

The South West needs 15,000 affordable homes a year

HOMES FOR THE SOUTH WEST

ELECTION MANIFESTO 2019

Homes for the South West is an alliance of 11 of the largest housing associations in South West England. We share a common vision about ending the housing crisis and are ambitious in our plans to tackle barriers to new housing and deliver the homes our communities need.

We are investing £2bn to deliver 16,000 homes over the next four years across the South West. With the right support from Government we could deliver more, faster.

We therefore call on the future Government to work in partnership with us and rise to the scale of the challenge. To give us the tools to deliver more, we are seeking bold commitments in the following areas:

- 1** Increasing long-term investment in new social and affordable homes through additional grant funding.
- 2** Acting urgently to simplify and speed up the planning system.
- 3** Implementing measures to prioritise the release of public land for affordable housing.

IN NUMBERS

11 of the largest housing associations in the South West



£2bn to deliver **16,000** homes over the next four years across the South West



15,000

affordable homes needed annually

circa

8,000

should be for social rent

just over

1 in 10

new affordable homes in the UK need to be built in the South West

For further information, please contact Elliot Cochrane at e.cochrane@connectpa.co.uk

This document sets out the view of Homes for the South West on what should be included within these policy areas to address the specific housing needs of the South West as well as offering a wider solution to the housing crisis in the UK as a whole.

1 INCREASE LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

- Housing Associations are key partners in solving the housing crisis; we can deliver many of the homes the country needs
- Figures published by the National Housing Federation show that a government investment of £12.8bn per year for the next ten years would support delivery of the 145,000 new affordable homes this country needs each year
- This Government investment offers value to the public purse via the consequent significant additional investment made by housing associations
- In the South West region alone, 15,000 affordable homes are needed annually of which some 8,000 should be for social rent – that means that just over 1 in 10 new affordable homes in the UK need to be built in our region
- A long-term commitment to public investment from Government, offering certainty over grant funding, is essential for us to make the necessary investment decisions to continue to build, particularly through periods of market uncertainty
- Making grant funding accessible and flexible for all housing associations will allow the sector to remain agile and make long term decisions, providing stability in the supply pipeline
- Certainty about future rent levels will also support the sector's ability to continue to borrow and invest in new supply

2 SIMPLIFY AND SPEED UP THE PLANNING SYSTEM

- The planning system is a serious barrier to quickly delivering quality affordable housing; we believe that steps should be taken at both a national and local level to reform the planning system to add more capacity and speed
- In other regions, new developments have a minimum acceptable level of affordable homes mandated; we call for the same across the South West and say that this should be no less than 25% across the entire region
- Sites that are 100% affordable housing should be 'fast tracked' through the planning system – with applications considered in 8 weeks and automatically consented where the statutory periods are missed
- Viability assessments must be reformed so they are more transparent and publicly available. Standardised methodologies should be introduced where possible
- Minimum housing densities should be required in areas where there is an acute shortage of land
- Resources for local planning departments should match demand so that 100% of applications are assessed within statutory periods. We would be prepared to pay for a fit-for-purpose system which has the right capacity and expertise

3 PRIORITISE THE SALE OF LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Government should create incentives for local authorities to offer up public land to developers of affordable housing. The current model for development is geared towards those who can acquire land as the highest bidder, which favours large developers prepared to 'land bank'
- Increasing the supply of land for development would reduce the upward pressure on land values, curtail discussions about the viability of development programmes, and maintain the level of affordable housing to be delivered
- Local Authorities should extend their land supply targets to increase the likelihood that those targets will be met. Local authorities should plan on the basis they will need the necessary land supply to meet 130% of demand over the next 5 years, making them more likely to meet the actual need
- Funding beyond Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 should be prioritised to support the building of more affordable housing