

Defend Council Housing

Press Statement for immediate release (08 Jul 2020 14:29)

Government advisor joins lobby for council housing

Government advisor Sir John Armitt, says more council housing is essential, to reach the Government's annual target of 300,000 new homes.

Armitt, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, today makes public the rising pressure on Ministers for investment in council housing as a central part of the Prime Minister's *Build Build Build* programme.

He says there is no point hoping "somebody's going to decide that they're going to build lots of homes, even though there isn't a market for the homes, and they're not going to make a profit." (Council houses "only way to reach 300,000 homes goal" *Times* 8.07.20)

A growing lobby of economists, charities and thinktanks is lining up with politicians, tenants and trade unions demanding urgent government investment in new and repurposed council housing.

Matt Western MP, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Council Housing says:

"Sir John is right. The Government's plans to build 300,000 houses can only be met by ensuring a significant proportion of these are built by councils.

"With the economic crisis looming, good quality, genuinely affordable homes are more needed than ever, especially at social rent.

"The Government has a golden opportunity to fix the housing crisis, but they can only succeed in this by undertaking a large-scale council housebuilding programme not seen in two generations, aiming for 150,000 social homes a year, with at least 100,000 of these social rented council homes."

Sylvia Jones, Assistant Policy Officer, UNISON says:

"UNISON supports calls for councils to lead the nation's efforts to build homes for ordinary people. This will require a return to grant funding so that genuinely affordable homes at social rent rates are built, both contributing to economic recovery and providing homes for thousands of public sector workers - our heroes - who have been working hard to protect lives and keep the nation going, as well as for the vulnerable and low paid workers.

"The private sector has failed to provide the homes we need, and with housing now the largest single demand on household incomes, it's crucial that all councils are enabled to build at scale again. Forty years ago councils were building around 100,000 new homes each year; they can do so again if they are supported financially by the Government."

Councillor Dermot Ward, Islington Council executive member for Housing and Development says:

"There is no shortage of political will in local authorities, to build council homes. But the Government needs to stop stacking the system against us. The last time the UK built 300,000 homes a year, councils built over 40 per cent of them.

"The current crisis has exposed how many people across the country live in precarious housing. It's time for the Government to step up and raise grant levels to 100 per cent of the cost of a new council home."

Eileen Short, chair of Defend Council Housing says:

"We need 100,000 new and re-purposed council homes a year, starting now, to avert the looming eviction and homelessness crisis.

"Council housing is a sound investment: it pays for itself. With interest rates near zero, and

thousands of acres of public land available, this is the way to create the new decent, really-affordable, secure and accountable housing we need."

Tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs are working together to step up a national campaign for investment in 100,000 council homes a year, to avert a housing catastrophe and create much needed genuinely-affordable homes.

Otherwise, the forecast is of just 4,000 new homes for social rent this year, the lowest level since the second world war.

Ends

Council houses "only way to reach 300,000 homes goal" *Times* 8.07.20