



The Parties' housing policy commitments 2015

Standard Note: SN07142
Last updated: 23 March 2015
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Section: Social Policy Section

In light of the generally accepted housing shortage currently facing the UK, housing is arguably a more important political issue than it has been for decades. It is however not yet clear how important an electoral issue it will be.

Although the parties have not yet published their election manifestos setting out their priorities on housing, all have made a number of public statements and commitments, which this note has collated.

The note looks at public commitments from the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, UKIP and the Green Party.

Non-English parties have voted and expressed clear opinions on a number of housing issues – for example SNP, Plaid Cymru, DUP, SDLP and Alliance opposition to the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit – and this could conceivably impact on future coalition negotiations. As housing is a devolved policy matter in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, this note only considers policy commitments from the parties listed above.

This note is also intended as a collation of public statements, not as detailed policy analysis. Where costs of implementing a policy or savings from repealing a policy are included, these are figures provided by the parties themselves.

The following information is intended as a snapshot to provide information on pre-manifesto housing policies announced prior to the 2015 dissolution of Parliament. It will therefore not be updated following the 2015 General Election.

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1 Introduction

There is broad agreement that the UK is facing a housing shortage, and housing is arguably a more important political issue than it has been for decades.

Ipsos MORI research published in January 2015 shows that 75% of the public and 67% of MPs agree that “there is a housing crisis in Britain”.¹

It is unclear whether this will translate into electoral significance. The Ipsos MORI data also shows that 48% of the public disagree there is a housing crisis in their local area (40% of MPs disagree there is a crisis in their constituency). Further research by Ipsos MORI published in February 2015 shows that the public view housing as the 8th most important issue facing Britain today.²

This confusing picture is further compounded by a Greater London Authority survey from November 2014 which shows that Londoners view housing as the most important issue facing the city.³

The publication of the parties’ manifestos, expected following dissolution on 30th March 2015, will give a clear indication of their housing priorities in the next parliament. Although these are not yet published, the parties have already made a number of public commitments on housing, which have been collated and set out below.

2 Conservatives

In [a speech in Colchester](#) on 2 March 2015, David Cameron set out the Conservative Party’s five main election priorities on housing:

- Keeping mortgage rates low;
- Building more houses;
- Helping more people onto the property ladder;
- Increasing security for private renters;
- Giving local people control over planning.⁴

The details of these, and other existing commitments and proposals, are articulated below.

2.1 Housebuilding

The Colchester speech announced a commitment to build 200,000 ‘Starter Homes’ in the next parliament, specifically for first-time buyers under 40, to be sold at 20% below open market value.

A written statement by Housing Minister Brandon Lewis on the same day announced that the 20% discount would be funded by developers. In exchange, they would not be expected to

¹ Ipsos MORI, [MPs and public sense ‘housing crisis’, but less so locally](#), 30 January 2015

² Ipsos MORI, [The NHS remains the most important issue facing Britain](#), 27 February 2015

³ Talk London, [London Survey 2014 – the results](#), 3 March 2015

⁴ [Essex Chronicle](#), ‘Full speech: David Cameron announces cut-price house-building programme during Essex visit’, 2 March 2015

pay section 106 charges for affordable housing or to pay a community infrastructure levy to fund infrastructure related to a new housing development.⁵

No overall housebuilding target has been given, however David Cameron argued that if the trajectory seen since the Government's planning reforms continued, in 2017 work would start on 200,000 houses. The Colchester speech did see the announcement of a target of 90% suitable brownfield sites having planning permission by 2020.

David Cameron also announced a commitment to preserving the green belt, and to continue to promote neighbourhood plans as a way of involving local people in planning decisions.

The Conservatives have also promoted a local-centric approach with regards to the creation of new garden cities. In response to a parliamentary question, Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Kris Hopkins stated in January 2014 that the Government supported "garden city design in locally-led developments," but that it had "absolutely no plans to impose new towns on any part of the country."⁶

2.2 Home ownership

In his Colchester speech, David Cameron reaffirmed a commitment to run a budget surplus by 2018 and continue deficit reduction measures which he argued would keep interest rates, and therefore mortgage payments, low.

There were also measures announced to increase home ownership and get more people on the property ladder. The Help to Buy equity loan scheme, providing up to 20% equity loans to first-time buyers and home movers, will be extended until 2020.

The Chancellor George Osborne announced plans to further extend the Help to Buy scheme in his 2015 Budget speech through the introduction of a Help to Buy ISA. This would contribute an additional 25% to any money saved for a deposit by a first time buyer, up to a maximum Government contribution of £3,000.⁷

The Prime Minister also committed in his Colchester speech to continue "backing the Right-to-Buy" policy of allowing council tenants to buy their property at a discount, although no specific measures were outlined. Potential changes to Right-to-Buy to be included in the Conservative manifesto have been reported by some newspapers (see section 2.4 below).

2.3 Private rented sector

Measures to increase security for private renters announced in Colchester were largely continuations of policies already in place. The focus was on introducing as few new regulations as possible, instead continuing to encourage landlords to voluntarily offer longer-term tenancies.

Equally the commitment to end 'retaliatory evictions' for reporting maintenance issues to a landlord comes from amendments introduced to the [Deregulation Bill](#) in December 2014.⁸

The Government has also committed £400m in low cost loans to build 10,000 'Rent-to-Buy' homes. These will be fixed at below market rent for 7 years, before giving the tenant first

⁵ Written Statement HCWS324 [[Starter Homes](#)] 2 March 2015

⁶ [HC Deb 17 January 2014 c694W](#)

⁷ HM Treasury, [Help to Buy: ISA – scheme outline](#), 18 March 2015

⁸ [Deregulation Bill](#), clause 34 amendments to be moved on report, 4 December 2014

refusal to buy the property.⁹ It is also still to allocate approximately £750m of its £1bn 'build-to-rent' fund to build 10,000 new homes for market rent.¹⁰

2.4 Social housing

In December 2014, the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles announced the Government's affordable homes programme, with a target to provide 275,000 new affordable homes between 2015 and 2020 (55,000 per year).¹¹

Eric Pickles also announced in March 2015 a 'right to move' policy. This would ensure social tenants, who need to move to another part of the country for work or an apprenticeship, have 'reasonable priority' on the housing register in the new area.¹²

Although not officially announced as policy commitments, potential changes to Right-to-Buy have been reported in the media. *The Telegraph* reported that Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith is in favour of extending the Right-to-Buy to housing association tenants.¹³

The Times reported an additional proposal by Mr Duncan Smith to gift ownership of their homes to council houses tenants who come off benefits and stay in work for a year.¹⁴ Although not confirmed by the Conservative Party, a later report from *Inside Housing* suggested that this policy proposal had been withdrawn.¹⁵

2.5 Welfare & taxation

In an interview at the 2014 Conservative Party conference, David Cameron committed to remove Housing Benefit from unemployed people aged 18 to 21, as well as reducing the benefit cap per household (including Housing Benefit) from £26,000 to £23,000 per year.¹⁶

George Osborne announced in his speech to conference that working age benefits, including Housing Benefit, would be frozen for 2 years.¹⁷

According to reports prior to the 2015 Budget, Conservative plans to increase the inheritance tax threshold from £325,000 to £1million were blocked by the Liberal Democrats. However, it was reported that this change is one that any future Conservative Government would consider.¹⁸

3 Labour

Labour's main policy announcements on housing have come from Ed Miliband's '[generation rent](#)' speech in Redbridge to launch the European election campaign in May 2014¹⁹, and the Labour-commissioned [Lyons housing review](#).²⁰

⁹ DCLG press release, [New 'Rent to Buy' scheme to help young people save and move up housing ladder](#), 26 September 2014

¹⁰ Homes and Communities Agency, [Build to rent: round 2 signed contracts](#), 24 February 2015

¹¹ DCLG press release, [New measures will provide thousands of new homes](#), 2 December 2014

¹² DCLG press release, [New support for social tenants who want to work](#), 9 March 2015

¹³ *The Telegraph*, ['Right to Buy could be extended to housing association property'](#), 21 January 2015

¹⁴ *The Times*, ['Get a free council house for coming off benefits'](#), 12 February 2015

¹⁵ *Inside Housing*, ['Conservatives 'extending Right to Buy to housing associations''](#), 23 March 2015

¹⁶ *BBC News*, ['Tories would tighten benefit cap to fund apprenticeships'](#), 28 September 2014

¹⁷ CCHQ press, [George Osborne: Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2014](#), 29 September 2014

¹⁸ *The Times*, ['Tories propose inheritance tax 'giveaway' on £1m homes'](#), 17 March 2015

¹⁹ *New Statesman*, ['Ed Miliband's speech on Generation Rent: full text'](#), 1 May 2014

Although Ed Miliband established the housing commission which carried out the Lyons review, it is not expected that all 39 of its recommendations will become Labour policy. For example, the review recommends an immediate review of Right-to-Buy, with Sir Michael Lyons himself predicting an end to the policy within 5 years. The Shadow Housing Minister Emma Reynolds has stated that it is not Labour’s policy to scrap the Right-to-Buy.²¹

Recommendations from Lyons are therefore only included where they have also been publicly advocated by a member of the shadow frontbench.

3.1 Housebuilding

The terms of reference of the Lyons review were to assess how Labour could meet its commitment of building 200,000 new houses per year by 2020; it recommended the following housing delivery figures:

	2000-07 average	2013	2020 target
Volume housebuilders	82,400	65,600	101,100
SME housebuilders	38,300	13,900	25,000
Custom/ self-build	12,000	7,500	15,000
Institutional private rented sector	-	-	8,700
Housing associations and local authorities	17,000	22,400	50,200
Total	149,700	109,400	200,000

A number of measures were suggested to meet this target, including the creation of a New Homes Corporation funded by Government, which would seek new partners for private investment and commission developers to build out sites “at pace”.²² Ed Miliband confirmed this would be Labour policy at the 2014 party conference.

The increase in small and medium enterprises (SME) housebuilders will come through a new ‘help-to-build’ scheme, which will give Treasury guarantees on low cost bank lending. There will also be a requirement for local authorities to introduce fast-track planning on sites of less than 10 homes, and to include a higher proportion of small sites in their five-year land supply.²³

Lyons proposed these corporations could help with the development of new garden cities, garden suburbs and new towns, delivering up to 500,000 homes, a figure also cited in Ed Miliband’s 2014 party conference speech.²⁴ The delivery of this, and of other new

²⁰ Lyons Housing Review, *Mobilising across the nation to build the homes our children need*, 16 October 2014

²¹ *Express and Star*, ‘Right to Buy failed, says Ed Miliband’s housing guru’, 4 March 2015

²² *Inside Housing*, ‘Labour announces new homes corporations to boost development’, 20 September 2014

²³ Labour press, *Labour will get Britain building and help the next generation on to the property ladder – Emma Reynolds*, 27 January 2015

²⁴ *New Statesman*, ‘Ed Miliband’s speech to the Labour conference: full text’, 23 September 2014

developments, is to be aided by a new 'right to grow' for local authorities if they have housing need but have no space to meet these within their own boundaries.²⁵

Emma Reynolds announced that Labour will consider a review of planning rules which have a presumption in favour of development where no local plan is in place, as part of a devolution of planning power to local authorities.²⁶ Shadow Communities Secretary Hilary Benn also stated a commitment to devolution and noted that, whilst Labour supported the green belt, it would be for local authorities to decide whether or not to build on it.²⁷

In order to speed up developments, Labour plan to introduce a 'use it or lose it' power for local authorities on land with planning permission that is not being developed. Local authorities can either remove the planning permission or issue a compulsory purchasing order on the land.²⁸

Local authorities may also be able to pool unused borrowing capacity in their housing revenue accounts in order to fund the construction of new houses.²⁹

In addition to the proposed introduction of several new schemes to support housebuilding, Ed Miliband announced in December 2014 that a Labour Government would scrap the New Homes Bonus scheme for local authorities, calling it "regressive and ineffective".³⁰

3.2 Home ownership

The increase in the number of houses to be built is the main instrument Labour has set out to meet its target of doubling the number of first-time buyers who get on the housing ladder each year by 2025.³¹

The Lyons review also set out plans to allow local authorities to give preference to first-time buyers from the local area for new build housing. This commitment was reiterated in a press release ahead of a 'people's question time' event with Ed Miliband in Hove.³²

Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls has called for the Help to Buy scheme limits to be cut from £600,000 to under £400,000.³³

3.3 Private rented sector

In addition to the increase in new build private rented sector properties funded by institutional capital set out in the Lyons review, Labour has set out a number of policies for tenants in private rental accommodation.

In his 'generation rent' speech in Redbridge, Ed Miliband set out three policies specifically for renters:

- Introducing a national register of landlords;

²⁵ Labour press, [Emma Reynolds speech – the choice on housing](#), 31 July 2014

²⁶ *Inside Housing*, ['Shadow housing minister hints at planning rules reform'](#), 22 September 2014

²⁷ *The Telegraph*, ['Labour: let councils decide on green belt developments'](#), 18 May 2014

²⁸ Emma Reynolds MP, [Speech by Emma Reynolds MP, Labour's Shadow Housing Minister to the National House-Building Council Annual Lunch](#), 20 November 2014

²⁹ *Inside Housing*, ['Labour considers allowing councils to share borrowing capacity'](#), 25 September 2014

³⁰ *Inside Housing*, ['Labour would scrap New Homes Bonus if elected'](#), 12 December 2014

³¹ *New Statesman*, ['Ed Miliband's speech to the Labour conference: full text'](#), 23 September 2014

³² *The Guardian*, ['Ed Miliband dismisses Cameron's housing plans as 'pie-in-the-sky''](#), 2 March 2015

³³ *The Guardian*, ['Cut Help to Buy, start helping to build, says Ed Balls'](#), 14 March 2014

- Banning letting agencies from charging fees to tenants;
- Legislating to make three year, rather than six month, tenancies the norm, with a ceiling on rent rises throughout the period.³⁴

3.4 Social housing

There have not yet been many specific announcements on social housing. It is likely that the significant majority of 50,200 local authority and housing association properties targeted for 2020 in the Lyons review will be social housing.

Labour has announced that it will repeal the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit for social tenants (see section below).

3.5 Welfare and taxation

In his 2013 party conference speech, Ed Miliband committed Labour to getting rid of the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit (also known as the “bedroom tax” or “spare room subsidy”):

David Cameron was the Prime Minister who introduced the bedroom tax, I’ll be the Prime Minister who repeals the bedroom tax.³⁵

At the following year’s party conference, Ed Balls confirmed this would take place in Labour’s first budget.³⁶

With regards to the Government’s benefit cap, Labour has indicated its preference for a regional rather than a national cap, taking into consideration regional housing costs.³⁷

In addition to benefits reform, Labour has outlined new commitments regarding taxation of housing, including the so-called ‘mansion tax’. This will be a monthly charge for homes valued at over £2million, starting at £250 per month for houses between £2million and £3million. It is estimated this could raise £1.2billion per year, which has been earmarked for NHS funding.³⁸

Local authorities may also be given new powers to charge double their usual Council Tax on properties which are left empty for more than a year.³⁹

4 Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats published in August 2014 a [pre-manifesto](#), including a section on housing. This builds on a previous 2012 policy paper, [Decent homes for all](#). A number of points from the pre-manifesto were passed in a 2014 party conference motion, [Building the affordable homes we need](#), which gives a good indication of Liberal Democrat housing priorities.

³⁴ *New Statesman*, ‘[Ed Miliband’s speech on Generation Rent: full text](#)’, 1 May 2014

³⁵ *New Statesman*, ‘[Ed Miliband’s speech to the Labour conference: full text](#)’, 24 September 2013

³⁶ Labour press, [Speech by Ed Balls MP to Labour Party Annual Conference in Manchester 2014](#), 22 September 2014

³⁷ *BBC News*, ‘[Labour to oppose national benefit cap plan](#)’, 29 January 2012

³⁸ Labour press, [Labour’s Mansion Tax: Six things you need to know](#), 18 November 2014

³⁹ *Financial Times*, ‘[Labour plans higher council tax for empty homeowners](#)’, 6 May 2014

4.1 Housebuilding

The pre-manifesto sets a target of 300,000 new houses per year by the end of the next parliament, with a detailed plan on how to achieve this to be published within the first year.⁴⁰ Although specifics of this plan are yet to be established, a number of commitments have been announced that will likely play a part in any future housing plan.

The pre-manifesto committed this plan to include proposals for at least ten garden cities. In an article written for *The Telegraph*, Nick Clegg stated that these would be “where there is clear local support and private sector appetite”.⁴¹

At the 2014 party conference, a motion was passed which would set up a housing investment bank.⁴²

The pre-manifesto would also introduce new responsibilities for local authorities to allocate land to meet 15 years’ housing needs in their local plans. The conference motion advocated increased use of Local Housing Companies, allowing local authorities to invest outside of their Housing Revenue Accounts.

Although not set out in any official policy document, Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander advocated in October 2014 giving central Government the power to directly commission housebuilding. This would be a significant change from the current system of local authority and market-driven housebuilding.⁴³

4.2 Home ownership

The 2014 conference motion advocated investment in tenures allowing home ownership for low and middle income families, including shared ownership and Rent-to-Buy. At the party’s 2015 spring conference, the Liberal Democrats set out a commitment on Rent-to-Own, which would designate 30,000 new homes as Rent-to-Own by 2020. These would see tenants’ rent payments being used to build up ownership in the property over 30 years.⁴⁴

At the 2014 party conference, delegates also voted to change the policy on Right-to-Buy, allowing local authorities to suspend the scheme in their area if they so wished.

The party put out a press release on the day of the Budget 2015, stating that it was “packed with Liberal Democrat policies” including a “£3,000 bonus for first time buyers”, in reference to the new Help to Buy ISA (see section 2.2).⁴⁵

4.3 Private rented sector

After Sarah Teather’s Private Member’s Bill aimed at tackling ‘retaliatory eviction’ failed to complete its Second Reading stage, Liberal Democrat Peers tabled amendments to the *Deregulation Bill* to the same end. Subsequently the Government tabled its own amendments which have attracted Liberal Democrat support.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Liberal Democrats, *Pre-Manifesto 2014: A stronger economy and a fairer society*, August 2014.

⁴¹ *The Telegraph*, ‘Nick Clegg: Garden cities are the answer to a housing problem we can’t ignore any more’, 17 January 2014

⁴² Liberal Democrats, *F21: Building the affordable homes we need*, 6 October 2014

⁴³ *BBC News*, ‘Give ministers power to build new homes – Danny Alexander’, 6 October 2014

⁴⁴ *BBC News*, ‘Lib Dems in ‘rent-to-own’ homes election pledge’, 13 March 2015

⁴⁵ Liberal Democrats, *Budget 2015 packed with Liberal Democrat policies*, 18 March 2015

⁴⁶ Liberal Democrats, *Protecting tenants from revenge evictions*, 5 February 2015

The 2012 policy paper, *Decent homes for all*, proposed a new, three-year tenancy, although its introduction was to be encouraged rather than legislated for. This new tenancy could also see landlords reducing some of their maintenance responsibilities in return for lower rents.⁴⁷

In its pre-manifesto, the party also committed to introduce new energy efficiency standards for private rented homes.

4.4 Social housing

Prior to the 2014 party conference, Liberal Democrats announced plans to offer incentives to housing associations to 'split up' homes where tenants were under-occupying. These could be divided into flats to prevent under-occupation, to work alongside the party's policy on the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit (see section 4.5).⁴⁸

As part of a programme of 'everyday democracy', the pre-manifesto also sees a commitment to promote tenant management in social housing.

4.5 Welfare and taxation

The Liberal Democrats have committed to a reform of the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit (otherwise known as the "bedroom tax" or the "spare room subsidy"). The pre-manifesto sets out the proposed reforms:

We will reform the policy to remove the spare room subsidy. The subsidy will continue to be removed for new tenants in social housing but existing social tenants will not be subject to any housing benefit deduction until they have received a reasonable offer of alternative social rented accommodation with the correct number of bedrooms. We will ensure that tenants who need an extra bedroom for genuine medical reasons or whose homes are substantially adapted do not have their housing benefit reduced.

A 'mansion tax' on homes worth over £2million is also proposed, however unlike Labour's commitment, the money is not earmarked for any particular purpose.

Business Secretary Vince Cable has also publicly advocated the introduction of an annual land value tax for homeowners.⁴⁹ The only official commitment to this in the pre-manifesto is in relation to business premises, where it is cited as a 'longer term' ambition beyond the next parliament.

5 UK Independence Party

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) has not produced any policy documents on housing, but its housing spokesperson Andrew Charalambous' 2014 and 2015 conference speeches have outlined some of the party's housing priorities.

5.1 Housebuilding

UKIP have set a target of 1million houses to be built on brownfield sites by 2025, with a series of policies to help encourage this:

- Brownfield bonds;

⁴⁷ Liberal Democrats, *Decent homes for all: Policies on housing – policy paper 104*, August 2012

⁴⁸ *Inside Housing*, 'Lib Dems to offer associations incentives to split up family sized homes', 9 October 2014

⁴⁹ *The Telegraph*, 'Vince Cable backs land tax for home owners', 15 September 2013

- Brownfield decontamination assessment grants;
- Removing stamp duty from brownfield first builds;
- Removing VAT from brownfield conversion costs;
- Establishment of a UK Brownfield Agency to collate data for a national register.⁵⁰

Protection of the green belt and the countryside is a key commitment. In response to a Government announcement of a new garden city, UKIP MEP Bill Etheridge cited this as evidence of an “aggressive anti-countryside agenda”.⁵¹

The party has also announced plans to allow the removal of planning permission for large-scale developments through a referendum, which can be triggered by the signatures of 5% of local electors collected within three months.⁵²

5.2 Home ownership

In his 2015 spring conference speech, Mr Charalambous announced that UKIP would remove the Right-to-Buy for foreign nationals, except for those that had served in the armed forces.

He also committed to reform leasehold law, making it easier for leaseholders to extend their leases and to challenge service charges.⁵³

5.3 Private rented sector

In an interview with *Inside Housing*, Mr Charalambous set out UKIP’s intention to introduce a ‘mediumhold’ lease for tenants for between three and five years.⁵⁴

5.4 Social housing

UKIP have argued that the local connection required for social housing priority should be stronger than it currently is, and have proposed a ‘grandparent test’, where local priority will depend on a parent or grandparent having been born in the area.⁵⁵

It has also announced an intention to bring 700,000 empty properties back into use as affordable housing, however it is not clear if these will be for rent as social housing provision, or for sale.⁵⁶

At the 2015 spring conference, Mr Charalambous announced that UKIP would introduce a duty on local authorities to provide housing to any ex-serviceperson “in need”.⁵⁷

Previously, the party has advocated the right to self-management in high-rise council blocks, increasing resident responsibility with regards to budgets and maintenance.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ UKIP, [Andrew Charalambous: “Vote purple, keep Britain green”](#), 26 September 2014

⁵¹ UKIP, [Brownfield development calls amid fears of a breezeblock Britain](#), 2 December 2014

⁵² UKIP, [Policies for people](#) (last accessed 13 March 2015)

⁵³ UKIP, [UKIP leading the housing debate](#), 28 February 2015

⁵⁴ *Inside Housing*, [‘Gaining ground’](#), 17 May 2013

⁵⁵ *The Telegraph*, [‘UKIP Party: social housing should be given to people whose grandparents born locally’](#), 19 September 2013

⁵⁶ *Inside Housing*, [‘UKIP targets empty homes and brownfield sites’](#), 26 September 2014

⁵⁷ UKIP official YouTube channel, [Leading the Way in Housing Policy - Andrew Charalambous - UKIP Spring Conference 2015](#), 6 March 2015

⁵⁸ *Inside Housing*, [‘Gaining ground’](#), 17 May 2013

5.5 Welfare and taxation

UKIP has committed to repealing the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit,⁵⁹ and has previously advocated all Local Housing Allowance be paid directly to landlords rather than tenants.⁶⁰

In his 2015 conference speech, Mr Charalambous committed to improve health and support services for rough sleepers.⁶¹

6 Green Party

Apart from a recent Green Party's commitment on social housing, the majority of the party's proposals on housing come from a [policy document](#), last amended in September 2014 following their autumn party conference.⁶²

6.1 Housebuilding

The only publicly announced housebuilding targets by the Green Party have been specifically related to social housing (see section 6.4).

The policy document announces that:

All new houses will be built to improved standards for accessibility, space and facilities, ergonomics, sound and thermal insulation, and energy efficiency.

These standards are to be applied retrospectively to existing houses "where practicable". It also states that new large developments and developments on green field sites will require independent environmental impact assessments.

The policy document also commits to encourage self-build schemes, with unemployed people permitted to work on such schemes without the risk of benefit sanctions.

6.2 Home ownership

The Green Party policy document spells out an end to the Right-to-Buy, stating that each local authority should decide which, if any, properties should be sold, and that tenant discounts would end. This was reiterated by party leader Natalie Bennett, who confirmed the policy at a Sky News' 'stand up and be counted' event in February 2015.⁶³

It is intended that it will be replaced by a 'Right-to-Rent' policy, with homeowners under threat of repossession gaining the right to transfer the property to council ownership at less than market rate, and to remain in the property as council tenants.

In order to fund the party's commitment to build new council housing (see section 6.4), the Green Party have committed to scrap mortgage interest tax allowance for buy-to-let mortgage holders.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ UKIP, [Policies for people](#) (last accessed 13 March 2015)

⁶⁰ *Inside Housing*, 'Gaining ground', 17 May 2013

⁶¹ UKIP official YouTube channel, [Leading the Way in Housing Policy - Andrew Charalambous - UKIP Spring Conference 2015](#), 6 March 2015

⁶² Green Party, [Housing: Part of the Green Party Policies for a Sustainable Society](#), September 2014

⁶³ *Sky News*, 'Greens call for 'Peaceful Political Revolution'', 2 February 2015

⁶⁴ *Inside Housing*, 'Green goals', 16 February 2015

6.3 Private rented sector

Although the policy document states that “this (private rented) sector needs to have rents controlled”, no further detail is provided. In June 2014, the party’s MP Caroline Lucas called for the establishment of a living rent commission to set a voluntary, ‘living rent’, and to cap rent rises at the rate of inflation.⁶⁵

The policy document calls for the registration of all private rents, and for the gradual phasing out of assured shorthold tenancies to be replaced by more stable, assured tenancies.

There is also a call for new legislation to “protect civil liberties in the home”, giving all tenants the right to keep pets and to make environmental modifications such as the installation of solar panels.

6.4 Social housing

In February 2015, the Green Party announced a target to build 500,000 new council homes by 2020.⁶⁶ As mentioned above (see section 6.2), this would be partially funded through direct Government grant paid for by removal of mortgage relief for buy-to-let landlords. The party’s housing spokesperson Tom Chance also confirmed that the borrowing cap for local authorities would be lifted, funding an estimated 60,000 extra properties.⁶⁷

Changes to local authority housing provision are set out in the policy document. Historic council housing debt would be assumed by central Government. With regards to homelessness housing provision, local authorities would no longer be able to classify people as ‘intentionally homeless’ and therefore refuse to provide housing, and temporary housing of homeless people in hostels and B&Bs would also be stopped.

The document also sets out reforms to housing associations, which would be made more democratic through changes in internal governance and by breaking up some of the larger associations. Housing co-operatives would also be promoted.

6.5 Welfare and taxation

A long-term policy commitment from the Green Party is to replace all benefits, including Housing Benefit, with a £72 per week ‘citizens’ income’. As this is phased in a means-tested, regional Housing Benefit would be introduced, related not only to rent payments but also to mortgage repayments. There have been differing statements from Caroline Lucas and from the party’s deputy leader, Shahrar Ali, on the question of when this policy would be implemented.⁶⁸

More immediate commitments outlined in the policy document are:

- Higher Council Tax for empty properties;
- New Council Tax bands above band H for high-value properties;
- A one-off grant for homeless people moving into unfurnished homes;
- Insulation grants for low-income households.

⁶⁵ Caroline Lucas, *Generation Rent*, 25 June 2014

⁶⁶ Green Party, *Policy Brief: 500,000 new social rented homes by 2020*, February 2015

⁶⁷ *Inside Housing*, ‘Green goals’, 16 February 2015

⁶⁸ *New Statesman*, ‘Green deputy leaders contradict Caroline Lucas: Citizens’ Income will be in the manifesto’, 9 February 2015

In addition, a commitment to a long-term phasing out of Council Tax in favour of a land value tax is also set out.

Although not included in the policy document, the Green Party has expressed its intention to get rid of the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit.⁶⁹

7 Housing organisation manifestos

In addition to the parties' manifestos, which are expected following the dissolution of parliament, a number of housing organisations have also produced election manifestos. A selection of these are listed below:

[National Housing Federation](#)

['The Property Professionals'](#) (joint document from NAEA, ARLA, ICBA, NAVA and APIP)

[National Federation of Builders](#)

[Council of Mortgage Lenders](#)

[British Property Federation](#)

[Residential Landlords Association](#)

[National Federation of ALMOs](#)

[Generation Rent](#)

⁶⁹ Green Party, ['Green Party leader speaks out against bedroom tax as she visits Tameside homelessness project'](#), 28 March 2014