

Speech

Housing and Planning Minister speech at Housing Community Summit

The Housing and Planning Minister's speech at the Housing Community Summit 2026.

From: **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** (</government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government>) and **The Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook MP** (</government/people/matthew-pennycook>)

Published: 9 September 2026

Location: Exhibition Centre at Liverpool Experience Campus

Delivered on: 9 September 2026 (Transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered)



Thank you for that introduction Kirsty and good morning everyone.

It is a privilege to take part in this year's Housing Community Summit, and I extend my sincere thanks to the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing for inviting me to do so.

It is also a real pleasure to be back in Liverpool – a city region with a hugely ambitious regeneration pipeline and a strong commitment to

maximising social and affordable housing delivery. I commend and thank Steve Rotherham and Liam Robinson for their continued leadership in this area.

Our housing market is resilient, and I have no doubt that it will not take long to recover, but as this audience knows only too well, these are tough times for housebuilding in England.

Margins continue to be squeezed by a combination of factors including a sharp reduction in interest cover and a significant increase in building materials costs – not least owing to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

The resulting viability challenges are affecting every part of the country, with pressures particularly acute in some housing markets.

As councils and housing associations seek to take forward ambitious development programmes, they are having to cope not only with challenges in relation to site viability but also those arising from the pressing need to improve the safety and quality of the homes they already manage.

The government is asking a lot from the sector, and we appreciate fully the difficult balancing act involved in seeking to build new social and affordable housing at scale while also improving the decency of existing stock.

That is why, throughout the 26 months that this government has been in office, we've striven to work in close partnership with you, listening carefully to what you have told us you need to deliver your social purpose, and doing as much as we possibly can to accommodate your asks.

I intend to argue today that we have made significant progress since coming to office just over two years ago, but that much more can and will be done in the years ahead to ensure councils and housing associations, alone and, I hope, in deepening partnership, can flourish and play their full part in the decade of social and affordable housing renewal that this government remains determined to deliver.

It is a natural human habit to bank what you have, take it for granted and ask for more, but I want to begin by reminding you all just how far we have come over the past two years and two months.

It is almost three years to the day that I gave a keynote speech at the NHF's National Housing Summit in Birmingham as the then Shadow Housing and Planning Minister.

I remember well the general air of polite scepticism that greeted my speech and the series of bold commitments it contained:

To enhance compulsory purchase powers.

To provide long-term rent policy certainty.

To overhaul the Right to Buy Scheme to better protect existing social housing stock.

To deliver a marked increase in affordable housing supply.

And to prioritise social rented homes.

As you all know, we have not only fulfilled those promises, we have gone much, much further.

When it comes to grant funding, we've made the biggest investment in social and affordable housing in living memory – a £39 billion pound 10-year Social and Affordable Homes Programme with a target to deliver at least 60% of homes as Social Rent; a target that I'm delighted to say we are on course to exceed in the first wave of allocations announced a fortnight ago.

When it comes to rebuilding the sector's capacity to borrow and invest in new and existing homes, we've not only secured a 10-year social housing rent settlement at CPI+1% but also Social Rent convergence; equal access to government remediation funding schemes for social landlords; and £2.5 billion of low-interest loans over this Spending Review period.

When it comes to reinvigorating council housebuilding, we've not only returned Right to Buy maximum cash discounts to pre-2012 levels and allowed councils to keep 100% of Right to Buy receipts, but through our Social Housing Bill we are taking forward a comprehensive and radical package of reforms to Right to Buy that will give councils the confidence they need to increase the delivery of new council homes.

And when it comes to providing regulatory clarity and certainty, whether through our updated Decent Homes Standard, our new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards or the implementation of Awaab's Law, we have sought to ensure that standards are proportionate as well as ambitious with implementation timelines that will allow social landlords to boost housing supply at the same time as driving up the quality of the homes they manage.

Taken together, these measures have laid the foundations for that decade of social and affordable housing renewal we are so determined to deliver.

I've dwelt on them at some length because as we look to the future, it is important to acknowledge that the outlook for the sector has been utterly transformed over the past 26 months as a result of the decisions taken by this [political content removed] government.

Yet, notwithstanding what has been achieved, I know that councils and housing associations across the country want and need more support and more funding to deliver the high-quality homes and services that residents and communities need.

I also recognise that we issued a "call to arms" to everyone with a role in social and affordable housing to step up and demonstrate they could deliver at scale and at pace, and that precisely because the positive response has been so overwhelming we have not been able to give everyone what they asked for.

This is particularly true when it comes to our Social and Affordable Homes Programme.

As you know, a fortnight ago, we confirmed that Homes England is allocating just over £9.5 billion pounds to 33 Strategic Partners to deliver over 70,000 social and affordable homes outside London, with the Greater London Authority set to offer allocations of at least £6 billion in the capital.

Sadly, the sum total of bids received by Homes England and the GLA dwarfed the amount of funding we had available to allocate in this initial wave.

But with £39 billion of funding available over the lifetime of the Programme there is over £16 billion of funding outside London and around £5 billion in London still yet to allocate.

This includes funding in each year of this Spending Review period up to 2030 and significant sums in the second half of the Programme.

In allocating this funding, we have made clear we intend to prioritise social rented homes and in particular council homes.

But I want to stress again that funding will also be available for other providers.

With that in mind, I reiterate our call to partners to come forward with strong bids in respect of specific sites, and Homes England stands ready to work intensively with you to exhaust all options.

I want to say a little more about council housebuilding given the emphasis our new Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, has rightly placed on it.

Direct council delivery of Social Rent homes does have a range of benefits, including democratic accountability, the ability to tailor provision to meet local housing need, and the creation of public assets that generate rental income which is reinvested in local housing to support and sustain communities.

It is also simply a fact that the last time we built social housing on the scale that is now required, councils were the driving force, delivering tens of thousands of social homes each year until building rates fell off dramatically from the early 1980s onwards as a result of the constraints and restrictions created by the introduction of the Right to Buy scheme.

It is for these reasons that we are determined to enable councils to once again build at scale and we know that hundreds of them share our ambition to secure the future of council housing.

The steps we have taken since arriving in office to reinvigorate council housebuilding, including providing tens of millions of pounds to increase skills and capacity within councils, have already borne fruit.

In 2024/25, councils delivered the highest number of social homes since the current reporting period began in the early 1990s.

I am also delighted that for the first time ever, three councils outside London have been awarded Strategic Partnership status with Homes England, namely Cambridge City Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Newcastle City Council.

But we need to go much further.

The Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and I are determined to deliver the biggest council housebuilding programme since the post-war boom ended in the early 1980s.

To that end, we are actively exploring further ways we might support councils to expand their stock of social homes, including low-cost borrowing options, and we've made clear that councils will be able to access more of the funding available through our Social and Affordable Homes Programme.

Now, I can well imagine that having registered the renewed emphasis that the government is placing on council housebuilding, many housing associations and other providers may be questioning what it means for them.

Let me reassure anyone who is in any doubt that private registered providers will continue to play a key role in the delivery of social and affordable homes.

We value immensely all that you do to help meet housing need and we are relying on you to continue to progress ambitious development plans, not only delivering grant funded homes but also maximising homes built through Section 106 – drawing on the recently published National S106 Affordable Housing Engagement Guidance developed jointly by the NHF, CIH, HBF, and the LGA.

And for any housing association or other provider that is concerned about their future in a world in which councils are once again building at scale, let me state plainly that the revival of council housebuilding that this government is working to deliver should complement not threaten the contribution you make.

Indeed, we want to encourage greater partnership working between councils and housing associations whether that be through forming Joint Ventures, aligning development plans, delivering new council homes through partnership models, or working more closely on allocations.

Our ambition is to harness the potential of everyone across the sector, and we want to hear your ideas about what effective partnership working looks like and what more government and Mayoral Strategic Authorities can do to support it.

I believe passionately that good housing is the foundation of a flourishing life.

Decent, safe, secure and affordable homes provide a platform for families to live, grow, and build better lives.

They make for stronger, healthier and happier communities.

Everyone, everyone, deserves to have one.

Yet, as we all know, far too many families in need are still languishing on social housing waiting lists, struggling in the private rented sector or in expensive temporary accommodation as a result, and driving up rents and the housing benefit bill in the process.

That is why this [political content removed] government committed in its manifesto to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation; to prioritising the building of new social rented homes; and to supporting councils and housing associations to build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply.

Over the past two years, we have strained every sinew to faithfully honour those commitments.

The steps we have taken today have made a real difference, with affordable starts up by 26% last year, and the highest number of social rent starts since 2010.

But there is more to be done in the coming months and years to finish the job we have started.

Whether council, housing association or other provider, we cannot do it without you.

I very much look forward to continuing to work with you all as we deliver that decade of social and affordable housing renewal and in so doing ensure that all our people enjoy a decent, safe, secure, and affordable home in which to live.

Thank you for listening.