

Roundtable on Local Authorities and Planning with Cllr Darren Rodwell, Leader of Barking & Dagenham Council

Wednesday 18 October 2023

Introduction

The APPG's meeting with Cllr Darren Rodwell underscored the urgent need for increased affordable housing in London and the UK as a whole. The discussion highlighted that the current rate of housing completions falls far short of the demand, with London facing a dire homelessness crisis. The allocation of grant money and the infrastructure levy came under scrutiny, with concerns about their effectiveness and the financial strain on local authorities. Overall, the meeting emphasised the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address the housing crisis and the importance of a national dialogue to drive progress.



Key takeaways

- The meeting highlighted the urgent need for affordable housing in London and across the UK. It was noted that the current rate of housing completions falls far short of the demand, and this issue is considered the most significant housing problem affecting London and the rest of the country. For instance, the government's figure of 52,000 completions per year was criticised, with London councils arguing that the number should be closer to 100,000, with at least 50% of them being affordable housing.
- The allocation of grant money was a major concern, especially in London. It was highlighted that London councils received approximately £19 billion in grant money, but this amount was perceived as inadequate to address the housing crisis effectively. This shortage of funding was seen as contributing to the large number of stalled housing projects in the city.
- The meeting featured criticisms of the current infrastructure levy system. Participants argued that the system places an immediate financial burden on local governments, as developers only pay the levy at a later stage. This was viewed as a challenge for local authorities, as they had to cover the upfront costs without timely compensation, which can lead to financial strain.

- There was a consensus on the need for reforms in the planning system. Concerns were raised about the system's inefficiency, which includes continually changing regulations and a significant delay in the creation of local plans.
- The meeting emphasised the necessity of a national dialogue and collaborative efforts to address the housing crisis. Participants agreed that political leadership and effective collaboration between different sectors were vital. A call was made for both national and local governments to work together to develop a comprehensive, long-term solution to the housing problem. The need for a shared vision and the importance of involving communities in decision-making was also raised as essential for addressing the challenges effectively.

Issues raised

- The meeting highlighted the need for continuity in government leadership to effectively address housing challenges. It was noted that consistent political will and leadership are essential for implementing and sustaining long-term housing policies and reforms.
- The shortage of trained and qualified planners was recognised as a bottleneck in the planning system. Suggestions were made to establish a national training program funded by developers to increase the number of planners available to facilitate the planning process.
- Issues related to the quality and safety of housing were raised, especially in light of incidents like the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The importance of maintaining high-quality construction standards was emphasised, but concerns were voiced about how regulations were applied.

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

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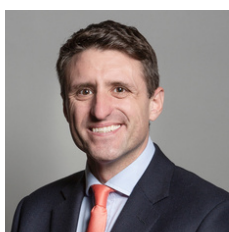
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To get involved, please contact
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