, and community consultation specialist. In small groups, participants then explored specific questions related to each session's theme. Finally, the groups shared their deliberations in a plenary discussion,

<sup>10</sup> House of Commons Debate, 2020. Planning for the Future White Paper. <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/debate-planning-future-white-paper-house-commons-15-december>

<sup>11</sup> See appendix 1



LSE Community Participation Workshop: 8 Oct 2024

Credit: Olexiy Pedosenko

allowing for observation of both value conflicts and shared priorities.

- Participation in Development Management: Key Tensions
- Towards Strategic Participation for Strategic Planning
- Alternative Participatory Futures: A Way Forward

Participants heard expert presentations from a local planner, developer, community group leader, regional strategic planner, participatory programmes think tank, and community consultation specialist. In small groups, participants then explored specific questions related to each session's theme. Finally, the groups shared their deliberations in a plenary discussion, allowing for observation of both value conflicts and shared priorities.

## Analysis

### Barriers in a discretionary planning system

The discretionary planning system provides both real flexibility and the appearance of flexibility. Those with a thorough knowledge of the system will understand where flexibility exists and how to employ it while for outsiders the degree of flexibility in the system may appear greater than it really is. This is reflected in the observation of one strategic planner:

*"We've been wedded to this legal framework where it is all infinitely negotiable, but actually certain things could be locked down more, and then you wouldn't end up in the position where we hear from one side, 'Oh, it's pro-growth and we support everything,' and from the other, 'Oh, it is all being stymied.' Well, which one is true? I think it's probably both from different perspectives." - Regional Government Representative*

This creates a complicated environment where competing priorities coexist. We argue in favour of understanding planning as an arena to discuss these trade-offs and address complex problems. However, the system lacks clarity. The planning process has become obscured and is a barrier to inclusive engagement, creating challenges for community groups, planners and the private sector. A private practitioner observed that due to concerns over risk, planning applications prioritise legal defensibility over accessibility:

*"they're [planning applications] not a good read. They're heavy and formulaic. But then the planners would say the lawyers have made it that way because*

*if it's not in the report, you're vulnerable to JR [Judicial Review] ... But the fact the report has become unreadable and they're not always an aid of good decision making has fallen by the wayside." - Private Practitioner 2*

Moreover, austerity-driven budget cuts have under-resourced local authorities, forcing them to focus on meeting minimum statutory responsibilities rather than innovation.<sup>12</sup> As one civil servant described:

*"They [development management colleagues] are drowning with apps and regulations.... It's not that they don't want schemes to be better, but how do you make that fit" - Combined Council Representative*


Finally, the current system's main form of community participation is a binary choice of objecting or supporting applications, fostering an adversarial culture. As one participant noted:

In conclusion, while the English planning system's discretionary framework enables flexibility, there are inherent barriers to the system. These barriers – adversarial participation, legal defensibility over accessibility, and resource constraints – must be addressed to meaningfully transform community participation. Without clearer processes, adequate resourcing, and a shift toward inclusive, innovative engagement, participation will remain tokenistic and defensive.

### Mapping out community participation

This section maps community participation in the planning system from 'upstream' to 'downstream', situating community participation processes between top-down and bottom-up approaches. It examines participatory mechanisms at different stages of the planning process and highlights challenges such as accessibility, resource constraints, and representation, alongside strengths like inclusivity and empowerment. By mapping these dynamics, we underscore the importance of reconciling the competing demands of representative and direct democracy to create a participatory system that is both effective and legitimate.

<sup>12</sup> Taking the period 2010–11 to 2024–25 as a whole, councils' overall core funding is set to be 9% lower in real terms and 18% lower in real terms per person this year than at the start of the 2010s. See [How have English councils' funding and spending changed? 2010 to 2024](#)



*“This type of community participation is a product...of a defensive system. When community groups show up, it's in defence of their interests not being met. But real community participation, for me... is doing things from democratic innovation”*

- Private Practitioner 3



dynamics, we underscore the importance of reconciling the competing demands of representative and direct democracy to create a participatory system that is both effective and legitimate.

### *Top-down and bottom-up approaches*

Community participation in planning exists within a delicate tension between top-down mandates and bottom-up empowerment. The distribution of power and the processes by which decisions are made and evaluated are at the heart of effective community participation. However, Labour's current plan to speed up delivery tilts this balance towards top-down mandates, potentially disrupting the intricate interplay between national directives and local aspirations.

During the workshop, one participant highlighted a striking contradiction regarding community participation in strategic planning

*"They're both [regional strategic planner and community leader] saying this should be delegated down to the local level, but they're both talking about a top-down approach. I think they're both asking for the best of both worlds – and the worst of both worlds." - Private Practitioner 2*

This contradiction showcases how community participation gets muddled between top-down and bottom-up approaches, raising deeper questions about who defines public priorities and how legitimacy is established. The workshop revealed a clear value clash between representative and direct democracy, encapsulated in this heated exchange:

*P3 "I'd argue it (community governance) is not explicit. Community organising becomes more like an expert lens where a group has a passionate belief in a thing like social housing or a particular area of community interest. But then you need a proper democratic process where everyone has an equal opportunity to be represented and be present.*

*A1: No explicitly, communities can decide that for themselves. Communities are us, and we can decide it. We would like to be part of the democratic process, so we are part of the democratic process...*

*P3 (interjecting) who's deciding then...?*

*A1: The community can decide.*

*P2 Well we're a representative democracy, aren't we. First of all...*

*P3 (interjecting) Well, I'd argue that's not democratic*

*(to A1)"*

This exchange highlights the complexity and tensions surrounding legitimacy, as stakeholders grapple with the balance between direct community governance and the structures of representative democracy. Debates on decision-making and legitimacy emphasise the need for a blend of democratic methods and robust accountability mechanisms.

The discussions reveal that the tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches in planning governance is not merely a procedural challenge but a fundamental democratic conflict about power, representation, and legitimacy. Striking the right balance requires acknowledging the interdependence of national, regional, and local decision-making while embracing a blended model of democracy that combines the inclusivity of community-led participation with the accountability of representative structures.

### *Upstream participation Participation in strategic planning*

Strategic planning lacks a single legislative definition, resulting in varied interpretations. Often conflated with local plans, regional plans, or transport plans, strategic planning broadly aims to address development challenges across defined regions.<sup>13</sup> During the workshop, participants noted this lack of delineation and discussed how their interpretations differed based on scale and remit - although they agreed that strategic planning must be visionary. In the Devolution White Paper, Labour calls for a "universal system of strategic planning" in the next five years but refers to, Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) as a regional mechanism to solely deliver housing needs.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, we define strategic planning as an overarching vision established through diverse (public, private, civil) involvement that outlines long-term objectives at different levels (national, regional, local) supported by detailed action plans and measurable indicators to create positive economic, environmental and social spatial outcomes.<sup>15</sup> We

<sup>13</sup> Planning Aid, 2024. What is strategic planning?. Planning Aid England, RTPi. <https://www.planningaid.co.uk/hc/en-us/articles/23321712343709-What-is-strategic-planning>

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. English Devolution White Paper. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

<sup>15</sup> Albrecht, L., 2004. Strategic (Spatial) Planning Reexamined.

propose including this expanded definition in the Devolution Bill to realise the full potential of strategic planning for communities to achieve Labour's multisectoral missions. With this in mind, the following will provide a multilevel review of strategic planning.

### National strategic planning

England does not have a national strategic plan. Instead, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out "government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied".<sup>16</sup> Following the working paper on planning committees, which has the potential to diminish democratic accountability, Labour emphasised the NPPF consultation as a means of providing direct national democratic input.<sup>17</sup> While the consultation was open to the public, its 106 questions, requiring evidence-based critique, effectively alienates nonexperts, perpetuating planning as a bureaucratic, inaccessible process.

Although the NPPF consultation offers a valuable platform for experts to weigh in on policy, it is not designed to facilitate broad democratic participation. As one workshop participant argued, the current requirement of evidence-based critique deters meaningful community input for overall public participation in planning.

*"People should be able to tell us, this is what I want and that's enough. We don't have to go, 'well what are the projected nitrous oxide values for this road?'" - Regional Government Representative*

To address this gap, we propose the adoption of a national strategic plan. This would provide a space for "politics that are done with communities, not to them".<sup>18</sup> Communities can articulate their needs for the future through building a shared actionable, measurable vision. A national strategic plan can also generate stronger legitimacy and buy-in, providing sustained support for Labour's ambitious missions.

Mariana Mazzucato, the author of a mission-driven

Environment and Planning B Planning and Design. 31(5):743-758.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. National Planning Policy Framework. London. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Rayner, A., 2024. Interviewed by Laura Kuenssberg. Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg. BBC One. 8 December. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0025txc/sunday-with-laura-kuenssberg-can-the-government-build-15-million-houses>

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. English Devolution White Paper. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

approach, has emphasised that successful missions require public co-creation and participatory decision-making structures.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the push for universal strategic plans would benefit from alignment with, and guidance from, a singular national strategic framework. (See Chapter 3's recommendation on fostering entrepreneurship).

### Regional strategic planning

Previously abolished, outside of London, in the Localism Act of 2011,<sup>20</sup> regional strategic planning is set for a universal resurgence in the Devolution White Paper. This revitalisation, alongside the creation of new governance bodies - Strategic Authorities - requires high levels of community participation to provide legitimacy during an institutional reshuffle. Participation in SDSs will not only enhance legitimacy but also proactively mitigate inequities. As one participant emphasized:

*"Participation in the strategic planning stage is important to define those intangibles in a positive way. Without it, you get councils deciding a plan based on their own small jurisdiction, without any sense of assets in common, infrastructure in common or what the boundaries and connections between places are. You get pain doled out on communities, because they take the load - for transport, for housing... That is quite unjust, unequitable and it breeds distrust in the planning system." - National Government Representative*

### Opportunity areas

Opportunity areas (OAs) exemplify the possible disconnect between regional strategic plans and local people. OAs are a principal area of strategic planning in the London Plan, they are defined as, "principal opportunities for accommodating large scale development to provide substantial numbers of new employment and housing".<sup>21</sup> These areas present significant opportunities for regeneration but also pose critical challenges that must be addressed to ensure equitable and sustainable development.

Workshop participants voiced concerns about OAs, highlighting issues including increasingly technocratic administration, insufficient cross-borough collaboration, and a lack of meaningful community involvement in evaluation. On the topic of

<sup>19</sup> Mazzucato, M. 2021. Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism. Penguin. London.

<sup>20</sup> UK Government, 2011. Localism Act. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>

<sup>21</sup> Mayor of London, 2021. The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London. Greater London Authority.

inadequate monitoring within OAs, one participant remarked:

*"[the] experience of communities is completely disengaged from it. You're losing a huge amount by doing that. You're losing all those canaries that could be singing and saying what works." - Community Group 1*

The experiences shared by participants underscored the tensions between top-down and bottom-up approaches to decision-making. While this report does not position bottom-up approaches as inherently superior, it advocates for a blended model that combines the strengths of both. As one participant reflected:

*"And there is always hope that somewhere someone will have the ability to keep this vision together, and maybe an expectation that the mayor would... But it's very chaotic and uncomfortable, and we need to have a conversation about monitoring. Who can keep an eye on it? Who will organise this complexity, and how?" - Planning Academic 1*

OAs are key for delivering cross-borough transport, social and digital infrastructure. However, participants insisted that they must incorporate greater community monitoring to enhance buy-in, legitimacy, and create better outcomes. Moreover, working with communities in the development of OAs speeds up development and encourages collaboration between boroughs who are accountable to their constituencies.

### *Local strategic planning*

Plan-making is the "heart" of the planning system. "Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure as well as a basis for conversing and enhancing the natural and historical environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change and achieving well designed places."<sup>22</sup> Consultation in local plans is a key pillar of local democracy. However, planning suffers from the quantity of time it takes to enact a local plan, and engaging communities strategically remains challenging as the abstract nature of strategies can feel detached from tangible, localised concerns.

*"It's quite hard to get your head around strategy, and it's only when you're talking about sites, it gets*

*interesting." - Local Government Representative*

Consequently, community participation in strategic planning can suffer from what participants described as the "black hole effect" – where communities contribute time and input but feel their voices have no real impact on outcomes. To overcome these challenges, strategic engagement must shift from abstract discussions to action-oriented participation. Digital tools, including AI, were suggested to democratise local plans. These tools could increase the quantity and quality of engagement, especially as community values are not a monolith. However, other participants argued against the ethicality of AI. Overall, workshop participants emphasized that engagement is most impactful when it is focused, purposeful, and directly connected to community needs:

*"It's when you've got something that you need from people that it is most valuable. You know, in terms of that exchange, if we can offer something, if we've got something that they can do or shape." - Regional Government Representative*

Strategic plans must actively embed community input at key stages, particularly during the sustainability appraisal scoping process. At the local, regional and national levels, communities should contribute to defining the plan's objectives and shaping the criteria for evaluation. By embedding participation early and aligning it with practical, outcome-driven processes, strategic planning can foster greater community ownership, trust, and meaningful contributions.

### *Neighbourhood planning*

Driven by communities, neighbourhood plan-making fosters a sense of belonging and ownership of a local area. However, a community representative underscored the barriers of enacting a neighbourhood plan:

*"To allow a community group to raise a neighbourhood plan needs funding. Community groups do not have the funding to do that. They don't have the technical skills to even build capacity. I've worked at the GLA to do community-led funding, it's so miniscule in comparison and you can't see the next funding round." - Community Land Trust Representative*

For groups that have the capacity and resources to influence, tokenistic participatory mechanisms can hinder meaningful engagement. A community leader highlighted this as well as the importance of being

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. Guidance on Plan-making. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making#local-plan-intervention>

able to influence a decision in their local area: “We’re not NIMBYs, we’re not YIMBYs, we’re SHIMBYs – Social Housing in our Backyards. That’s what we want: social housing... So, we produce alternative visions, master plans, and neighbourhood plans...The problem is, unlike what happened in the 70s with Waterloo, too often they’re not taken seriously, they’re ignored.” (CG1) Community influence is important to ensure that new developments are built in the right places, of a high standard and provide affordable/ social housing (see Chapter 4 on Housing Delivery). This lack of power to impact the type of housing provided in their local area through strategic participation pushes communities into an adversarial position downstream.

## Downstream participation

### Pre-application

The confidential pre-application (pre-app) process emerged as both a significant challenge and an area of opportunity during discussions. It was seen as an exclusionary process, whereas gaining access would be key to decision-making. One participant emphasized this sentiment:

*“But actually, the engagement that happens at the pre-app stage to me is so fundamentally important. That is when communities really have the ability to influence and shape schemes.” - Local Authority Representative 1*

Local authority representatives agreed that the confidential nature of pre-app exacerbated tensions between communities, developers and councils as it often presents a finished scheme for communities to review rather than to shape from the outset. This confidential process contributes to the perception that local authorities do not work in communities’ interests as communities are not privy to the negotiation process. Several participants suggested making the process visible to increase understanding of the trade-offs and create a level playing field between communities and developers. As one participant explained:

*“I think people would see a much more honest discourse taking place. If you’re trying to get a scheme to work; if you’re trying to deliver on policy objectives; if you are trying to manage financial and political issues. If it was seen being played out, it would increase public understanding of it. And there would be an understanding that these things are about dealing with trade-offs.” - Private Practitioner 2*

In defence of local councils, one participant pointed

out that 13 councils already publish pre-app discussions following planning approval, but emphasized that transparency reforms must also engage developers, who often prefer to conduct viability negotiations behind closed doors. Including communities in a transparent pre-app process could help communities shape schemes early on, increase trust, and foster greater public understanding of the complex trade-offs inherent in planning decisions, ultimately supporting more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

### Development management

Participants recognised that engagement in development management (DM) is adversarial and binary. The current framework hinders meaningful participation as communities are relegated to objecting or supporting development. Many participants agreed with moving participation upstream, out of development management to avoid this adversarial framework. As one said:

*“I think we need to be realistic about engagement in DM because engagement should be upstream in the planning-making process. There should be a requirement for developers to engage effectively before they’ve tied up everything on sites.” - Local Government Representative*

Who is engaged and how they’re engaged is a fundamental challenge. Participants discussed consultation fatigue, as well as the ‘usual actors’ monopolising power. A local councillor noted the incumbent advantage of groups who already live in a community and the importance of balancing decision-making to provide development for those who want to move into an area.

*“It’s not hard to reach groups, but it’s the group most affected. We’re talking about building social housing, the people who are most affected are overcrowded and homeless. If you consult them about building this development, they’d say ‘let’s do it’. The people who say ‘no’ are the ones who are already housed.” - Elected Official*

### Planning committees

The Local Government Association notes that “planning committees are an important shop window for the council and play a crucial role in providing democratic and transparent decisions on sometimes controversial issues.”<sup>23</sup> As a mechanism for representative democracy, participants highlighted

<sup>23</sup> Planning Advisory Service, 2025, Planning Committee. Local Government Association.

challenges faced by planning committees, particularly the need for enhanced skills and education to support informed decision-making. A local councillor illustrated this challenge of balancing legislative requirements with community interests:

*“Elected members are effectively supposed to be representing their community. They have a lot of difficulty [when] they get onto a planning committee. They're no longer representing their community. They're adjudicating using the planning legislation... And I do think there should be more of a role for members. But that's going to involve a lot more training and education.” - Elected Official*

Regarding the national conversation around delegation, participants expressed support for politicians retaining the final say in local decision-making:

*“The local plan is one way to say that the politician should really decide the controversial schemes. At the end of the day, you always want a politician to decide, you want someone to wear responsibility.” - National Government Representative*

However, to improve the quality of decisions made, participants called for greater involvement from committee members early on. Currently, members risk conflicts of interest if they engage with a scheme before the official briefing. Instead, participants proposed a much more collaborative approach between communities, elected officials and developers, and welcomed de-risking committee members' involvement so they could take an active role as a democratic bridge allowing them to represent their communities through planning.

*“...and we could do all those things [housing, collaboration, social goals]. We could shape all this, but we are going through a process that doesn't enable any kind of collaborative, plan-making exercise. You formulate something with an officer, and then you have it judged by people [committee members] who know nothing about it.” - Private Practitioner 2*

This perspective was widely shared, emphasizing the importance of empowering local governments to be innovative, entrepreneurial actors with the capacity for long-term visioning. These authorities must represent the public interest – including future residents – and act as stewards of inclusive growth. Their role requires balancing immediate community concerns with broader societal objectives.

In December 2024, Labour released a working paper

proposing the standardisation of planning committees, aiming to provide greater certainty for applicants by delegating more planning decisions to professional planners rather than committee members. While study participants did not comment on this approach, it has been welcomed by certain actors in industry and also criticised, with concerns that it may undermine local democracy by reducing the role of elected representatives in decision-making.<sup>24</sup>

### *The future of community participation*

The previous section explored various mechanisms of community participation and the tension between top-down and bottom-up democracy. Addressing the current challenges of community participation is urgent to enhance democratic legitimacy, empower the public, and build the institutional capacity required to confront “wicked” problems like climate change.

As a mechanism for place-based solutions, the planning system can play a critical role in climate mitigation and adaptation. However, it is not adequately prepared to address the demands of climate change, particularly in fostering meaningful community participation. Participants noted that the future of community participation in planning increasingly hinges on the ability to strategically navigate climate trade-offs:

*“The only thing I wanted to bring up that I haven't heard in any of the talks, is climate change. And if we're going to talk strategic planning, we have to talk about the changes that we're clearly not ready to have within our communities. The change that's going to be imposed on them rather than something that they get to decide.” - Planning Consultant 1*

Participants expressed a sense of urgency about the need to prepare communities for the sacrifices required by a climate-conscious future. Yet, they struggled with how to resolve these inherent conflicts in the current system. As one participant questioned:

*“Is the planning system equipped to deal with things like environmental justice? [There's] not an answer [in the system], so how can we engage well?” - Planning Association Representative*

Planning can be the arena to navigate these difficult multisectoral (environmental, social, economic) trade-offs. We caution against reducing it to a

<sup>24</sup> TCPA, 2024. Planning Reform: in defence of democratic planning blog. 11 December. <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-reform-in-defence-of-democratic-planning/>

mechanism to deliver housing and villainising community involvement as a blocker to progress. Instead, we promote empowering the industry via resourcing and education to lead the way in a just transition.<sup>25</sup> While “making Britain a clean energy superpower” is an item on Labour’s agenda, they shy away from calls for a just transition.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the majority of participants in the private, public and non-profit sectors were unfamiliar with the term. However, an elected official emphasised the danger of not incorporating fairness and public consent into climate decisions:

“When somebody says ‘what’s a just transition?’, I say it’s what we didn’t get in 1984 when Margaret Thatcher closed the coal mines: we didn’t have a just transition from digging coal out the ground to what we then wanted those villages to do.” - Elected Official

Working in partnership with the public and promoting equitable outcomes is essential to prevent social and economic fallout from climate imperatives. If properly valued and in tandem with a resourced and skilled industry, community participation in strategic planning can become the arena for enacting a just transition.

## Discussion

### Towards a culture of trust

The current approach to community participation in planning sees the Government crowding out values of democratic accountability for speed and efficiency. While some may reduce the challenges of participation to simplistic dichotomies—such as “NIMBYs vs. communities”—it is crucial to acknowledge these as “wicked problems” that demand equally nuanced “wicked solutions.” This chapter does not claim to resolve these complexities entirely but rather seeks to improve the processes and outcomes by identifying and addressing key tension points throughout the system.

Community participation plays a critical role across various aspects of planning. However, the methods for meaningful engagement remain unclear for both community groups and other stakeholders. To address this, we propose a new Skeffington review aimed at reestablishing best practices for

participation and creating a comprehensive repository of methods. This review should reposition community involvement as a cornerstone of planning, essential for building trust, increasing buy-in, and uplifting communities – all while advancing the broader growth agenda. Importantly, the review would also provide a space to assess current processes, offer a framework for institutional transition, and shape the future of participatory planning. As one participant insightfully observed:


This perspective highlights the potential for participatory planning to be visionary, laying the groundwork for a mission-driven approach to a better future. Rather than seeing participation as a barrier, it should be reframed with a focus on how the process builds communities, fosters a sense of belonging and ultimately shapes social and physical space. However, a fundamental challenge remains - building a culture of trust. As another participant remarked:

*“Mutual trust between all those involved – not just trust towards local authorities but also trust in communities and the political side of planning – is critical. The question is how to create this culture of participation and democracy.” - Planning Academic 1*

To respond to this challenge, the recommendations in this chapter are grounded in the concerns and values shared by a diverse range of stakeholders. By fostering trust and reinforcing the role of participation, planning can better reflect democratic principles, strengthen communities, and ultimately achieve shared goals.

<sup>25</sup> According to the is an equitable path– one which shares the benefits and opportunities and mitigates the adverse impacts – is a necessary condition to achieving net zero.

<sup>26</sup> Labour Party. 2024. Change, Labour Party Manifesto 2024. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf>



*"We're constantly focused on outputs in planning. Yet I'm aware it is about us as a society, as communities. It's about legitimacy. It's about democracy. It's about policy. It's not just about the output of getting more housing, and getting stuff done. There's also this – people engaged in this process – in debate. It is part of what life should be about."*

- Community Group Representative 1



# BUILDING UNDERSTANDING

Community participation in planning is a key mechanism for providing democratic legitimacy to decision-making and is a building block to achieve Labour's milestones. This requires fostering an understanding of the value of community participation, providing greater clarity of its principals and the ways in which people can participate. To build this understanding, the Government could consider:

## **1.1 Refraining from scapegoating community participation in planning.**

Instead, prioritise community participation as an integral mechanism to achieve Labour's milestones. This provides a dual opportunity to build political buy-in and community empowerment.

## **1.2 Providing a comprehensive review of the ways in which people can participate in planning.**

Building on the Skeffington report, a new review could (re)establish a framework suitable for the 21st century and develop best practices through the creation of a central repository of case studies, tools, and methodologies. Collaborating with community groups, practitioners, and civil servants, this review can provide enforcement mechanisms and address key challenges to create a shared vision of community participation.

## **1.3 Embedding a blended approach of democratic participation** into planning governance to prevent backlash from overly top-down approaches; enhancing outcomes by leveraging the strengths of both direct democracy (e.g. community assemblies, participatory budgeting) and representative democracy (e.g. elected officials and advisory bodies).

## **1.4 Providing greater clarity to participants about their roles and the scope of their influence**

in the planning process when engaging with different democratic models. This would foster a less adversarial and more collaborative environment by aligning the appropriate mechanism to the decision-making context, reducing misunderstandings and potential conflicts.

## **1.5 Increasing transparency about the negotiable and non-negotiable aspects of community participation within national policy.**

Standardising participatory processes and greater openness about "what's on the table" can provide more certainty to communities and local councils about what they can impact. This in turn could reduce tensions within the system and foster more meaningful and productive participation.





# 2

## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH RESOURCING

Local councils and communities are stifled due to being under-resourced in capacity, skills and funding. The Government plays an important role in facilitating investment in local areas to enact meaningful collaboration, trust and empowerment. They can encourage this through:

**2.1 Equipping local authorities with the funding, tools, and capacity to adopt innovative, entrepreneurial approaches to community participation and decision-making.** This promotes public entrepreneurialism and allows local authorities to take risks resulting in collective value creation and shaping (see Chapter 3 on more holistic value creation).

**2.2 Devolving fiscal powers is an important step to rebuild trust between local authorities and communities.** Local councils with more long-term power in financial decision-making have a greater capacity to address local priorities and provide tangible outcomes in the public's interest.

**2.3 Offering communities clear, upfront guarantees to demonstrate tangible benefits of proposed developments,** such as GPs, schools and other social infrastructure funded through Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (see Chapter 3 for more details). These guarantees can build trust and make communities more open to change and development, reducing resistance and fostering collaboration.

**2.4 Providing greater education to planning committees and increasing their involvement before planning committees** to promote more informed decision-making, stronger collaboration, and greater democratic accountability.

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# 3

## STRATEGICALLY LED STRATEGIC PLANS

By relegating strategic planning to a mechanism narrowly focused on regional housing delivery, the Government limits its capacity to fulfil its visionary and collective potential. Coupled with community assemblies and accountability mechanisms, informed strategic planning can provide a space for meaningful community participation and strengthen plan-making. To realise this potential, the Government could consider:

**3.1 Expanding the scope of strategic planning to the national level and incorporating a multisectoral long-term approach to guide regional and local plans.** This will serve as a platform for collective vision-setting, embedding national democratic principles, and providing the institutional capacity to collectively address the challenges of a just transition. By aligning efforts across sectors and scales, this framework would ensure coherence, resilience, and inclusivity in tackling future societal and environmental challenges.

**3.2 Utilising national-level public assemblies as a critical mechanism to build consensus around complex trade-offs and governance choices.** This would provide a foundation for diverse perspectives to be heard, and an opportunity to educate the public on policy impacts and decision-making processes - fostering informed and engaged citizenship.

**3.3 Ensuring regional strategic plans, such as the London Plan, are strategically led with community input;** mandating community participation in setting objectives and defining accountability mechanisms during key stages, such as sustainable appraisal scoping; establishing consistent standards for community engagement across all regional strategic plans, fostering transparency and trust in the process.

**3.4 Encouraging an iterative approach to strategic planning to investigate complex problems and provide innovative solutions.** Create a positive feedback loop based on lessons learned and provide space for an open conversation on the pros and cons of different options instead of evidence-based critique as part of sustainability assessment for strategic plans. This would reduce risk for planning professionals and generates a less defensive environment for engagement.

**3.5 Instituting evaluatory public bodies to strengthen accountability in key growth areas such as opportunity areas.** Independent, representative community bodies tasked with holding policy and decision-making processes accountable could improve equitable outcomes for growth plans.

**3.6 Establishing local community assemblies as statutory bodies in the Devolution Bill,** which could support the democratic development of local plans by involving residents in structured, timely, and accessible discussions. Functioning as a continuous and stable body, they could provide ongoing support and oversight throughout the planning process, which would help maintain momentum and avoid disruptions as well as streamline the formulation of local plans.

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# 3

## Land as a Resource: How to Best Unlock its Value

Labour's planning agenda has recentred land as a key lever for kickstarting the economy. In this chapter, we propose a nuanced approach to understanding land as a resource: exploring how landowners value their land, their attitudes towards land value distribution, and how we might best facilitate their participation in value creation and sharing.

# Land as a Resource

By Meg Hennessy

While the role of land was deemphasized as a factor of production in the early 20th century, Labour's planning agenda recentres it as a key lever to kickstart the economy. It raises questions about how we get the best value from land with significant plans to reshape the land market. Indeed, between the grey belt/green belt debate, establishing a New Towns Taskforce, plans to use development to fund strategic nature recovery, and Labour's commitment to establishing a land-use framework, there is a lot to unpack. In particular, growing attention has been paid to land value uplift, capture and sharing as a key mechanism for financing long-term infrastructure investment.<sup>1</sup>

Successive land value capture mechanisms have been introduced since the nationalisation of development rights under the Planning Act 1947. However, three attempts by Labour to capture land value uplift through taxation on development in the 40s, 60s and 80s failed due to the resistance of landowners. In fact, the OECD cites landowner opposition as one of the major obstacles to successful land value capture on a global scale.<sup>2</sup> Since the 1990s, land value capture mechanisms have therefore shifted towards a system based on developer contributions (in the form of Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy).

Currently, we appear to be at another critical juncture following the introduction of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, granting local authorities the power to disapply hope value in the name of public interest when preparing Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs). However, CPO will most

likely remain the exception rather than the rule. Therefore, negotiated developer charges are the main mechanisms through which value uplift from development is captured in the UK today.

When looking at land value capture, it is essential to consider a more holistic picture of the value that land provides as a resource and the multiple notions of value that can be unlocked across the development process. Land is at the heart of a just transition, ensuring that no one is left behind as we move towards a more sustainable future. Indeed, the increasing competing demands for housing, infrastructure, biodiversity, climate change resilience, clean energy, food security, access and well-being, as well as financing, oblige us to reconsider how we manage land as a precious but finite resource.

By 2050, up to 4.4 million hectares (or 18% the total UK land area) of additional land could be needed to meet the diverse competing demands of the UK, raising fundamental questions about distributive justice (or how to fairly govern the wealth and resources of our planet).<sup>3</sup> Balancing these trade-offs is key to unlocking economic, natural and social capital in England. In rethinking land markets, the Government should therefore imagine how key players can co-create value that extends beyond its monetary appreciation.

In recent years there has been growing interest in the institution of land ownership, its embeddedness and its broader consequences for English society. How land is owned and managed has profound economic and societal impacts. Landowners play a pivotal role in shaping land use debates: determining which values are prioritised, who has a seat at the table, and how the benefits of land value uplift are shared. Understanding landowner rationales is, therefore, integral to shaping market behaviour and to encouraging the pursuit of more progressive notions of land "value", particularly in the context of a discretionary planning system.

**Working within the current legal and political frameworks, we propose a nuanced approach to**

<sup>1</sup> Land value capture is a term used to describe a set of policy instruments that use the increase in land value generated by public investments or administrative action (e.g. planning permission) to fund infrastructure or public services.

<sup>2</sup> OECD. 2022. [Global Compendium of Land Value Capture Policies](#). Paris: OECD. p. 11

<sup>3</sup> If current agriculture remains at the same level. See [Royal Society's \(2023\) report on multifunctional landscapes](#)

understanding land as a resource, exploring how landowners value their land, their attitudes towards value distribution, and how we might best facilitate their participation in value creation and sharing. We outline a number of recommendations grounded in the key concerns and values expressed by landowners throughout our research.

### Box 1: Land Tax

While the potential to capture value from new development through development taxes or negotiated contributions is limited, these mechanisms are more broadly accepted by study participants from the private sector, who demonstrated a conservative attitude towards further land value taxation. They maintained that Capital Gains Tax and Stamp Duty at the point of sale were sufficient methods for taxing value uplift.

However, while Labour's manifesto did not mention a land tax, the notion of a more "radical", revalued and reformed land tax has gained traction in recent years. A periodic tax on land rather than on development could enable significant value capture. As this report works within the parameters of the current system, the possibilities of such a tax will not be covered in this chapter.

## Methodology

### Determining the sample

In 2022, the "Land Use in England" Committee insisted that the Government consult with those who would be directly affected by a future land use framework.<sup>4</sup> Landowners are key stakeholders in this regard. They come in different shapes and sizes with distinct and varied interests, motivations, and values. Our sample included landowners from the public, private, and third sectors to demonstrate the multiplicity of values held across and within each sector.<sup>5</sup> Their landholdings ranged from "less than 50 acres" to "more than 10,000 acres".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> House of Lords Land Use in England Committee. 2022. [Making the most out of England's land](#). HL Paper 105.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>6</sup> Obtained via online survey to participants by project team

### Data collection

Alongside desktop research, we gathered data from 18 landowners and landowning organisations through our roundtable event, Land as a Resource: How to Best Unlock its "Value". The open conversation amongst a diverse range of landowners aimed to determine how we best facilitate landowners' participation in value creation. The three sessions centred around:

- The key tensions and diverse pressures associated with land as a resource
- The strengths and weakness of current land-value capture mechanisms in the UK
- The potential for alternative land management futures

We disseminated a follow-up survey to all participants to better determine how landowners perceive their land as a resource.<sup>7</sup> We also conducted eight in-depth interviews with various landowners including the Church, developers, local authorities, and private landowners.

Our data collection centred primarily on the built environment as this is where development value is created and captured. However, while we focus on the development process, it is by no means the most valuable mechanism for producing and redistributing value. Instead, it should be seen as complementary to initiatives such as sustainable farming, nature recovery, the provision of green energy infrastructure or the stimulation of natural capital markets.


<sup>7</sup> The project team received 14 responses



LSE Landowners' Roundable: 5 September 2024

Credit: Olexiy Pedosenko



A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy field with a utility pole and power lines. The middle ground shows rolling hills with a mix of green and brown fields, and a line of trees in the distance. The sky is clear and blue. A semi-transparent brown box is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing text.

*"Landowners are extremely fickle. I've sat in many farmhouses trying to negotiate land deals. All they want is more than their mate \*audible laughter from fellow participants\*. They don't care about anything else... Anything you look at doing...they will wait for the next version. So we've got to be really careful about where we sail to the edge of the wind..."*

- Housing Association Representative 2

## Analysis

### Defining land value Landowners' relationship to their land

The values espoused by landowners and the value that land holds for them are intimately linked to their relationship with land.<sup>8</sup> Their sense of purpose as landowners determines the role that land plays for them – or its primary utility – and is key to understanding the trade-offs they are willing to make or actions they are likely to take. As one landowner (PL3) exclaimed, the value or utility – the total satisfaction or benefit derived from their land – is the “glue” that holds their landowning enterprise together and is key to unlocking their “entrepreneurialism”.

Land has increasingly become an important asset class. Therefore, exchange value or the price at which land is sold, bought or traded on the market is of importance to the majority of landowners. For some, land is principally a source of economic return, whether outright owning the land or securing a legal interest on a speculative basis. However, the commodification of land through valuation as a good to be bought and sold often obscures the values and evaluations that lie beneath its headline price.

Land's value extends far beyond its potential as an investment asset. Its symbolic, social, cultural, and environmental value, though less tangible, is equally important in land-use decisions. To holistically evaluate land value capture, we must be clear about what value is created or can be created. Here it is important to distinguish between traditional transaction-based property valuation and the economic valuation of land and land-use decisions, which embraces a wider range of values in its calculations.<sup>9</sup> Although land's value is intimately linked to its social and environmental assets, its overall value is excluded from its market price.

Indeed, participants expressed multiple notions of value when asked how they view their land:

**Use value:** land's use value is tied to its intended purpose, as a site of production, for example. Land is a vital space where business activities take place. It may be the “raw material that feeds [their] business” (HB1). For a private landowner, it may also be a site for private shelter or leisure activities.

**Symbolic value:** land's sentimental or symbolic value should not be underestimated. It is sometimes a family's only asset or an important piece of heritage linking one generation to the next. Land ownership is also a symbol of power that can be employed for diverse reasons. For example, community ownership of land challenges traditional social and economic structures.

**Social value:** land can play a social role as a site to “provide and maintain homes, communities and amenities” (HA1) providing a means through which to “help the most vulnerable in society” (PL2) or to “deliver educational and recreational opportunities for people living locally and beyond” (UF).

**Environmental value:** land's environmental value is linked not only to its natural beauty, but its functional attributes in terms of biodiversity or resilience. Land is therefore valued for the natural resources it provides and as a site for green energy production, for instance.

### Towards a greater understanding of land's multidimensional value

In general, our findings reveal a multifaceted relationship to land across and within the public, private and third sectors. The multifunctionality of land adds nuance to the land value creation and capture debate that transcends the notion of exchange value (as much as these factors can contribute to its price). While the social value of land was highlighted by many participants, there was less mention of the environmental value that it holds.

Yet, the 2023 State of Nature Report revealed England to be one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.<sup>10</sup> In this context, natural capital has recently been safeguarded by the Government through the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain in early 2024, requiring new developments to achieve 10% net gain in biodiversity. Nevertheless, the social value of land to provide housing was at the top of the agenda for many stakeholders in the room.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in the current crisis, there is a clear financial opportunity cost for landowners who forego or are unable to develop land for housing (see Chapter 4 on Housing Delivery).

<sup>10</sup> Burns, F. 2023. [State of Nature 2023](#). London: The State of Nature Partnership

<sup>11</sup> The Government seems to have recognised this in their preliminary plans to discharge developers of certain environmental obligations - proposing the delivery of state-led strategic interventions for nature recovery in the forthcoming [Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#).

<sup>8</sup> Massey, D., Catalano, A. 1978. *Capital and Land: Landownership by Capital in Great Britain*. Edward Arnold. London.

<sup>9</sup> See RICS (2017) [report on natural capital](#) for an outline of the different bases of value

The benefits associated with social and environmental value, such as health and happiness, or climate resilience, are difficult to evaluate in monetary terms (CLT1). Indeed, study participants were not in agreement on whether or how to approach this process. However, given the importance of economic rhetoric in policy spheres, putting a “price” on such benefits through monetary valuation methods can help to guide decision-makers towards more socially and environmentally oriented policies and projects.

Significant progress has been made in refining techniques for economic valuation of these externalities. For example, a diverse range of conceptual frameworks have been created to measure both the baseline value of natural resources and the value of change to those resources through potential policy actions. Indeed, the Treasury and DEFRA provide a range of environmental valuation tools.<sup>12</sup> However, there are a number of challenges inherent to this complex process: these include the risk of double counting overlapping values, the need for granular scientific data, the reliance on perceived worth of non-market goods, the inability to capture land’s intrinsic value, and the prediction of future impacts and risks, such as climate uncertainty.

Moreover, our capacity to capture and understand the multidimensional value of land is all the more difficult as there is no single mechanism for comparing different value concepts. Indeed, multiple and competing uses are often found on the same plot of land. Participants noted that despite existing frameworks, decisions between food security and biodiversity, affordable housing or social infrastructure cannot be collapsed into an elegant optimisation exercise. Given the limited supply of land, government is under pressure to fulfil the diverse needs of society that extend far beyond the planning system.<sup>13</sup> These decisions inevitably come down to important trade-offs and political decisions.

## How to best unlock the value of land

### *Unlocking value at different stages of the development cycle*

Land value is determined by its inherent qualities (and our perceptions of them) as well as improvements made to it or the surrounding area.

<sup>12</sup> See the Treasury’s (2022) [Green Book](#) and DEFRA’s (2023) [guidance](#)

<sup>13</sup> [The Royal Society](#) found that the UK’s land risks being “overpromised” given diverse policy commitments in their report on multifunctional landscapes.

Within the built environment sector, value in its broadest sense is created, captured and distributed through land release, the provision of quality development and infrastructure, and land value capture mechanisms in both rural and urban economies (Figure 1). Along with trade-offs related to the type of value prioritised, a balanced approach must be taken between the different stages of the development cycle to maximise value creation. This is all the more pertinent given the diverse stakeholders who wish to benefit from the land as a limited resource and its potential to create value, including financial profit.

For instance, value is unlocked when local authorities and landowners make land available for development. Landowners often spend significant time and money promoting their land through the planning system, therefore expecting a certain level of return. However, the extent to which value uplift is captured by the public purse directly impacts the viability of developments and therefore the return that landowners receive when they sell their land as these costs are factored into the gross development value (GDV) of a project. Viability also has a direct effect on the capacity of landowners to deliver high-quality schemes.

Indeed, the NPPF consultation revealed that those against benchmark land values on green belt land (50% of respondents) feared it would disincentivise landowners from bringing their sites forward, especially if set too low.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the Government will consider the treatment of benchmark land values when reviewing viability planning practice guidance in 2025. However, distinct trade-offs must be made to ensure maximum benefit.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. 2024. [Government response](#) to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation.

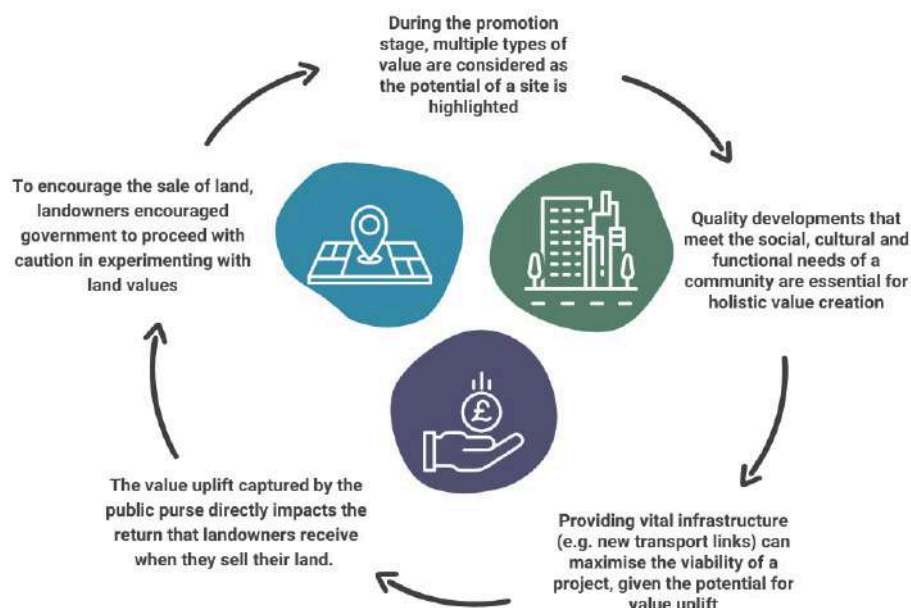


Figure 1: Trade-offs between the different stages in value creation and sharing (Author’s own)

The following section explores landowners’ attitudes towards value distribution – how the benefits of a project are shared amongst stakeholders. It also outlines the factors impeding their participation in processes of land value creation, capture and sharing.<sup>15</sup>

### Attitudes towards land value sharing

While landowners are key players in the development process, the parameters for action are set within planning legislation, policy and guidance designed and delivered through government intervention. Most notably, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines a set of principles to guide local plan-making and decision-taking, ultimately shaping development outcomes: “Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions... encourag[ing] multiple benefits from both urban and rural land.”<sup>16</sup>

Landowners across sectors are therefore expected to deliver a set of public goods through their development schemes in line with the societal values set out by central Government. Study participants

were in agreement that all landowners have a role to play in this regard. However, their attitudes towards value distribution vary according to their landowning rationales.

Those that lean towards more “social” rationales for owning land tend to see themselves as “custodians” or “stewards” of the land they own, which constitutes “an opportunity to look after a corner of the world.” (PL1) They play a more active role in promoting progressive notions of value.<sup>17</sup> They also tend to see themselves as somehow separate to the regular market - providing social goods that cannot be delivered through normal market mechanisms.<sup>18</sup> Community Land Trusts, for example, aim to decommo[dify] housing “in perpetuity with their value decoupled from market value.” (CLT1)

This “social” rationale revolves around questions of distributive justice and who owns an interest in land. One participant (HA1) proposed a move away from the question of “your land” towards the more inclusive notion of “our land”. Indeed, several landowners were quick to encourage a move away from maximising shareholder value to include a wider range of stakeholders in land use decisions – including community members who have an interest

<sup>15</sup> It is important to bear in mind the spillover effects of policy decisions made outside the remit of the planning system on land use and development e.g., the impact of increased employers’ national insurance contributions on supply chains.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. 2024. [National Planning Policy Framework](#). London. Available from:

<sup>17</sup> See [Canelas and Noring \(2022\)](#) for details on more progressive notions of value when approaching land value capture.

<sup>18</sup> [Zetterlund, H. 2022](#). *The Landed Municipality: The Underlying Rationales for Swedish Public Landownership and their Implications for Policy*. PhD. Uppsala University. Available from:

in their lived-environment (see Chapter 1 for the value of community participation).

Legacy developments, founded upon the continued vested interests of a landowner throughout the development cycle, offer a solution to deliver multiple sets of value. Several participants cited patient capital and the intergenerational approach of a landowner who recognises and engages with the needs of the local community as key elements for

### Box 2: Land value “sharing”

“Land value sharing” or the concept of sharing land-value gains has been used by international organisations such as UN-Habitat or the World Bank to describe the process of equitable land value capture and redistribution. In the UK, the term has also been adopted by institutions such as the TCPA and the URBED Trust to advocate for a more progressive, “fairer” funding system for urban developments. Recently, the term was explicitly used by the Irish Government in its Land (Zoning Value Sharing) Bill 2024.

While the term “sharing” aligns with progressive ideals of reducing inequality and ensuring public benefits, it carries a collaborative connotation and frames land value capture as a “mutual benefit mechanism”, unlike terms such as “taxation” or “redistribution”. This can depoliticise the land value capture debate and obscure underlying power dynamics or contestation involved in these processes. While using this term, it is therefore important to remember the inherent conflict of value distribution. As one landowner (PL3) described: “everybody’s got their straw in this jug of fizzy pop, sucking away like crazy”.

value creation. One landowner (PL3) commented that this “entrepreneurialism” should be encouraged by the Government as a key lever for unlocking the factors of production (land, labour and capital).

Several more “socially driven” landowners were skeptical towards the marketing of social, symbolic or environmental value to boost profit margins, highlighting the predominance of investment rationales circulating in the planning system. However, many landowners with profit motives expressed that they also take a diverse range of values or value-added into account when carrying out

activities on their land, particularly when it contributes to better business outcomes. One housebuilder (HB1) explained that looking at “everything else holistically” contributes to “gross development value”

*“...say the environment was a resource on that site...how do we uplift it? Yes, we have to as part of legislation, but we want to try and go a little bit beyond that” - Housebuilder 1.*

Therefore, this set of landowners are often motivated to take action that embraces wider notions of value when they can see a business case for doing so. One housebuilder clarified that while financial value is the first value that should be generated, it is what makes more progressive forms of value possible (HB2).

Nevertheless, fundamental political conflicts exist within the development space. On the notion of viability and developer profits, one local authority representative commented that while the public and private sector understand each other on a technical level when negotiating financial values, in reality:

*“it is a political conflict between how we are going to govern the wealth of this planet... it’s 10 [affordable] units or a yacht” - Local Authority Representative 1*

Therefore, not all landowners will want to take part in a “value sharing” mission. However, for those that do, their diverse rationales and relationships to land influence how they interact with the planning system and how they perceive opportunities and obstacles for creating value. While all participants claimed to have a long-term interest in their land, there seems to be varying degrees of investment, which directly affect land-use decisions.

Moreover, the benefits of value creation are often secured by different actors at different stages along the development cycle. If the Government wishes to take its place as market maker or shaper - creating an environment that facilitates holistic value creation in line with its goals - it must bear these trade-offs and staggered gains in mind, along with the factors that currently impede landowners’ participation in this process.

### Factors that impede value creation and sharing

When it comes to value creation, landowners evidently experience obstacles specific to their land and their respective material conditions. However, through our research a number of themes emerged

with regard to the main factors impeding value creation, capture and sharing. First, the complex, costly and time-consuming nature of current planning processes was criticised as “the real issue” (HB1) by both the private and third sectors.

*“So for us, it's the planning system. Without a doubt, that is the main barrier and obstacle for us, purely in just how long it takes, how complex it is, and how uncertain the outcome” - Housebuilder 1*

From site promotion or designation to the approval of planning permission and the processing of developer obligations, landowners expressed their frustration with a system that they consider hinders rather than helps development outcomes. Participants cited delays in local plan-making as a major brake. Indeed, without government intervention, 78% of local plans will be out of date by the end of 2025.<sup>19</sup> This increases risk for landowners regarding site designation and subsequent investment planning. It is also a missed opportunity for local authorities to clearly demonstrate their diverse development needs.

The planning application process is also a “painful” journey for landowners (DR). Many therefore put forward “bare minimum” developments or nothing at all. A local authority representative (LA2) insisted that the system must not dissuade landowners from investing in legacy developments. While the cost of uncertainty varies for different landowners, it is a major risk that can dishearten those who want to pursue more progressive notions of value through development or even lead to the “collapse” (HB1) of a firm.

*“Once you've lost the value of the things that really meant something to you and touched your soul, as it were, then it just becomes a commodity.” - Private Landowner 3*

*“The trustees ...don't have the heart or capacity a lot of the time to do anything other than just stick it on the market and let somebody sell it for them” - Church Representative*

Likewise, despite the more proactive developer role that certain local authorities have played in recent years, many public landowners have behaved similarly to their private sector counterparts due to their changing material conditions, selling off their land assets to secure much needed revenue –

“getting the capital receipt straight on” (LA3).<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, a number of landowners fear the public sector’s over reliance on the private sector to deliver public goods. For instance, the deliverability of affordable housing targets through Section 106 was questioned, especially in geographies where values captured are typically lower. Delays associated with the provision of public services such as GP surgeries and new schools were also largely attributed to inefficiencies within local government rather than the unwillingness of developers to pay the “CIL bill”. As one housebuilder stated:

*“You know, the Section 106 on that scheme was all of £400,000 (pounds Sterling). That wasn't the thing that was worrying the developer. It was giving this CIL bill to the council and it not being used to benefit the development or to benefit the community”. - Housebuilder 2*

Indeed, private sector landowners were particularly vocal about public sector actors pulling their weight. There is a perception that the public sector is not creating value in a way that it expects others to do. The lack of transparency regarding the processing of developer contributions adds to the antagonism between public and private actors. One participant suggested getting rid of the planning system altogether (HA2), while another questioned whether planning reforms were going far enough (3SD).

However, many participants criticising the planning system acknowledged that funding and resources are severely lacking in the public sector. For example, one housebuilder, highly critical of the planning system, underlined that delays were not a question of incompetency but rather a lack of staff for planning authorities. Similarly, a local authority representative (LA1) insisted that social value could not be maximised by them without the necessary funding. Many local authorities are not in a position to implement ambitious development projects or programmes without further financial support from the Government. Another representative (LA3) commented that funding and capacity were vital to creating a delivery model that builds at scale, without relying on the private sector.

In fact, funding and access to affordable finance are key obstacles for many participants given the current inflationary environment, the shortage of raw

<sup>19</sup> Lichfields 2023. Timed Out? A projection of future local plan coverage in 2025 under prevailing policy conditions report.

<sup>20</sup> Public landowners include a wide range of public actors, many of whom are not directly involved in the planning system and may have other priorities for delivering social good

materials and limited land supply. In general, funding bodies remain “extremely skeptical” of the risk that comes with an unpredictable planning system (DR). Conservative lending practices are particularly challenging for smaller landowners, who are perceived as higher-risk borrowers. The current system is not set up to support more experimental development models such as the Community Land Trust.

Lastly, the antagonistic or politicised nature of the planning system is a major obstacle impeding development. For some landowners, vocal local minorities (NIMBYs) and planning committees were identified as the biggest threat to development preventing planning permission:

*“If the planners could start planning rather than stopping people trying to get planning done you’d free up everything” - Private Landowner 1*

The above comment demonstrates the level of distrust prevalent amongst many landowners in our sample. Another private landowner felt as though he was treated as more of a “nuisance” or “pariah” than a partner (PL3), despite being named as such by government officials. He considered that the word partner had been “recalibrated” or “debased”. For him, a partner is defined as follows:

*“...somebody who shares the risks and the rewards and who has no secret agenda or undisclosed purpose in dealing with it and is attuned to a set of common goals...” - Private Landowner 3*

Meanwhile, a Community Land Trust (CLT3) representative criticised the extractive power relationship between “bad actors” and community members within the development industry that creates value for all but a few:

*“I think the partnership model ... it is deeply relational and it’s not transactional...it’s about value creation around relationships, not extracting value that is based the requirements as an asset owner” - Community Land Trust 3*

The quality of relationships and the level of trust between actors is therefore fundamental to effective value creation – increasing the overall sense of ownership, legitimacy and deliverability of development processes. A local authority representative remarked that this is:

*“...about sharing that burden wider across everyone who benefits” - Local Authority Representative 4.*

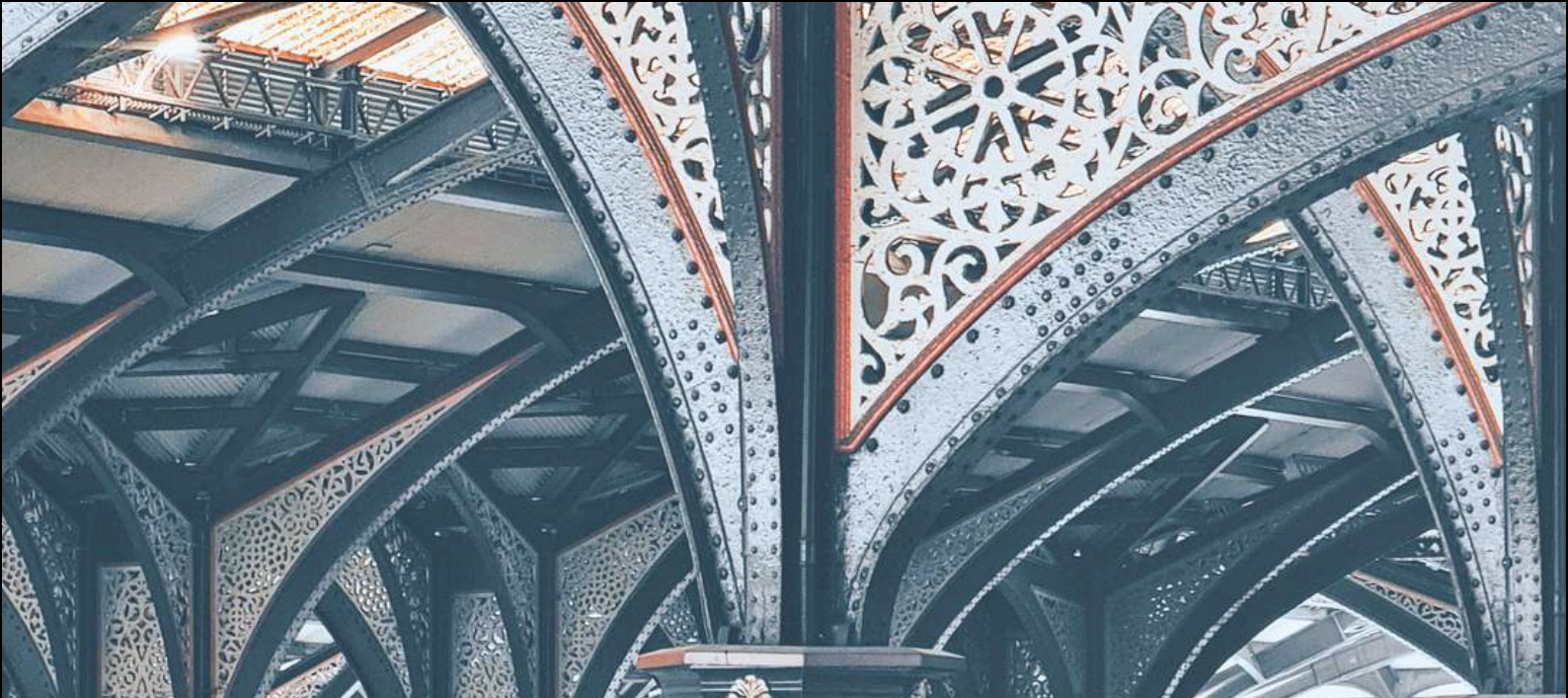
## Discussion

While there is clear ambition from Government to deliver their sustainable objectives through the effective use of land as a vital resource, there are several gaps between these aspirations, and the practical policy mechanisms and financial structures in place to achieve them. On top of this, the long-held and protected institution of landownership is often resistant to change despite the general acknowledgement that reform is necessary to meet society’s diverse needs. Therefore, a conscious and deliberate reshaping of the land market must be initiated in collaboration with landowners across all sectors. Creating an environment that facilitates growth through their participation in value sharing is key to unlocking economic, natural, social capital across the UK.

Given the complex tapestry of landowners and the diversity of their needs and objectives, it is important to take a multipronged approach to reform. This should be guided by careful consultation with key players to instil confidence and promote engagement with a new culture of value creation. We propose a Values-Based Approach to policymaking that recognises the value of land for different landowners and enables them to maximise this value in a progressive manner. This is key to ensuring a just transition that fosters community wealth building across Greater London and the Wider South East.

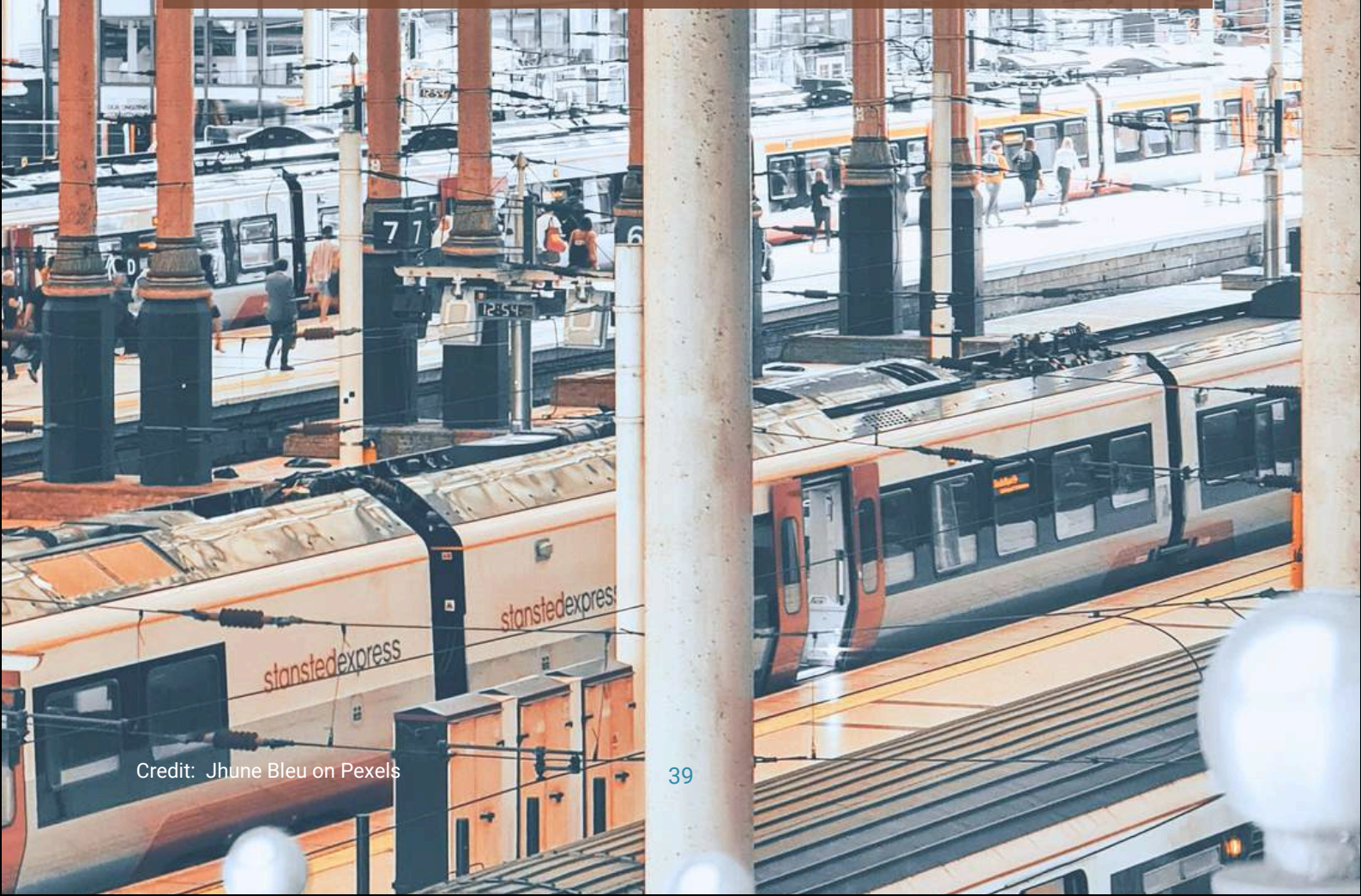
It is also crucial to recognise that value creation is more than a means to an end: more progressive or intangible notions of value - such as risk reduction, capacity-building, and partnership creation and consolidation - can be unlocked within processes themselves. These should not be a by-product, but rather consciously cultivated through a new land-use culture that embraces the collective ownership of the risks and rewards at play. Indeed, effective value creation cannot take place until a broad consensus has been reached on the values that should be fostered through these processes

The Government must adopt a proactive approach to holistic value creation, and in turn, encourage others to do the same. With this in mind, we grounded the following recommendations in the key concerns and values expressed by landowners throughout our research.

The top half of the page features a close-up, low-angle shot of the intricate steel arches of a train station. The arches are dark grey with ornate, white-painted decorative patterns. The lighting is dramatic, with bright spots from overhead lights creating a sense of depth and texture.

*"A lot of the value is lost in the fight: It's a lot of the risk, it's a lot of the value. If we can move to the model where we are assuming that something's going to go ahead, we can look at sharing values and creating shared values [as well as] a sense of place. And then people and landowners can invest the energy and the money into creating something more positive".*

- Private Landowner 1





# 1 FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is a need to create a safe space for innovation by increasing certainty for decision-makers, landowners and their investment partners. Moreover, designing clear delivery pathways is key to fostering ambition and increasing both public and private investment. The Government can play an important role in fostering entrepreneurship by:

**1.1 Integrating open-source data on land** provided by the Government and its diverse agencies (e.g. MAGIC, planning and infrastructure data) into one hub, available and accessible to landowners and the wider public. This would paint a more holistic picture of land-use needs and potentialities.

**1.2 Creating an active and cross-cutting Land Use Framework** that extends beyond agricultural land to include urban and peri-urban areas is essential for balancing the multifaceted value of land as a resource across siloes and jurisdictional boundaries. It could constitute the basis for a national-level strategic spatial plan, allowing the Government to effectively reflect on the interdependencies of land as a resource across the country. The establishment of regional spatial development plans at the strategic level under the forthcoming Devolution Bill could also feed into and be informed by a national-level framework.

**1.3 Ensuring that local and regional plans are kept up to date**, while maintaining a consistent strategic long-term vision can enable landowners and their investors to plan ahead.

**1.4 Building trust in the public sector as an essential value creator and market shaper** could increase consensus around government intervention and secure further co-operation with local and national government. The Devolution White Paper provides an opportunity for strategic authorities to **de-risk development at the early stages** by preparing sites (e.g. land assembly) or providing important infrastructure (e.g. transport and heat networks) upfront. This would increase the feasibility of quality developments and long-term investment for landowners.

**1.5 Reinforcing the capacity of local authorities to process developer contributions** in a more strategic, transparent manner is crucial to the delivery of public goods. While the introduction of a Mayoral Levy under the forthcoming Devolution Bill would provide more powers for coordinated value distribution at the regional level, it will not improve the ability of councils to process Section 106 and CIL funding at a more local level. We encourage the Government to examine this when reviewing viability guidance next year.

**1.6 Incentivising landowners to deliver public goods** through tax breaks or subsidies could further facilitate legacy developments and placemaking. Those with a proven track-record of delivery could also be rewarded when it comes to securing site designation or planning permission in the future.

# 2

## EMPOWERING SMALLER LANDOWNERS

Making sustainable land use viable and attractive across various scales and financial situations is key to unlocking growth. All landowners can play a part in value creation. For some, this is made all the more possible through effective collaboration. The Government has a role in diversifying the market and encouraging healthy partnerships wherein all parties are on an equal footing in striving for common goals. To facilitate this, they could consider:

**2.1 Incentivising multisector partnerships with SMES and community-led developers** could allow them to gain a foothold in competitive markets such as London. As part of this process, **traditional hierarchies and power dynamics must be addressed** to ensure that all actors are on equal terms - even if they bring different strengths to the table.

**2.2 Encouraging landowners to pool the benefits and the risks** through joint venture developments would allow each landowner to take on risks that are within their remit and in line with their resources to deliver complimentary value sets within a single project. **Tracking and creating formal agreements** about the points at which value is released and risk is highest for different actors at various stages of development could also allow for better investment planning and co-ordination amongst stakeholders.

**2.3 Providing increased and sustainable access to finance and government guarantees for SME and community-led developers** to significantly reduce the, often, preventative entry costs for smaller players.

**2.4 Enhancing communities' Right to Buy and their capacity to do so under the Devolution Bill** would unlock new opportunities for development. The Government should ensure that the definition of "**valued community assets**" is extended to sites for which communities have a clear development vision and action plan that would enhance its social and environmental value.

**2.5 Better enabling public landowners to facilitate small-scale or community developments by establishing a clear and more holistic definition of "best considerations"**, in line with a broader duty of care to communities and climate, when disposing of their land. This could be complemented by policy guidance that encourages long leases on public land that is not in (optimal) use to maximise its value in accordance with the statutory purpose of each public authority.

# 3

## PROMOTING A CULTURE OF CHANGE

The Government has an opportunity to fundamentally transform land use culture beyond this parliament term. In pursuing its Plan for Change, it could lay the foundations for a more long-term, generational approach to land use and management by:

**3.1 Establishing a statutory duty for public sector land commissions** at the strategic authority level would clarify their mission. The work of land commissions across the UK demonstrates their potential beyond planning to foster a new land-use culture. However, this requires mutual learning from key stakeholders. Along with gathering diverse actors at the regional level, land commissions should have an official forum to engage with other commissions, driving national conversations on land as a resource. A creative, inclusive reimagining of land-use futures should be proactive and iterative, grounded in England's diverse spatial realities.

**3.2 Establishing a (new) sense of purpose for longstanding and prospective landowners** through open conversation about what "ownership" might mean in the 21st century and highlighting the benefits of responsible land-use and management for a multitude of actors. Laying out clear pathways for how the planning system can facilitate diversification and value creation for landowners could foster increased interest in such processes.

**3.3 Codifying land as an important social and natural resource** in national legislation could further embed the responsibility of landowners to deliver progressive notions of value through development. The Government could look towards Scotland (Land Reform [Scotland] Act 2016) or Brazil (Article 141, section 16, 1946 Constitution) amongst others for guidance in this regard.

**3.4 Engaging the public on the centrality of land in meeting the fundamental needs of society** and safeguarding a resilient future could expand and deepen engagement at a societal level. Including communities in strategic visioning is an important first step in this process. Co-production and community participation also play a key role in de-risking proposed developments (see Chapter 1 for further recommendations in this regard).

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# 4

## London's millennials at the epicenter of the housing crisis: values and appetite for change

The Government has recently prioritised reforms to the English planning system to increase housing supply and drive economic growth. While younger generations are primarily bearing the brunt of the current housing crisis, we compared government priorities with millennial perspectives in this chapter, identifying both alignment and divergence.

# Housing London's Millennials

By Olexiy Pedosenko

The wicked problem of housing delivery and its governance has been a constant focus for UK Government policy at least since the inception of the modern planning system in 1947. Despite decades of diverse policy interventions to increase adequate and affordable housing supply, recent research<sup>1</sup> underscores their overall failure to resolve the problems, particularly in London and the Wider South East of England. Regarding supply, although new home building across the UK has generally increased since 2010, in no year has the overall target been met. In 2023, fewer than 250,000 new homes were built across the UK, short of the 300,000-target set for England. To give a sense of the scale of the challenge, even when combining England, Scotland & Wales the figure of 300,000 new housing units per year was last exceeded in the ten-year period 1961-1970 and even then, demolitions and other losses reduced the net gain to 234,000 per year. Taking a recent ten-year period 2003-2022 for England only, the net annual gain was an improvement at 243,000 units a year (including conversions of existing buildings), but still far off the target.

In London in 2023 only 32,739 new homes were completed, a 15% drop compared to 2021.<sup>2</sup> And this, despite new annual targets set by the Government for London at 87,992 homes per year,<sup>3</sup> presumably to keep pace with the capital's growing population.

This chronic under-supply has contributed to rising house prices and affordability issues, particularly for

younger generations, who face quite different circumstances compared to their parents and older generations. Back in the 1970s and 80s, median house prices equaled around four times the average annual income, making homeownership reasonably accessible and affordable. Instead, today, the ratio of house prices to annual income has more than doubled to around 8.8 nationally, with average house prices in London equaling 14 times the average income.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, high rents hamper many people's ability to save enough money to qualify for mortgage schemes and take the first step on the housing ladder. The Government believes this is particularly true for "younger residents" who are "priced out of home ownership".<sup>5</sup> These challenges deter young skilled workers from settling in productive regions like London and the South East, negatively impacting economic growth and generating social costs: rising poverty rates and overcrowding, worsening homelessness, and a growing wealth divide - all of which erode public health and social mobility.

As a result, the Labour Government has focused on reforms to the English planning system as the main route to increasing housing supply, to make housing more affordable as well as to stimulate economic growth. As the new NPPF announcement states:<sup>6</sup>

*"Our Plan for Change will put builders not blockers first, overhaul the broken planning system and put roofs over the heads of working families and drive the growth that will put more money in people's pockets."*  
– Keir Starmer, 12 December 2024

However, whilst seeing planning as a key point for change is reasonable, there is the danger of oversimplifying the problem. The planning system in its current form is the result of many years of alterations and adjustments which have sought to address shifting priorities and to apply differing values as these have changed over time. Much of this change has been piecemeal. To give one example, green belt, a policy that constrained the supply of

<sup>4</sup> For instance, stability in 2023, median house prices in London were 14 times the median earnings, see: Paul Cheshire and Christian A.L. Hilber. Election Analysis 2024: Housing and planning, paper number CEPEA061, CEP, London School of Economics, June 2024, <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/ea061.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Rayner Angela, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, 30 July 2024. Playing your part in building the homes we need. Letter to all local authority Leaders in England. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-the-deputy-prime-minister-to-local-authorities-playing-your-part-in-building-the-homes-we-need>

<sup>6</sup> UK Government, 12 December 2024. Planning overhaul to reach 1.5 million new homes. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-overhaul-to-reach-1-5-million-new-homes>

<sup>1</sup> Competition and Markets Authority, 26 February 2024. Housebuilding market study final report. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housebuilding-market-study-final-report>

<sup>2</sup> Greater London Authority (GLA), Residential completions dashboard, Available at: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/residential-completions-dashboard>

<sup>3</sup> Haynes, Bethan, December, 12, 2024. A(nother) new Standard Method: Back in Stock, Lichfields. Available at: <https://lichfields.uk/blog/2024/december/12/a-nother-new-standard-method-back-in-stock>



land for housing, was introduced in the 1930s but was greatly expanded in the 1950s. The expansion of green belt was accompanied by the development of New Town policy which positively identified land for new housing and developed that housing. While the green belt remains, new town policy has withered on the vine.

Similarly, if we return to the housing delivery figures previously mentioned, in the 1961-70 period the public sector delivered nearly half (42%) the total in the period 2003-2022 it delivered less than a fifth (18%). The private sector now shoulders a far greater burden of housing delivery and the public sector can now provide far less housing than it once did. This change reflects a fundamental shift in values where housing is seen as a product provided primarily through the mechanism of the market rather than as a basic need that will often need to be provided socially.

It is well beyond our resource to solve the wicked problem of delivering sufficient affordable housing. Rather, we have sought to represent the experience and values of young people who are often the group most effected by the housing shortage. As those at the sharp end of the housing challenge, we test their views on a range of planning policy to test their appetite for change and how they would reevaluate the planning system in pursuit of more affordable housing.

In the sections that follow, we recognise the significant impact that the chronic shortage of

housing has had on young people. Based on the key concerns and values expressed by this important social group, as well as a range of experts and desk-based research, we make recommendations that seek to support a positive role for planning in delivering affordable housing in the places where it is needed.

## Methodology

### Determining the sample

Our research explores how to increase housing delivery from the perspective of people aged 25-45 – the so-called ‘millennials’.<sup>7</sup> Using findings from a millennial jury of urban development academics and professionals, we investigate what they want to see delivered in terms of housing, how they think this should be done, and why it matters to them.

We focus our analysis on the values of the millennials we selected as our study sample to highlight certain gaps the Government may want to address to better align planning policy and governance with the desires expressed by millennials.

There are several reasons why understanding the views and values of 25-45 generation is crucial when exploring the potential of planning, including:

**Cost of housing and its effects on productivity.** The housing crisis hampers the productivity of the region

<sup>7</sup> We are using ‘millennials’, ‘younger residents’ (a term without specific definition that the Labour Party and the Labour Government used), and ‘25-45 generation’ to refer to the age group we have focused on looking at in this chapter the report. To refer specifically to the participants of our research workshop, we are using ‘our group’, ‘our millennials’ and ‘our participants’.



LSE ‘millennial jury’ deliberation session  
12 June 2024  
Credit: Olexiy Pedosenko

and the nation,<sup>8</sup> inflating the costs overall, especially for millennials in London.<sup>9</sup>

**Shortage of supply within many types of tenure.** The housing market of a global city like London will never provide private housing for all. As one of the world's leading economic and cultural hubs, London's inability to provide an adequate tenure mix is at odds with its status and global aspirations. This shortage makes living in London less attractive for millennials because it impacts their quality of life and ability to settle in the city. The 25-45 generation, often in their most productive working years, is vital to driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth. Their absence could hinder London's competitiveness on the global stage, reducing its ability to retain and attract skilled workers and investment.

**Inter-generational inequality.** A home-owning democracy is an ambition that many people share, yet too many cannot access home ownership. As mentioned above, existing homeowners tend to be older. Additionally, many Londoners compete in a constrained housing market with international and domestic investors who treat homes as commodities, driving up prices. As a result, fewer home buyers are buying their first home: 293,000 people bought their first home in 2023, the lowest number since 2013.<sup>10</sup>

Through this research focus area, we want to understand what the 25-45 generation value when it comes to resolving these three issues. We're not suggesting that millennials necessarily come out on top, but providing a deeper understanding of their rationales could help policymakers make better choices to unlock the productivity potential of this generation in the capital region and across the country. Moreover, the values of this generation could help inform the Government on the development of a more progressive planning system and governance.

<sup>8</sup> Centre for London, 2023, Homes fit for Londoners: Solving London's housing crisis, <https://centreforlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Homes-Fit-For-Londoners-Solving-Londoners-Housing-Crisis.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Young Londoners' Access to Home Ownership, Housing Committee, London Assembly, March 2024, <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/1527%20-%20Housing%20Committee%20-%20Young%20Londoners%20Access%20to%20Home%20Ownership%20combined.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Statista Research Department, Feb 27, 2024, Number of first time buyers in the UK 2009-2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/557862/total-first-time-buyers-united-kingdom/>

## Data collection

To gauge our millennials' views on housing policy, we conducted a research workshop using a 'millennial jury' format. This event gathered participants aged 25-45 to discuss future housing policy, including the grey belt policy, and broader housing issues in London and the Wider South East. They were then asked to share their opinions on how the housing crisis should be tackled.

The workshop had three main components: a targeted sample, expert speaker sessions, and deliberation sessions:

**Sample:** We recruited 27 participants aged 25-45 through direct outreach and an open online call for academics and professionals in the urban policy, planning, architecture, and urban design sphere based in London and the Wider South East.<sup>11</sup> The goal was to include individuals who are both professionally involved in housing policy and personally affected by the housing crisis.

**Speakers Sessions:** The workshop featured three panels with ten opinion leaders in planning, policy, placemaking, academia, and architecture, followed by Q&A sessions. Panels addressed: "What should housing achieve?", "Can London deliver?", and "Should the grey belt contribute?"


**Deliberation Sessions:** After expert contributions, our participants were divided into two groups of 13 for 60 to 90 minutes. Guided by a moderator, each jury was prompted with questions echoing the panel discussions. They discussed their priorities for resolving the housing crisis and the role of grey belt land. Each jury then created a short elevator pitch outlining their vision for future housing policy.

## Analysis

### Policy context

England's housing policy is guided by several key national documents, these include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as mentioned in previous chapters, and in addition the Standard Method (for calculating housing targets), and the Housing Delivery Test (a means for holding to account planning authorities). Together, these aim to boost housing supply and improve affordability whilst promoting sustainability.

<sup>11</sup> Annex 1 contains the full anonymised list of participants, along with their occupations, gender, and age sub-group split.

An aerial photograph of London, England, showing a dense urban landscape. The Shard skyscraper is the central focus, rising prominently above the surrounding buildings. The sky is a pale, clear blue. The foreground shows a mix of modern and older architecture, with many windows visible on the buildings.

*“The purpose of the planning system should be to create sustainable homes that give everybody a good foundation for life, and create new choice of homes that are accessible to all of us physically and financially”.*

- Elevator pitch 2

The Government is currently seeking to streamline or change these three major pillars of housing delivery. This research is based on these planning policy changes, announced by the Government in public consultation and the Government's response to it,<sup>12</sup> several vital public statements from the current administration made dated June and August 2024, and a new NPPF along with several consultation papers published in December 2024. These documents serve as a baseline for comparison with the data from our workshop.

To compare the values espoused by the Government with those expressed by our millennial jury and to determine to what extent these align and where they differ, we have chosen to explore seven key topics connected to the workshop's overarching questions,

*What should housing achieve?* We explored which jobs housing should do for our millennials, what qualities it should have, where it should be, and what models of ownership they prefer, through the topics of, (1) Affordability, home ownership and the rental sector; (2) Social housing; (3) Tall buildings and density and, (4) Beauty. These topics were chosen to help us understand the values of our participants in relation to a series of existing housing policy.

*Can London deliver?* Was addressed this through the topic of (5) State intervention and regulation. This topic was chosen to understand our Millennial's views on the system itself.

*Should the grey belt contribute?* we explored this question through the topics of (6) Grey belt; and (7) Sustainability and nature. We chose these as themes closely associated with the Labour Government's reforms and because it closely relates to the previous question, can London deliver.

## (1) Affordability, home ownership and the rental sector

### Values Expressed

genuinely affordable homes; affordability across all demographics and the whole country; affordable homes for local residents; safe and secure tenancy; rent controls; de-financialisation of the housing system; housing as essential infrastructure..

The Government and our participants have rather distinct perspectives on the issues of home affordability, home ownership, and the rental sector, reflecting different priorities and values in addressing the housing crisis. While the Government emphasises home ownership and market-based solutions through supply to secure affordability, our millennials are more focused on secure, affordable renting and reducing the financialisation of housing (managing housing less as a commercial product and more as a social necessity). They advocate for a housing system that promotes stability and accessibility for all rather than predominantly promoting home ownership.

While the Government prioritises home ownership, the group we have studied tends to doubt whether they need to own a home.

*"I think in the UK there's a sense of owning your house is like ultimate stability. But this is not necessarily the case in a lot of other countries. Could we just all rent?" – urban planning consultancy, Senior Consultant.*

Instead of praising homeownership, our group wants a secure tenancy at an affordable price and to stop worrying about whether they can afford the rent. They are also concerned about whether current rent regulations create housing security for families with kids:

*"I know there's a lot of issues around private landlords not wanting to rent out homes or spaces to young families with children". – Academia, Programme Delivery Officer.*

They want the Government to implement rent control and work to de-financialise housing. Our millennials believe housing should be recognised as a basic human needs and an essential part of infrastructure.

Our group also expressed scepticism about the Government's first homes scheme, intended to

<sup>12</sup> UK Government, 12 December, 2024. Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system-consultation>

promote shared ownership. On the one hand as our millennials don't believe they will even be eligible for social housing schemes, they saw some merit in attempts such as the first homes schemes to make housing (to buy) more affordable. On the other hand, they questioned whether building more homes and, thus, increasing the supply will inevitably bring more genuine affordability. Regardless of the specific merits and pitfalls of the first homes scheme they were clear, as summarised by one participant, that it is essential to create more affordable housing options "for those people who are not being picked up is by the increased social housing" (urban policy think tank, Analyst).

## (2) Social housing

### Values expressed:

ensuring that people can stay in their local area; many people will need to decide to move to other areas; stop Right to Buy scheme – keeping social housing in perpetuity; creating mixed communities rather than social housing estates.

The Government and our millennials support the expansion of social housing, but they differ on how it should be implemented. The Government plans to create new social housing estates and protecting new social homes from right to buy. In contrast, our millennials favour a more integrated approach to social housing within mixed communities and advocate for more ambitious treatment of the right to buy – some participants supported abolishing it to preserve the social housing stock.

The millennials we studied are split on where social housing should be offered. Some want "development in the right place to enable everyone to stay where they want to be" (Elevator pitch 1) and not be rehoused elsewhere. Others think the housing crisis means that many people will need to move to where the housing is made available to them, despite the possibility that many communities will "face destruction" (planning policy think tank, Project Manager).

While our millennials argue to stop the right to buy scheme and to keep social housing in perpetuity, they fear that new housing estates, where social rent is predominant, could fail - and where some estates delivered between the 1960 & 1980s were seen as a

possible precedent.

*"What happens is they created places like New Addington and Croydon where there are very stark class divisions in these areas". – academia, Master's Student.*

*"We know that putting people from the same kind of class, let's say, it doesn't work. You have to put them into community". – local council, Senior Good Growth Engagement Officer.*

There was then, caution about returning to earlier delivery models where large estates of single tenancy housing were developed.

## (3) Tall buildings and density

### Values expressed:

gentle density; low density neighbourhoods, sustainability linked to high density development; sustainable lives via density plus public transport; vertical extensions; diversifying delivery; provide mid-density housing and support communities; high density mixed-use development.

The Government and our millennials both recognise the need for increased urban density but differ in how it should be achieved. The Government supports policies that could lead to taller buildings and increased density, focusing on sustainability and housing supply. In contrast, our millennials are more cautious, with many favouring "gentle density" that emphasises liveability and community cohesion over the potential downsides of tall buildings. The debate on this issue was particularly divisive at the workshop. Opinions were almost evenly split: several participants argued that taller buildings are necessary to meet housing supply needs and improve affordability. At the same time, a few others advocated for a "gentle density" approach, limiting building heights to six or seven stories to preserve residents' sense of well-being:

*"A lot of the stuff about limiting heights, or limiting development at all, like through prioritising other things, it would mean you'd have less supply, which would mean that affordability is, against that, much harder to achieve". – urban policy think tank, Analyst.*

*"I don't think [tall buildings] are liveable. I don't see you being in like the 20th story, where microclimate, air quality, everything is so different [...] Not really going above six, seven stories, not being attacked by the built environment when you're human". – local council*

and academia, Principal Planning Officer/PhD Researcher.

#### (4) Beauty

##### Values expressed:

aesthetics of the home; functional beauty; beautiful places; beautiful communities; beauty is subjective; the choice of beauty.

Our millennials and the Government slightly differ in their approaches to beauty in housing policy. Millennials advocate to shift it from an abstract concept to a practical, functional, and environmentally focused principle. The Government, while removing the “beauty” and “beautiful” wording from the policy, states that it “recognises the importance of beauty in the built environment as an important objective of well-designed places” and seeks to simplify and clarify the notion of beauty in housing policy.<sup>13</sup> However, our millennials prefer a more tempered perspective on beauty that aligns with broader goals such as sustainability and community well-being.

One of the workshop participants argues that beauty and its subjectiveness has a certain value: it can result in a better variety of homes to choose from.

*“Maybe that’s the goal: the choice, the choice of beauty”. – Principal Policy Planner.*

For workshop participants, beauty is not just about aesthetics but also about creating desirable places and communities. They view beauty as interconnected with sustainability, affordability, and overall well-being.

*“Maybe, if you build beautifully, it means you build sustainably, which means you build affordably, so it sort of encapsulates all those”. – Assistant Planner in engineering, design, management consultancy.*

Yet, our millennials recognise that the notion of beauty can be controversial and subjective, suggesting that it is better to treat the beauty as function, rather than aesthetic:

*“I think for me, beauty is sort of a subjective term, and*

<sup>13</sup> UK Government, 12 December, 2024. Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system-consultation>

*we all see beauty in different ways. For me, beauty is really in function as well. If it’s functional, it’s fine”. – real estate consultancy and agency, Senior Town Planner.*

#### (5) State intervention and regulation

##### Values expressed:

strategic leadership of central government; resourcing local authorities; empower people at local authority level; balance expertise of local authorities and the private sector; support for self-builds and cooperative schemes; less power for local councillors over housing policy and planning decisions.

Our participants agree with the Government on the need for strategic oversight in housing delivery, with the implementation and resources devolved to local governments, but they disagree on the details. Disagreements relate to how power should be distributed between central and local authorities, the role of smaller housing providers, and the influence of local politics on housing delivery.

Many workshop participants view housing delivery as a mission that should be strategically led by the Government to enforce overarching objectives. However, they believe that delivery should be delegated to empowered local authorities. This approach aligns with the Government’s recent devolution initiatives, which aim to transfer resources and responsibility for delivering homes to Mayoral Strategic Authorities while coordinating implementation with Homes England, the government agency.

More importantly, a significant share of participants wants housing delivery during a crisis to be a responsibility shared among various stakeholders. However, the specifics of how this responsibility should be divided remain a topic of debate, particularly among millennials. Many believe it should be assigned to local councils, with all necessary resources provided. Some advocate for the development corporation model to streamline complex, high-volume projects, while others argue that housing delivery on the green belt should be an exception and managed by separate government agencies.

Certain participants also called for policies that

encourage further decentralisation and provide more agency to self-build projects and cooperatives:

*“Self-building is going to get really difficult now, unless there's some sort of government intervention to enable it”. – architecture company, Director Architect.*

*“Can we support groups to deliver housing for themselves? Can there be a role for local authorities or the Government or the GLA to support groups to take on some of that work for themselves?” – urban planning consultancy, Senior Consultant.*

Several workshop participants questioned the role of planning committees and councillors in making decisions about housing developments, echoing the Government's views on potential changes to the national scheme of delegation. For millennials, the housing delivery process should be less politicized: they advocate for reducing the powers of local councillors and planning committees, as these bodies sometimes block housing developments that align with the objectives set in local plans.

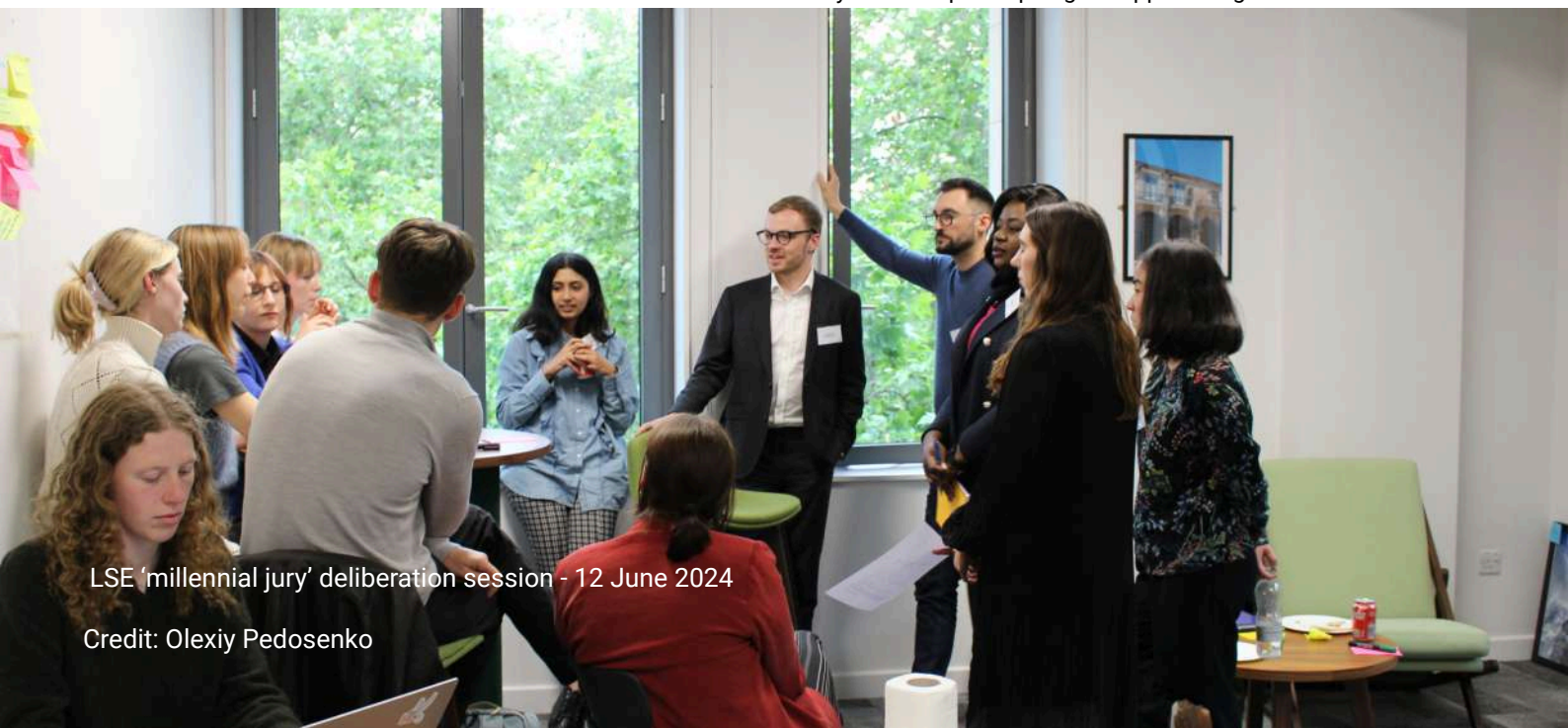
*“Why do they have further say in the developments? A site is delivering what's coming forward in the local plan, and that's been approved and agreed with the local authority planners”. – architecture company, Associate Architect.*

Workshop participants were split when discussing whether GLA or London councils are the best places to deliver housing. Some millennials argue that those are primarily councils which should be responsible for driving housing development. Still, the resourcing of local planning authorities should be significantly increased in many ways: grants, relaxations on blending it with other types of funding and building better professional expertise within councils' teams.

*“There should be more funding for local authorities and statutory consultees to enable them to deal with large scale and small-scale applications within sensible times in order to bring those forward”. – Elevator pitch 1.*

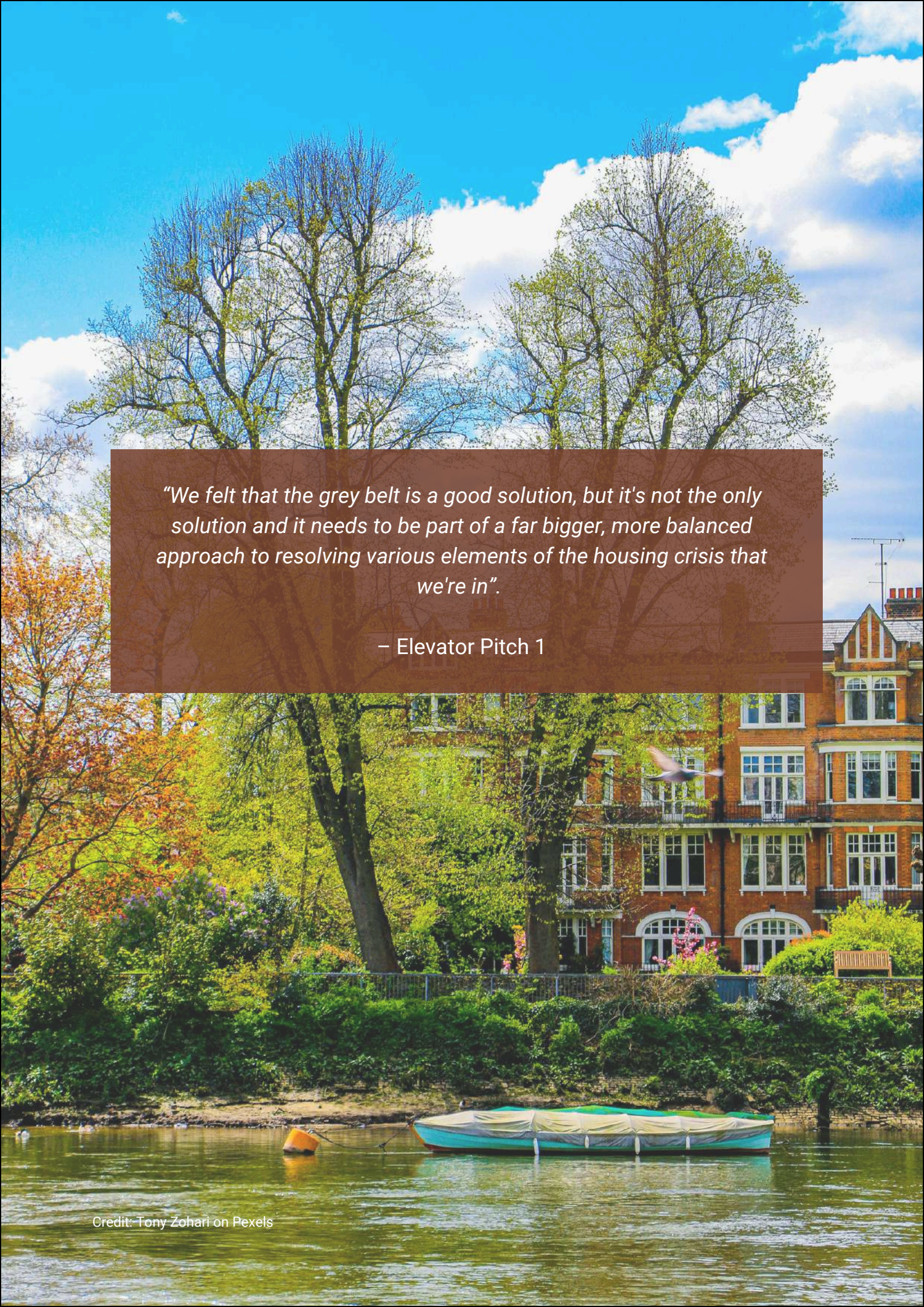
On the other hand, some millennials don't believe that London boroughs will be able to deliver significantly increased housing numbers on their own. They want to see more development areas, development corporations, different kinds of joint ventures and public-private partnerships introduced in the capital region. Within this scenario, more power and resources should be given to the GLA. Otherwise, significant housing projects risk being stranded if the councils lead delivery. However, what remains an open question within workshop discussions is how councils' and GLA's remit should be adjusted and what role the Mayor might play. For instance, making land available for housing delivery remains the council's responsibility, including the Green Belt review. That might create tensions between the GLA and the Mayor on one side (for instance the current Mayor was sceptical about Green Belt release earlier,<sup>14</sup> but recently has dropped his pledge, and the local planning authorities on the other.

<sup>14</sup> Mayor of London, June 16, 2016. *Mayor defended his manifesto pledge of protecting London's Green Belt.* Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-khan-pledges-support-for-green-belt>



LSE 'millennial jury' deliberation session - 12 June 2024

Credit: Olexiy Pedosenko

A scenic view of a river with a boat and a large brick building in the background. The sky is blue with white clouds, and there are trees with green and yellow leaves. A white bird is flying in the air. The boat is covered with a white and green tarp. The building is a large, multi-story brick structure with many windows. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding greenery.

*"We felt that the grey belt is a good solution, but it's not the only solution and it needs to be part of a far bigger, more balanced approach to resolving various elements of the housing crisis that we're in".*

– Elevator Pitch 1



## (6) Grey belt

### Values expressed:

Grey belt: opens up opportunities to deliver sustainable communities; relieves pressure and competition; has value as a space to provide different types of housing; is an extra tool for housing delivery, which activates housing delivery processes, but not a complete solution; has value but unlocks further potential in the future; may have negative environmental impact; may cause loss of employment space; has some value, however only if it's done in a truly affordable, sustainable way; is only one part of the solution; brings potential displacement of existing issues within housing delivery; requires more a solid framework and targets.

The Government and workshop participants share common ground on the grey belt development but diverge their emphasis and priorities. Both parties recognise the potential of grey belt land to address the housing crisis, yet they approach its development with different concerns and considerations. The Government emphasises formal mechanisms of 'golden rules' to ensure that development contributes 15% above the highest affordable housing requirement in the area – up to 50%; improvements to local or national infrastructure, and improved green spaces, easily accessible to residents within a short walk. Our millennials are arguing for an even more holistic impact of grey belt development, advocating for a balanced approach that integrates various community and economic needs.

Our participants predominantly endorse the idea of developing on grey belt land, but they encourage a nuanced approach to this policy:

*"I think we are coming to an understanding that "yes to Green Belt!", but with a very big asterisk: if certain conditions apply and if there's already infrastructure that's going to be there". – placemaking consultancy, Consultant.*

Our millennials are in line with the new policy, which leads to the Green Belt review by the most planning authorities having this type of land within their boundaries. However, for our group, this review needs to be independent and contain

recommendations about how to implement land release.

They insist that developing the grey belt should not be just about housing but should be part of a complex solution to the housing crisis. Finally, our participants argued that local economies and other Green Belt uses need to be protected, and a strategic approach on grey belt development should go beyond housing delivery.

*"I think that considers not only housing but all the uses that need to interact with one another in industries that need to survive and progress within that area". – architecture company, Director Architect.*

*"You order something from Amazon and you get it the next day and we need these sites for industrial locations". – urban planning consultancy, Senior Planner.*

Still, grey belt leaves many open questions and ambiguities for our millennials. They pointed to the fact that the true value of this land is unknown and at this moment we are only at the beginning the process of understanding it (see chapter 3 on Land as a Resource). Much is also to be done to develop a wider public understanding of what Green Belt really is.

Despite support for the grey belt, some of our millennials are sceptical about whether it is going to change anything:

*I feel personally that there's no guarantee that it's going to change anything. I mean, it was Green Belt, now it's Grey Belt, maybe it'll be a Blue Belt". – planning policy think tank, Project Manager.*

## (7) Sustainability and Nature

### Values expressed:

saving climate and environment; providing for the needs of future generations; sustainable homes; sustainability linked to high density development; access to public transport; increased wildlife and biodiversity; using bio-based materials; presumption in favour of retrofit and upgrading over demolition.

The Government and our millennials agree on the importance of sustainability in housing policy, but for our group it seems more important to use a

broader range of policies, rather than concentrating on new builds. Labour is focused on integrating sustainability into new developments, mainly through strategic land use and transportation planning. On the other hand, our younger residents are more critical of new developments, advocating instead for being more ambitious than the Government currently is on retrofitting existing housing and implementing more robust, forward-thinking environmental policies that address both the housing crisis and the climate emergency.

Workshop participants reached the consensus that any grey belt policy must balance climate and environmental concerns, especially if schemes on the Green Belt are scaled up. They want to “focus on the needs of future generations and the planet” (Elevator pitch 2). The housing crisis for younger residents should be resolved to meet human needs without compromising the health of the planet. They want the planning system to better safeguard environmental concerns.

*“The innovation is there. It is just that it is not enforced yet and those moves are too slow and too small, and it needs a sort of bolder step”.*  
– architecture company, Director Architect.

Many participants are sceptical that unlocking Green Belt will unlock major positive change. Instead, they note that building more will increase carbon emissions:

*“With the climate emergency and housing emergency at the same time, building more means more carbon emissions by the construction sector, and just building with timber’s not enough”.* – design NGO, Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager.

*“Why not invest more into our existing housing stock and make that better rather than being too narrow and focused on building more?”* – placemaking consultancy, Consultant.

## Discussion

The takeaways from analysing the Government’s housing policy proposals compared to those of millennials suggest that the gaps between what exists and what is desired are complex and evolving. Nevertheless, the 25–45 generation seeks innovative and inclusive solutions to the housing crisis, going beyond simply building more homes and addressing essential housing provision.

### 1. Rethinking homeownership and affordability

The analysis highlights a need for planning policies to address a potential generational shift in attitudes toward homeownership. Millennials increasingly question the traditional emphasis on owning a home as the ultimate goal. Instead, they prioritise secure and affordable renting, advocating for rent controls and a shift from treating housing as a financial asset to recognising it as essential infrastructure.

### 2. Subjective notions of beauty in development

While the Government aims to standardise and streamline the concept of beauty through local design codes, millennials perceive beauty more subjectively, associating it with functionality, sustainability, and community well-being. They advocate for diverse housing designs that cater to varying tastes and needs, promoting a broader understanding of beauty that encompasses practicality and quality of life. Our group prioritises a balanced approach to urban density, supporting incorporating “gentle density” strategies, such as mid-rise developments and vertical extensions. While addressing housing supply needs, they need to enhance liveability and community cohesion.

### 3. Empowering local authorities and communities while reducing the role of local politicians in planning

Millennials favour a decentralised approach to housing delivery, where local authorities are adequately resourced and empowered to address community needs. They also support community-led housing schemes to enable grassroots solutions. However, they argue for limiting the role of local councillors and planning committees in individual housing schemes, shifting decision-making to professional planners guided by local plans and national policies. A strong central government is still seen as crucial for providing strategic oversight and ensuring equitable outcomes.

### 4. Holistic and integrated planning for housing delivery

The analysis underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to planning that integrates community and economic needs. This includes considering the local economic impacts of development, ensuring housing policies are inclusive, and addressing the broader social and

environmental implications of planning decisions related to housing delivery.

#### **5. Balancing development with sustainability**

Both the Government and millennials recognise the potential of grey belt development to address housing shortages. However, millennials emphasise that such development must be genuinely affordable, environmentally sustainable, and aligned with long-term community needs.

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# 1

## BUILDING A FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE HOUSING FUTURE

### **1.1 Integrating holistic design standards by Improving the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.**

Prioritise **beauty that plays specific functions**, such as sustainability and community well-being over rigid aesthetic standards.

**1.2 Enhancing affordability, rental security, and tenure choices to remove financial barriers for the 25 - 45 age group.** Implement stronger rent controls and policies that prioritise affordable renting, particularly for younger residents. Make homeownership more accessible by encouraging the 25–45 age group to participate in alternative housing models, such as cooperative housing and self-build projects. Use accelerators and grants to diversify housing options and reduce financial barriers to securing housing.

**1.3 Introducing independent reviews of the Green Belt.** As part of further guidance for local authorities on assessing Green Belt land, establish a review process conducted by an independent third party. Independent reviews can help ensure that outcomes are less influenced by local party politics.

**1.4 Integrating intergenerational values into housing delivery policy.** consider creating an “intergenerational commission” or a permanent “intergenerational jury” to better understand shifts in values among diverse groups. Such an initiative could provide insights into important similarities and differences toward housing delivery and broader planning issues, enabling the planning system and governance to evolve and achieve more sustainable economic and social outcomes across generations.

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# 5

## Discussion

In this chapter, we showcase the utility of a Values-Based Approach to planning reform. We draw out common threads across the three research domains highlighting what really matters to diverse actors confronting the current challenges of the planning ecosystem. We then conclude with broader policy recommendations to provide a renewed sense of purpose and direction for the planning system.



# Discussion

The complexity of planning stems not only from its bureaucratic machinery but from the competing values circulating within the system. How these values are balanced and interpreted shapes the places where we live and work. This complexity presents challenges but also allows us to get to the heart of “what we value” and “why” to offer a meaningful way forward for the planning system. A Values-Based Approach provides a framework to uncover competing interests and bring trade-offs to the fore. While recognising that certain values are irreconcilable, a conscious focus on values can generate a more empathetic understanding of the compromises that must be made to drive institutional change.

We applied this approach to three key areas: Community Participation, Land Use, and Housing Delivery. Through workshops with diverse stakeholders, we investigated what “really matters” in these three domains. Acknowledging that various people have different interests and rationales, workshop participants explored “what they want” and “how to get there”. This created a productive space to discuss challenges for planning culture and governance, bringing to light both common ground and value clashes. Designing the workshops around a Values-Based Approach enabled us to:

**Show how language shapes debates:** language frames policy conversations, determines priorities and defines the framework within which we operate (including who has access to the planning arena). Indeed, the way language is used and understood affects planning outcomes. Ambiguous terms such as “housing affordability” or “sustainable development” often obscure diverse values and beliefs. This results in people gathering around the same concept, but with very different interpretations of what it actually means.

**Identify and unpack different types of “value”:** getting to the root of why something is valued and what type of value (e.g., social value) is produced by an initiative should be at the core of decision-making. Making explicit what is at stake for various actors is necessary to ensure more equitable outcomes for value distribution.

**Recentre people and politics in the decision-making process:** politics as a whole has been conflated with party politics, associated with short-termism and political footballs. While party politics are inevitable, a Values-Based Approach moves away from this mindset and focuses, instead, on politics as an integral mechanism through which people can engage in collective decision-making to achieve shared societal goals.

**Create space to talk about the reality of implementation:** within a discretionary planning system, there needs to be greater ability to connect policy to the realities of the political and economic world that it is seeking to shape. This approach examines the creation of policy gaps by illuminating how different actors interpret and implement policy, according to their varied interests and understandings.

**Map out the complexity of the planning system:** painting a systemic picture of different governance areas across the planning system and untangling the competing values influencing their effective management is an important first step in planning for targeted reform.

Therefore, a Values-Based Approach is a useful tool for policymakers to think through planning reform by identifying the gaps between what is desired of the planning system and what is currently in place. It enables visionary goal setting by creating a shared understanding of the core concepts underpinning political objectives and the value of potential policy options while bringing the trade-offs involved in collective decision-making to the fore. Our study revealed several common threads about what really matters for diverse actors confronting the current challenges of the planning ecosystem:

## The remit of planning

Workshop participants highlighted the centrality of planning in determining how we live our lives and its value as an integrative mechanism to achieve a broad set of social, environmental and economic outcomes for the built environment. However, they noted that the planning system, as it stands, is outdated and in need of a bigger conversation about why it matters, what purpose it should serve and for whom. Indeed, the way people want to live and work, as well as the challenges we face, have greatly changed since its establishment. The scope and culture of a modern

planning system should reflect this evolution.

While Labour has an ambitious agenda to reform the planning system, embracing strategic planning as a tool for change, planning's institutional remit is narrow. It remains primarily focused on housing delivery, rather than a key mechanism for communities to define the futures they want.<sup>1</sup> Failure to promote the visionary aspect of planning is a lost opportunity for the growth agenda and for improving the public's perception of the value that the planning system adds to the economy and society at large. The planning system should provide a platform for conversation about how we want to live.

Moreover, today's complex crises require integrated action that goes beyond planning's current scope (and embrace other policy levers that impact land use e.g., taxes). Many workshop participants called for a braver, more ambitious, cross-cutting planning remit. As a planning academic noted:

*"I teach students ... 18, 19 [year olds] ... And their idea is that plan making is everything. (...) I keep telling them go back to spatial planning and they don't want to (...) Although they're students in planning, they actually think about planning as something much more diverse and bigger".*

Indeed, the planning system has enormous potential as a mechanism for collective engagement with place-based challenges across England. Therefore, planners and planning policymakers should be seen as brokers, mediating between stakeholders, interests, and disciplines to achieve balanced, sustainable land use and management across siloes and sectors.

While we encourage the Government's increasingly spatial approach to issues such as energy provision or land management,<sup>2</sup> there is scope for more coordination across departments and extensive integration of a broader range of spatial considerations, such as climate change and public health, into the planning (eco)system. This would add meaningful value and allow the Government to confront complex problems in a cohesive, place-based manner.

<sup>1</sup> Planning policy is frequently related to and secondary to housing delivery in Government documents e.g., in the Devolution White Paper (2024), competences for strategic authorities include "Housing and planning policy", while "transport and local infrastructure", "environment and climate change" fall under separate categories.

<sup>2</sup> See NESO's initiative for a strategic spatial energy plan or DEFRA's forthcoming land use framework

## What you resource is what you value

Labour is committed to "fixing the foundations of the country" and "getting Britain building again" with the planning system cited as one of the key levers for growth. In our workshops, funding constraints were overwhelmingly cited as the biggest barrier to achieving transformative change. Indeed, the propensity for fiscal centralisation and the limited possibilities for value uplift in certain geographies create a climate of scarcity for local authorities and communities. Tight budgets prevent local government entrepreneurship and planning efficiency. One participant commented that:

*"[Too often] a Local authority is not performing the duties of a local authority... A lot of [them] are under-resourced. There is a big elephant in the room! I've been in rooms where developers and communities have been the progressive ones, and the local authority has been the [one] stopping anything from happening: not because they don't necessarily agree; but just because they don't have the capacity to do anything about it!" - Community Researcher, Social Enterprise*

Moreover, despite a move away from local government austerity since the pandemic, the underfunding of the system since 2010 has had important spillover effects on the private sector. Heavy reliance on the private sector to deliver a broad range of public goods and to finance key infrastructure through land value uplift in an inflationary environment is unsustainable without the support of a well-resourced public sector. For example, study participants referenced unspent CIL bills and councils' inability to efficiently utilise developer contributions on much need community facilities.

Recognising the need for greater resourcing, Labour has committed £100 million additional funding for councils' planning officers to achieve their ambitious housing delivery targets, as well as funding the recruitment of 300 additional planners across the public sector.<sup>3</sup> To address geographic disparities, the finance policy statement for 2025 to 2026 aims to direct funding to authorities where it is most needed. It is also encouraging to see Labour veering away from short-term funding cycles by introducing a multi-year settlement in 2026.<sup>4</sup> The Devolution White

<sup>3</sup> Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government. 2024. Planning overhaul to reach 1.5 million new homes

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. 2024.

Paper takes this one step further by offering integrated settlements across policy areas for Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

However, despite funding increases and "tentative steps towards local government finance reform",<sup>5</sup> Labour's mission will remain out of reach without sufficient fiscal and spending powers for local authorities, with growing pressure on the system to deliver. Government must back their commitment to planning reform by providing sufficient resources and further devolving local government finance.

## Working towards a common purpose

Meaningful collaboration requires (1) a common vision of the future; (2) an understanding of trade-offs; and (3) a willingness to compromise. Workshop participants identified the following obstacles to successful co-operation: a lack of trust amongst stakeholders, tokenistic partnerships, and the prioritisation of individual over collective interests. As one participant remarked:

*"...when we talk about values in the UK, we're becoming a lot more atomised as people. You know, our culture is very individualistic... I'm just wondering if, culturally, we have to do a lot more work around common good" - Housing Association Representative*

Strategic planning exercises can offer stakeholders an opportunity to establish a common vision, working through trade-offs in an effective and collaborative manner. We support Labour's establishment of a universal strategic planning framework but urge them to foster a culture of continuous and "negotiated collaboration" as part of this process.<sup>6</sup> We found a shared desire to work towards a common vision, whether to achieve positive community outcomes, manage land as a limited resource, or deliver quality housing at scale:

*"Starting at that very core question...communities can come together and set quite bold ambition and vision for a future of place... and if [you] actually start with that, and then build out from there, you bring the system 'in the room' as it were and create effective participation." - Think Tank, Participatory Programmes*

### To work towards a common vision, we must outline

Local government finance policy statement 2025 to 2026

<sup>5</sup> Hoddinott, S. 2024. The government is making tentative steps towards local government finance reform. London: Institute for Government.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon and Champion (2020) recognise the importance of continuous and practical institution building (e.g., "habits of co-operation") as integral to the strategic planning process.

what is on the table for negotiation from the outset. Actors must understand that individual and collective trade-offs are unavoidable. As one participant commented:

*"the hard bit, I think, [is] ...having people understand the complexity of the trade-offs, the complexity of the factors that [are] coming into play and how they [are] being balanced" - Local Council Representative.*

In sum: by making clear the inherent role of negotiation in planning, which requires give and take, we can better reconcile differences and ensure actionable commitments from necessary stakeholders. Creating clarity about each actor's roles and responsibilities, as well as what is at stake for them, engenders a greater understanding about the shared endeavours necessary to deliver public good. Fostering transparent decision-making processes around trade-offs can strengthen the legitimacy of the system and its outcomes.

## Legitimacy & trust

The planning system lacks legitimacy. Across all three workshops there was dissatisfaction with the planning system's inputs, processes and outputs. For example, engagement with planning – not just for communities, but all actors who seek to influence planning outcomes – is often compromised as people do not feel their values are heard by the system. As one participant noted:

*"...it shows that the participatory system is creaking, like no one has real influence and input. And even people in planning from my perception don't feel like they have very much input because they live in a system that is outside their control." - Think Tank representative.*

Distrust in planning processes and procedures also inhibits quality development from the get-go. Insisting on the need to build great places for people, one participant exclaimed:

*"I've had this crazy idea for a while that we should just get rid of the planning system for a bit and see what happens.... if you lose a couple of planning applications, you're a few million down, you know? It's just too difficult to get past go" - Housing Association Representative 2.*

Indeed, people's concept of fairness is often impacted by the "painful" journey of the planning process. Moreover, it is no secret that the current planning system does not deliver the quality and scale of outputs necessary to meet society's needs.

This is reflected, not only in the housing crisis, but in planning's inability to effectively deliver a variety of valued social, environmental and economic outcomes such as healthier communities, more green space, and access to local jobs.

This deficit further entrenches a lack of trust in the planning system, increasing opposition and creating a negative feedback loop, which directly impacts policy creation and implementation. Planning is also often referred to as a "black box": participants called for greater transparency and honesty about what's working and what could be improved in policy formulation, implementation and delivery.

The following recommendations are pulled from data collected across our 3 research workshops:

# 1

## DEFINING THE PLANNING SYSTEM'S REMIT

**1.1 Establishing a renewed sense of purpose for the planning system requires an open and deliberate conversation about its remit.** Situating the planning system as a mechanism to achieve broader and more holistic place-based solutions is a key opportunity to achieve national renewal.

**1.2 Embedding that shared understanding through legislation and policy** can safeguard social, economic and environmental outcomes for the long-term.

**1.3 Ensuring that sufficient infrastructure is in place to facilitate continuous conversation and collaboration will better align planning's remit to society's evolving needs.** This could take the form of a national land commission or a national forum for regional land commissions. Stakeholder juries could also provide an inclusive space to develop a shared vision of the next steps for holistic planning reform.

# 2

## BETTER RESOURCING THE PLANNING SYSTEM

**2.1 Providing sufficient funding for the planning system** to effectively fulfil its role is essential for unlocking growth and will, in turn, attract further investment in the UK economy.

**2.2 Loosening constraints for local government borrowing** could unlock public sector development such as affordable housing projects.

**2.3 Expanding local authorities' revenue-raising powers** would give them more agency to address the place-based needs of their populations.

**2.4 Exploring options for alternative funding mechanisms**, such as land value capture policies (e.g. a land tax), should take place in collaboration with key stakeholders and consider how land could be valued fairly in the context of a discretionary planning system.

# 3

## WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON PURPOSE

**3.1 Embracing the cultural work necessary to build a shared understanding of the planning system's remit and its values** across siloes and political affiliations could halt the constant churn of planning reform.

**3.2 Building a shared understanding that planning often deals with challenging trade-offs** serving an overall social purpose could reduce the tensions in planning discussions.

**3.3 Engaging key actors in conversation about their roles and responsibilities**, and what is at stake for them could also help establish a sense of shared accountability and to reconcile differences when working towards a shared vision.

**3.4 Adding a national tier to the universal strategic planning system** would bolster the democratic legitimacy of planning and its ability to deliver shared, visionary goals at various scales within already existing economic geographies.

# 4

## BUILDING TRUST AND LEGITIMACY

**4.1 Ensuring that planning processes are easy to navigate for all stakeholders**, balancing effectiveness and democratic principles, will promote better outcomes and an increased sense of legitimacy.

**4.3 Investing in a communication campaigns** to educate the public on the valuable jobs that planning performs for the economy and society at large, rather than presenting the planning system as an obstacle, could ease the resistance to planning and justify increased resourcing.

**4.2 Crafting more accessible policy language** would ensure more inclusive and transparent discussion about planning issues and leave less room for speculative interpretation.

**4.4 Strengthening evaluation mechanisms could help build trust and legitimacy**, as well as keeping planning up to date with how it is expected to deliver. Citizen juries could play an important role in evaluating planning process and outcomes, as well as defining metrics to ensure that future evaluation centres on social outcomes.

# Appendix 1

## Chapter 2: Community Participation

| Participant Code | Characteristic                 | Sector            | Table    |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| PC1              | Planning consultant            | Private           | Table 3  |
| PC2              | Strategic Planning Consultant  | Private           | Table 1  |
| P1               | Practitioner                   | Private           | Table 1  |
| P2               | Practitioner                   | Private           | Table 4  |
| P3               | Practitioner                   | Private           | Table 4  |
| P4               | Regeneration                   | Private           | Table 2  |
| A1               | Academia                       | Public            | Floating |
| A2               | Academia                       | Public            | Table 1  |
| CA               | Combined Authority             | Public            | Table 2  |
| E0               | Elected Official               | Public            | Table 3  |
| LA1              | Local authority representative | Public            | Table 1  |
| LA2              | Local authority representative | Public            | Table 1  |
| LA3              | Local authority representative | Public            | Table 2  |
| LA4              | Local authority representative | Public            | Table 4  |
| LG               | Local Government               | Public            | Table 3  |
| NG               | National Government            | Public            | Table 2  |
| RG               | Regional Government            | Public            | Table 3  |
| CR1              | Community Research             | Social Enterprise | Table 4  |
| CR2              | Community Research             | Third sector      | Table 2  |
| CR3              | Community Research             | third sector      | Table 1  |
| CG1              | Community Group                | Third Sector      | Table 1  |
| CG2              | Community Group                | Third Sector      | Table 4  |
| CH               | Community housing              | Third sector      | Table 2  |
| CLT              | Community Land Trust           | Third Sector      | Table 3  |
| PA               | Planning Association           | Third sector      | Table 3  |
| TT               | Think Tank                     | Third Sector      | Table 2  |

**Chapter 3: Land as a Resource**

| <b>Participant code</b> | <b>Landowner characteristics</b> | <b>Sector</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| HB1                     | Housebuilder                     | Private       |
| HB2                     | Housebuilder                     | Private       |
| DR                      | Developer representative         | Private       |
| RE                      | Real estate representative       | Private       |
| PL1                     | Estate manager                   | Private       |
| PL 2                    | Business owner                   | Private       |
| PL 3                    | Hereditary peer                  | Private       |
| LA1                     | Local authority representative   | Public        |
| LA2                     | Local authority representative   | Public        |
| LA3                     | Local authority representative   | Public        |
| LA4                     | Local authority representative   | Public        |
| CLT1                    | Community Land Trust             | Third Sector  |
| CLT2                    | Community Land Trust             | Third Sector  |
| CLT3                    | Community Land Trust             | Third Sector  |
| HA1                     | Housing Association              | Third Sector  |
| HA2                     | Housing Association              | Third Sector  |
| HA3                     | Housing Association              | Third Sector  |
| 3SD                     | Third Sector Developer           | Third Sector  |
| UF                      | Urban Farm                       | Third Sector  |
| CR                      | Church representative            | Third Sector  |



### Chapter 4: Housing Delivery

|    | Sector                                      | Position                                   | Age     | Gender     |
|----|---|--|---------|------------|
| 1  | Local Council                               | Senior Good Growth Engagement Officer      | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 2  | Policy think tank                           | Occasional Research Assistant              | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 3  | Local Council                               | Principal Planning Officer/ PhD Researcher | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 4  | Academia                                    | Master's Student                           | 20 - 25 | Male       |
| 5  | Development corporation                     | Placemaking Officer                        | 26 - 30 | Male       |
| 6  | Urban planning consultancy                  | Senior Planner                             | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 7  | Planning policy think tank                  | Project Manager                            | 36 - 40 | Female     |
| 8  | Urban Policy think tank                     | Analyst                                    | 26 - 30 | Male       |
| 9  | Placemaking consultancy                     | Consultant                                 | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 10 | House-builder company                       | Strategic Land Promoter                    | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 11 | Architecture company                        | Director Architect                         | 41 - 45 | Female     |
| 12 | Real estate developer                       | Analyst                                    | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 13 | Architecture company                        | Associate Architect                        | 36 - 40 | Male       |
| 14 | Urban planning consultancy                  | Senior Consultant                          | 26 - 30 | Non-binary |
| 15 | Built environment consultancy               | Director                                   | 36 - 40 | Female     |
| 16 | Urban planning and urban design consultancy | Graduate Urban Designer                    | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 17 | Transport Planning Consultancy              | Senior Consultant                          | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 18 | Real estate consultancy and agency          | Senior Town Planner                        | 26 - 30 | Male       |
| 19 | Engineering, design, management consultancy | Assistant Planner                          | 20 - 25 | Male       |
| 20 | Academia                                    | Graduate master's Student                  | 20 - 25 | Female     |
| 21 | Local planning authority contractor         | Senior/ Principal Planner                  | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 22 | Architecture company                        | Team Lead                                  | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 23 | Urban design consultancy                    | Spatial Analyst and Consultant             | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 24 | Academia                                    | Programme Delivery Officer                 | 31 - 35 | Female     |
| 25 | Local Council                               | Principal Policy Planner                   | 41 - 45 | Male       |
| 26 | Design NGO                                  | Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager         | 26 - 30 | Female     |
| 27 | Academia                                    | Master's Student                           | 20 - 25 | Female     |

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