

Nine key things we learned about planning from the Labour Party Conference

Labour this week held its first party conference since its victory in May's general election. Here are nine key planning messages from the event.

by [Samantha Eckford](#) 26 September 2024



Labour conference

- 1. The publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) “may” be delayed until the new year.** Speaking at the conference on Sunday (22 September), Lords minister for housing and local government Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, said the government had so far received “thousands and thousands” of responses to the consultation. The draft document proposed a series of wide-ranging changes to the planning system and was [published for consultation in July](#). According to the minister, the government will issue the revised NPPF “maybe later on this year”, although it “may take into next year because there’s a lot of responses”. [More](#)
- 2. The government intends to publish a new white paper setting out how mayors will be given more planning powers.** In her opening address to the conference, deputy prime minister Angela Rayner said that the government would bring forward a white paper mapping out “how we will move power out of Whitehall” to give mayors more housing and planning powers. Rayner also announced that the government would “move forward” with two investment zones, one focused on advanced manufacturing in the West Midlands and another on life sciences in West Yorkshire. [More](#)
- 3. The chancellor vowed in her conference speech to continue “ripping out the blockages” in the planning system.** Chancellor Rachel Reeves used her address at the conference to highlight that the new Labour government had “wasted no time in ripping out the blockages in our planning system” in order “to get Britain building again”. The Labour MP for Leeds

West and Pudsey assured attendees that the new Labour government wouldn't "stop there". [More](#)

4. Communities were told by the prime minister that they would have to accept new development in their areas. Prime minister Sir Keir Starmer warned communities that they will have to accept new homes, prisons and electricity pylons as he promised in his conference speech to make the tough decisions to get housing and energy infrastructure built. In his keynote speech on Tuesday (24 September) he noted the need for such developments, saying that "as we take on those massive challenges the Tories ignored, the time is long overdue for politicians to level with you about the trade-offs this country faces". [More](#)

5. The planning minister said the shortage of planners "keep[s] me up at night". Planning minister Matthew Pennycook told a conference fringe event that planning capacity "is a challenge". "These are the sorts of things that keep me up at night," he added. "We have lost a lot of planners out of the system over many, many years". [More](#)

6. The government's new towns advisory panel has been asked to name 'no brainer' locations before publishing its final report. At its first meeting this month, the panel, led by Sir Michael Lyons, was given 12 months to write its report by communities secretary Angela Rayner. But planning minister Matthew Pennycook told a conference fringe event that the government is encouraging its advisory panel on potential new town locations to name strong "no-brainer" candidates before the September 2025 deadline. Pennycook said: "If they say site X is an absolute no-brainer, and we should just get moving on it, come and tell us before." [More](#)

7. The president of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) defended the planning system against an MP's claim it is "broken". RTPI president Lindsey Richards denied claims by newly-elected Labour MP for Milton Keynes North Chris Curtis that the planning system is "broken". Richards said the system is "not broken", and planning is "not a blocker, we are an enabler". Meanwhile, Curtis noted that "too few places in the country have local plans in place, and [...]that's fundamentally the problem, and that, to me, is illustrative of a broken planning system". [More](#)

8. Rayner refused to commit to specific national targets for social housing. The housing minister told a fringe event on Sunday that she had "been honest about not putting a figure" on the number of social homes that will need to be built each year, when asked about housing charity Shelter's "ambitious target" of 90,000 social homes a year. But Rayner did reiterate the party's pledge to deliver the "biggest wave of social housing in a generation" and declared it a "moral mission". [More](#)

9. Councils and housing associations need to build 100,000 homes a year if the government is to hit its housing targets, according to a trade body chief. The chief executive of the National Housing Federation (NHF) Kate Henderson said that while the private sector "will make a really important contribution" towards delivering 300,000 homes per year, it is "never going to go further than 200,000 homes per year", Henderson said, meaning councils and housing associations would need to build 100,000 homes each year, but this would require "a considerable investment programme from government", she added. [More](#)