

LIVING SECTOR

A manifesto for places,
homes and growth



**ADDLESHAW
GODDARD**

MORE IMAGINATION MORE IMPACT

Living sector – a manifesto



The manifestos for each of the major political parties are now out (for a summary of our thoughts on each, visit our LinkedIn pages). For a bit of pre-election fun, we thought we would ask a few people at Addleshaw Goddard for some ideas about what would unlock housing supply and delivery, and in turn boost the economy.

We are not politically partisan, so these ideas are not meant to either support or challenge any of the commitments made in the party manifestos.

Here is what we have collectively come up with (some being a little less serious than others), almost all of which channel the ubiquitous catchy three-word slogans the campaign managers love to bombard us with:

POLICY 1

Properly Funded Planning

Proper investment in planning by having more planners in local authorities on enviable salaries so we have people who are able and committed to a locality and role for the duration. And more strategic regional planning by use of the combined authorities/regional mayors — with more powers to really get things done.

POLICY 2

Assumption to Grant

An "assumption to grant" stance to be adopted for planning permissions, starting from a position that planning applications within the local plan should be approved unless there is a strong, evidence-based reason to refuse them. We need to challenge the presumption many people have that local authorities are against development, shifting towards a proactive stance that not only welcomes but champions development. Couple this with better funding of local authority planning departments (probably via higher planning fees), but given that time is money in development, wouldn't a more expensive but quicker decision be better for everyone?



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POLICY 3

Greenbelt and braces

A serious belt-and-braces review is needed of the greenbelt. If we re-zone and allow the use of some of the poorer quality greenbelt for development, some of the proceeds of unlocking that land for development could be redirected towards improving the quality of other areas of the greenbelt. Additionally, this could encourage the development and improvement of parks in urban areas.

POLICY 4

Get Britain Registered

Major delays in land registry over the last several years is causing transactional problems now. Therefore, we propose increasing HM Land Registry fees, employing loads more staff and just doing a better job to unlock delays in transactions and "Get Britain Registered".

POLICY 5

Right Size Relief

Abolish SDLT on purpose-built accommodation for over 65s. This will better enable older members of society to move into more appropriate accommodation for them, known as right-sizing. It will then, in turn, free up their houses for younger people and families, matching availability to needs. This is a policy that would work wonders for both social and actual mobility. Of course, it would be better to abolish SDLT on residential property entirely to allow for even more mobility but, that may be a step too far at present.

POLICY 6

Make Renting Great

Stop focussing on home ownership as the holy grail of adulthood. For the young and upwardly mobile, for those on low incomes and those with assisted and supported living needs, rental is often a better tenure. This can be done by reviving the Renters' Reform Bill and getting it back through Parliament as quickly as possible, but instead of abolishing s.21 altogether, go back to the contracting out system that existed for all assured tenancies pre-1997.

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POLICY 7

Build it Better

Encourage energy efficient and sustainable builds. To do this is clearly in the interests of achieving net zero and actually leaving a habitable planet for future generations. This can be done either by legislating to force mortgage lenders to engage with modern methods of construction (MMC) or providing a government backed mortgage lender to provide financing for these. (Homes England already have grants available to developers for this sort of thing. the problem is getting a mortgage lender to back the plot purchases.)

POLICY 8

Re-industrial Revolution

Masses of what we need to build homes is imported. This caused genuine problems upon the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. With the lack of EU controls it may be possible now for the government to incentivise production of building materials in the UK or remove tariffs on importing materials. Re-industrialising the UK would get us building faster, solve the productivity lag and provide jobs for technically skilled workers.

POLICY 9

Preventing Safety Becoming Dangerous

Invest properly in the Health and Safety Executive to ensure that they are well-equipped and funded to navigate and process the Building Safety Act Gateway 2 and Gateway 3 applications. This will ensure that the safety of buildings is paramount, but in a way which does not undermine and prohibit much-needed housing development. The Building Safety Act is already causing huge difficulties for the industry and that will only get worse. Better funding for the HSE and employing many more people to get through the Gateways is a must. We would suggest looking at total abolition and re-regulating in a way that is more conducive to building whilst still ensuring it is done safely, therefore avoiding any chance of another Grenfell tragedy.



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POLICY 10

Harnessing Blue Belt

Housing delivery is underwater, so we can tackle the housing crisis by embracing the untapped potential of our canals and lakes. Through the visionary Floating Homes Initiative, which could be managed by the Canal and Rivers Trust, we could transform waterways into vibrant communities. With affordable leasing for moorings, the high cost of land is taken out of the equation, making the dream of homeownership a reality for many. This isn't just about providing a roof over heads; it's about crafting a buoyant future for "generation rent".

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