

***The new government's approach to planning and
the scope for member societies to influence
policy and development management***

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Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy framework

3. Today, we set out specific changes we propose to make immediately to the NPPF following this consultation. These changes – amending the planning framework, and universal, ambitious local plan coverage – are vital to deliver the Government’s commitments to achieve economic growth and build 1.5 million new homes. Specifically, they will:

- a. make the standard method for assessing housing needs mandatory, requiring local authorities to plan for the resulting housing need figure, planning for a lower figure only when they can demonstrate hard constraints and that they have exhausted all other options;
- b. reverse other changes to the NPPF made in December 2023 which were detrimental to housing supply;
- c. implement a new standard method and calculation to ensure local plans are ambitious enough to support the Government’s manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament;
- d. broaden the existing definition of brownfield land, set a strengthened expectation that applications on brownfield land will be approved and that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas;

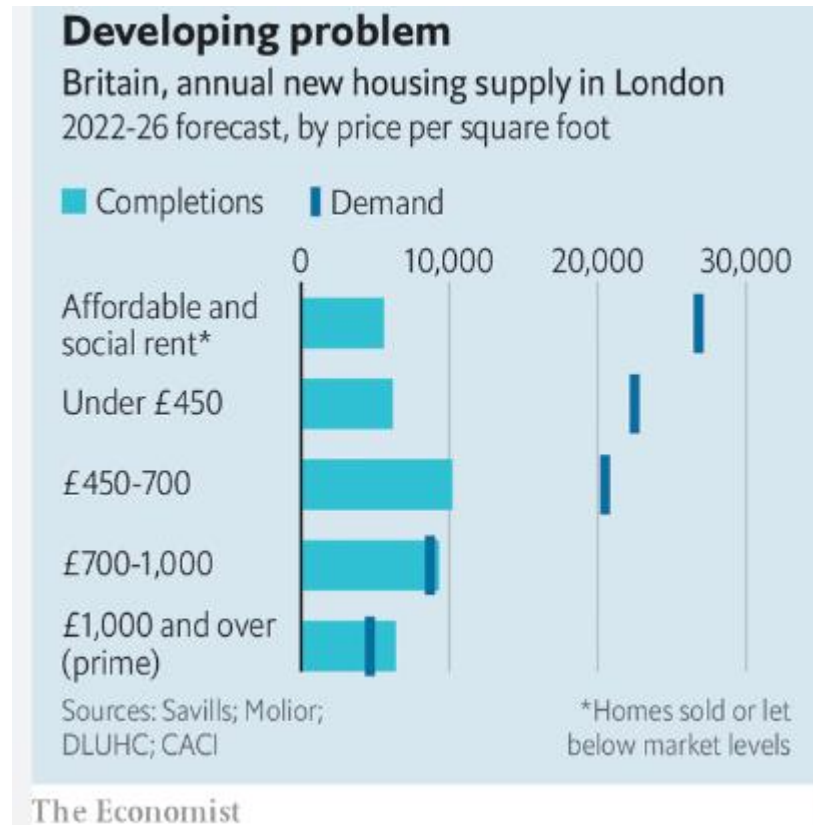
- e. identify grey belt land within the Green Belt, to be brought forward into the planning system through both plan and decision-making to meet development needs;
- f. improve the operation of ‘the presumption’ in favour of sustainable development, to ensure it acts as an effective failsafe to support housing supply, by clarifying the circumstances in which it applies; and, introducing new safeguards, to make clear that its application cannot justify poor quality development;
- g. deliver affordable, well-designed homes, with new “golden rules” for land released in the Green Belt to ensure it delivers in the public interest;
- h. make wider changes to ensure that local planning authorities are able to prioritise the types of affordable homes their communities need on all housing development and that the planning system supports a more diverse housebuilding sector;
- i. support economic growth in key sectors, aligned with the Government’s industrial strategy and future local growth plans, including laboratories, gigafactories, datacentres, digital economies and freight and logistics – given their importance to our economic future;
- j. deliver community needs to support society and the creation of healthy places; and
- k. support clean energy and the environment, including through support for onshore wind and renewables.

The government's 'approach'

- To signal powerfully that obstacles to development will be removed to facilitate higher levels of housebuilding and other development
- To over-ride those who obstruct development
- To use top-down powers to intervene in planning
- To signal a willingness to use 'grey belt' land within the Green belt
- To encourage the use of Mayoral Development Corporations
- To work with the Mayor of London to drive through development at locations such as Oxford Street and Old Oak Common

The challenge

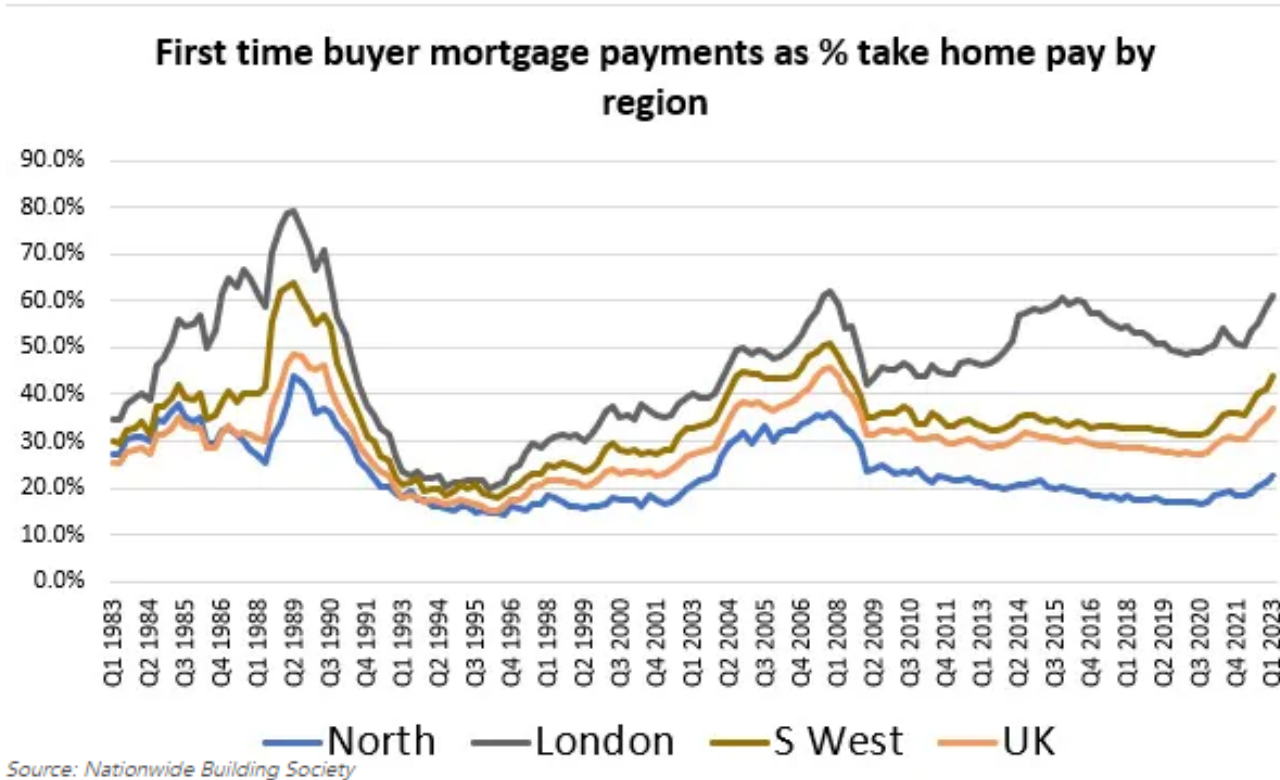
- completions, price and demand



Source: The Economist

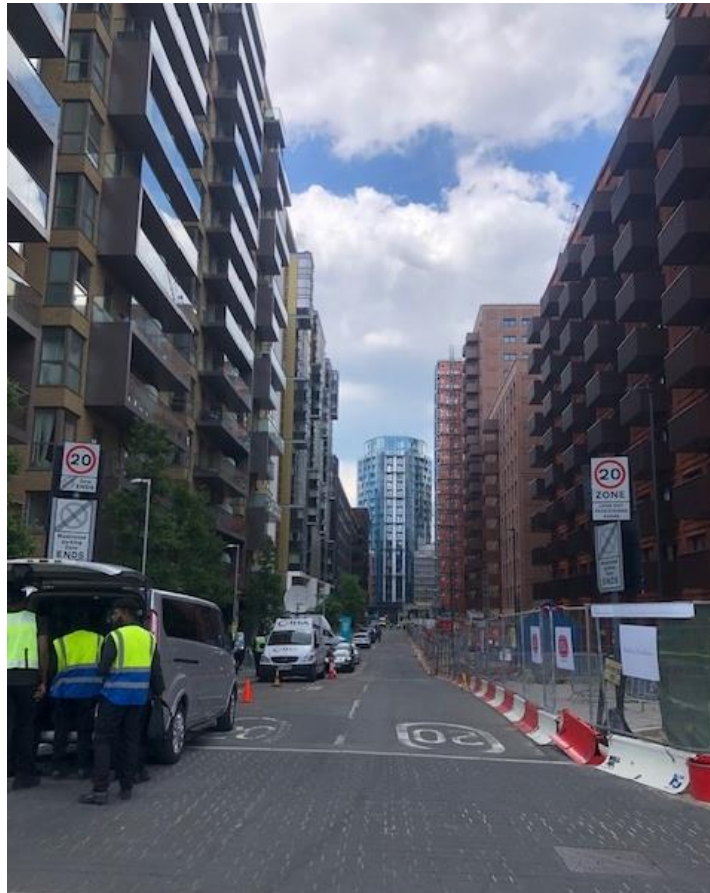
The impact on first-time buyers

- this has personal and productivity consequences



Source: SCM Direct

Impact of recent development on London housing 'type' and scale



Wembley Park



North Acton

Impact of recent development on London housing 'type' and scale



Ilford



Tottenham Hale

Impact of recent development on London housing 'type' and scale



Nine Elms



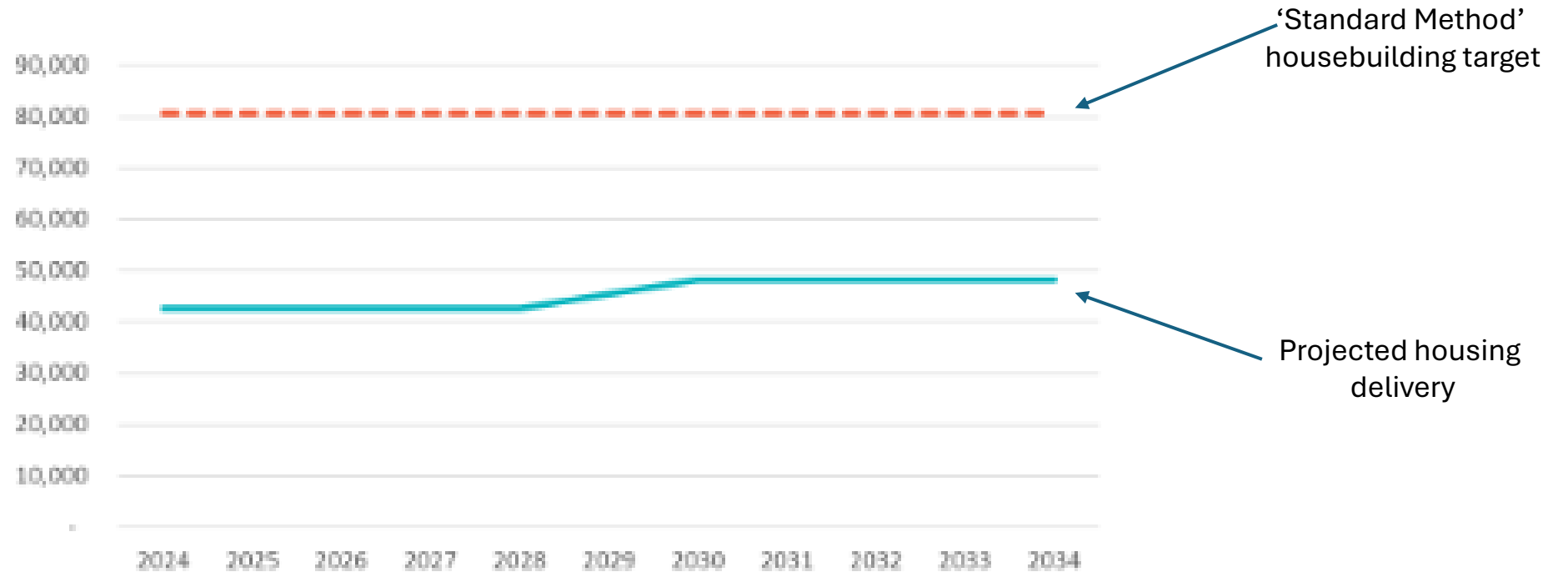
Isle of Dogs

How and why has this particular change occurred?

- London's population has risen from 6.6m in 1985 to 9.0m today
 - New homes constructed at broadly half the rate of population growth
- Prices and rentals have risen steeply
- Heritage and conservation keeps most new development out of Georgian areas, sections of which are in inner London
 - Outer London as analogous, but different conservation/heritage concerns
- Ex-industrial land has been seen fit for dense, tall, developments close to public transport
- This has led to an under-remarked phenomenon of large, dense and visible cluster developments visible across the skyline, notably in the outer part of inner London and some outer London centres
 - But also at South Bank and probably soon at Euston

The new government's plans for London

- the number of homes built effectively needs to double



Source: Lichfields

Influencing policy and development management

- No use in merely opposing the policy, because.....it's the policy
- What can be done is:
 - Accepting the need for significant densification and tall building in some locations, notably town centres and ex-industrial areas
 - Pointing out obvious absurdities (ie individual borough targets that can never be achieved)
 - Encouraging the use of compulsory purchase powers to help create bigger sites which can be developed densely without towers
 - Accepting densification (small extensions) of existing properties so long as aesthetic standards are observed
 - Accepting intensification (including new buildings) in conservation/heritage areas where this is done in an aesthetically desirable way
 - Lobbying for necessary local infrastructure
 - Lobbying for reduced noise, pollution and disruption in relation to development sites
 - Highlighting good development and explaining why it's good