# Conservative calls for urgent reform as Labour's green belt policies hinder London housing growth



Shadow Housing Secretary Sir James Cleverly has laid out the Conservative Party’s unwavering stance on tackling London’s ongoing housing crisis, emphasizing a bold push for reform and expansion that the current Labour government simply fails to deliver. Instead of pragmatic solutions, Labour’s approach under Mayor Sadiq Khan remains mired in bureaucratic red tape, hindering the development of crucial housing on brownfield sites and green belt land alike.[[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-london-conservatives-angela-rayner-mayor-b1251555.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-london-conservatives-angela-rayner-mayor-b1251555.html)

Cleverly’s call to rewrite the London Plan aims to unleash the true potential of London’s underused brownfield sites, such as former industrial areas and disused land near transport links and employment hubs. Such a strategy is designed to rapidly increase housing supply and transform city districts into vibrant communities—yet Labour’s administration drags its heels, bogged down by overregulation and excessive consultation processes that prevent real progress.[[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/michael-gove-london-councils-housing-rishi-sunak-b1138748.html), [[4]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/goves-london-plan-review-says-khans-strategy-frustrates-brownfield-delivery/5127768.article) This is a failure of leadership in stark contrast to the Conservative-led initiatives, which recognize the importance of unlocking land that is already within the urban footprint, rather than perpetually blocking development through strict planning constraints.

The government’s recent interventions, led by Michael Gove, expose Labour’s ineffectiveness. By criticising Mayor Khan’s policies, Gove’s review advocates for dramatically simplifying planning rules—offering an 11% boost in citywide housing capacity—and emphasizes a presumption in favor of brownfield development. Unfortunately, Labour's approach continues to prioritize green spaces and preservation at the expense of essential housing—an outdated ideology that no longer meets London’s demands for affordable homes.[[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/centre-london-green-belt-housing-homes-development-corporations-mayor-sadiq-khan-government-b1125306.html), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/20/we-must-build-on-the-green-belt-says-olympic-park-developer/) Labour’s resistance to reform effectively stalls vital growth, exacerbating the housing shortage for Londoners across all income levels.

Moreover, the debate on expanding into green belt land exposes Labour’s misguided priorities. Conservative voices propose developing ‘low quality’ green belt parcels, especially those near railway stations, which are often ecologically insignificant. Their plan would unlock underutilized land like old petrol stations and parking lots, providing a pragmatic way to increase housing without harming the environment. Labour, however, clings to restrictive green belt policies that crush aspirational development and alienate the urban population in need of homes.[[6]](https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/planning-consultations/towards-new-london-plan)

While Mayor Khan’s administration consults extensively on the London Plan, the slow pace and restrictive policies only hinder progress. Developers and communities alike demand swift action—yet Labour remains predominantly focused on bureaucratic procedures and green policies that stifle growth. It’s clear that Labour’s approach prioritizes maintaining a status quo rather than delivering the affordable, accessible housing the capital desperately needs.

The Conservative vision champions reform-driven development that prioritizes delivery over delaying tactics. A refusal to reform the current planning system effectively keeps London’s housing supply in limbo, worsening affordability and overcrowding. As the mayoral race heats up, it’s evident that only a bold shift away from Labour’s restrictive policies will meet London’s growing housing demands. Conservative-led reform offers real hope for a vibrant, bustling city with homes for all—unlike the current stagnation under Labour’s broken strategy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-london-conservatives-angela-rayner-mayor-b1251555.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-london-conservatives-angela-rayner-mayor-b1251555.html> - In this article, Shadow Housing Secretary Sir James Cleverly outlines the Conservative Party's commitment to revising London's planning strategy if their candidate is elected as Mayor. He emphasises the need to unlock tens of thousands of new homes by focusing on brownfield sites, particularly near transport links, the night-time economy, and job opportunities. Drawing parallels to successful developments in Canary Wharf and the Olympic Park, Cleverly advocates for prioritising brownfield sites to transform them into business and housing hubs, aiming to address the housing crisis in the capital.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/michael-gove-london-councils-housing-rishi-sunak-b1138748.html> - This article discusses Michael Gove's initiative to encourage London councils to build more homes on brownfield sites. The government is pressuring local councils to prioritise housing development on previously developed land, aiming to meet housing targets and alleviate the housing crisis. The move is part of a broader effort by the Conservatives to boost housebuilding, with a particular focus on urban areas where demand is highest, while protecting the countryside from overdevelopment.
4. <https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/goves-london-plan-review-says-khans-strategy-frustrates-brownfield-delivery/5127768.article> - This article reports on Michael Gove's review of London's planning strategy, which criticises Mayor Sadiq Khan's approach for hindering the delivery of new homes on brownfield sites. The review suggests that simplifying policies could increase housing capacity by nearly 11%, equivalent to around 4,000 additional homes per year. It proposes granting a presumption in favour of planning permission for brownfield sites to expedite housing development and address the housing shortage in the capital.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/centre-london-green-belt-housing-homes-development-corporations-mayor-sadiq-khan-government-b1125306.html> - This article highlights a report by the Centre for London think tank, which recommends allowing housing development on 'low quality' areas of London's green belt to boost the capital's housing supply. The report suggests creating development corporations at ten key sites within the green belt, close to railway stations, to facilitate development. It argues that many areas of the green belt are of low ecological quality, and their loss would not significantly harm climate goals or public access to natural spaces.
6. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/planning-consultations/towards-new-london-plan> - This webpage outlines the Mayor of London's consultation on the 'Towards a New London Plan'. It details the process of assessing over 750 sites submitted by various stakeholders, including developers, landowners, boroughs, and the public, to estimate potential housing delivery. The consultation also discusses the role of Opportunity Areas, which are identified as having substantial potential for new development to provide homes and jobs, and seeks views on additional areas that could be considered for new Opportunity Areas.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/20/we-must-build-on-the-green-belt-says-olympic-park-developer/> - This article features Nigel Hugill, chief executive of Urban&Civic, who advocates for building on the green belt to meet housing targets. He supports Labour's plan to reclassify some green belt land as 'grey belt', targeting underutilised sites like old petrol stations and car parks for development. Hugill argues that without releasing some green belt land, ambitious housing targets in South East England are unachievable, and that the green belt has become an economic constraint due to increased population growth.