Tackling the housing shortage will be one of the next Labour government’s top priorities. That’s because for many people the dream of home ownership is slipping out of reach. Under this government, home ownership is at its lowest level since the 1980s. That should be no surprise, when it is presiding over the lowest level of house building in peacetime since the 1920s.

This chronic shortage of housing is having an impact across the country. Young people and families are struggling to get on the property ladder. Those renting privately are now having to pay record sums, on average 41% of their income just to keep a roof over their heads. It’s also affecting those who want to upsize to a bigger home but are finding they can’t bridge the gap between what they own and where they want to move to. And for those who have just joined a waiting list for a social home, there are 1.7 million families already in the queue.

That’s why, last year, Ed Miliband set a target for the next Labour government to build over 200,000 homes a year by 2020. It’s a big ambition. But, Labour is determined to make home ownership a realistic aspiration for the next generation.

We know that there is no single solution to tackling the housing shortage. That is why alongside our ambition, Ed Miliband tasked our housing commission, chaired by Sir Michael Lyons, to draw up a roadmap for achieving this step-change in house building.

Labour is determined to tackle the root causes of this crisis. We need to release more land for development. We will ensure that local authorities that want to expand but do not have the land can do so through a right to grow. Alongside this, Labour is determined to reform the land market. We will bring an end to land banking by giving local authorities the power to levy fines and use proper compulsory purchase powers on those who sit on land with planning permission, so that they have to use it or lose it. We also want to support more firms to enter into the market and encourage small-scale and self-build so we can make the most of all opportunities to create a thriving housebuilding industry.

That is why, earlier this year, alongside Chris Leslie, Labour’s Shadow Chief Secretary, I announced the details of Labour’s House to Help Policy specifically designed to help SME builders. In the Federation of Master Builders’ 2013 House Builder Survey, 60 per cent of members cited access to finance as a major barrier to their ability to increase their output of new homes, more than any other factor. So the next Labour Government will provide government guarantees for banks lending to SME construction firms in a similar way to how the current ‘Help to Buy’ scheme underwrites mortgages.

By itself, the private sector has never produced the number of homes we need. Therefore, we are also exploring how we can get councils, together with housing associations, back into the business of building again. Local authorities are already blazing a trail. When it comes to delivering affordable homes built to outbuild their Tory counterparts by 2 to 1.

Given the severity of the shortage, we will need some big scale solutions. New Towns and Garden Cities played an important role in delivering housing in the past. The commission will be looking at how new plans for a new generation of New Towns and Garden Cities can be realised in a way that benefits local communities.

By contrast the Tories and Lib Dems can only offer more of the same. Their initiatives to boost house building have consistently failed to deliver. The government recently announced a new Garden City in Ebbsfleet and the building of 15,000 homes, but this is 5,000 fewer homes than those announced for the same place in 2012.

Their biggest initiative, Help to Buy, is, it is true, helping to boost demand but the Government hasn’t understood basic economics. Boosting demand without boosting supply will simply see prices pushed out of reach of aspiring buyers.

The next Labour government will succeed where this government has failed. Nobody should be in any doubt about our determination to deliver the reforms we need to double house building, restore the dream of home ownership and to give families the security of a home they can afford.

A Labour Government will tackle the Housing Crisis

by Emma Reynolds MP, Shadow Housing Minister

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Strategic Planning and Housing Crisis: the Sino-British Tales

by Professor Cecilia Wong, Professor of Spatial Planning and Director of Centre for Urban Policy Studies, The University of Manchester

We have slowly climbed out from the longest and deepest recession since the Second World War, although the recovery remains fragile compared to 1930s. The dominant news headlines have also returned to the pre-recession narratives. The UK housing market, for example, has been in the news headlines for several years. The government’s recent increase in stamp duty may be seen as a PR exercise. However, the sharp contrast between the housing costs caused by the shortage of affordable homes leave more and more people priced out of a home of their own.

The triple helix of market reforms, globalisation and the extraordinary rate of urbanisation have been described as the factors that motivate key stakeholders to develop regional plans to express their visions of sustainable development and to coordinate regional growth patterns in China. In spite of significant efforts to produce strategic urban plans, there have failed to provide the necessary vision and horizon to address the socio-economic and environmental challenges. The way the UK Coalition Government has managed the economic downturn has been to dismantle regional planning and strategic planning in England. While, we have abolished strategic and regional plans, the state government in China has initiated their preparation, including the well-known regional plans for the Pearl River Delta and the Yangtze River Delta. These regional plans include the development of rural lands, and they are powerful strategic instruments to coordinate major regional infrastructure systems, industrial development and the use of development resources across planning departments and other related stakeholders.

In financial terms, it is surprising to know that the typical government in China enjoys much more autonomy than in Britain. China has a multi-level government structure that shares national tax revenues through inter-governmental transfers. Although local government does not have discretionary power to modify inter-governmental transfers, they are powerful strategic instruments to coordinate major regional infrastructure systems, industrial development and the use of development resources across planning departments and other related stakeholders.

The discussion shows that there is not any easy solution to resolve a housing crisis and the two countries have very different policy, institutional and cultural traditions. However, the sharp contrast between the British and the Chinese approaches is that the latter still regards planning as a lubricant to oil the growth machinery by coordinating land use and to enhance the circulation of capital, commodities and information. The evidence of the latest regional planning trends in China largely confirms its strategic value as a means to state resource constraints for urban growth and to get all key stakeholders around the planning table. There is a need to reduce stamp duty to stimulate housing market and to provide affordable homes and infrastructure, the strategic coordination of spatial integration and clear leadership from central government has to be part of the policy package.
Why does older people housing matter for all of us?

**By Joe Oldman, Housing Policy Adviser, AgeUK**

Age UK has recently published its ‘Housing in Later Life’ report looking at some of the key issues affecting the housing choices available to all of us as we get older. This coincides with a number of important policy developments including the announcement of a new accessibility standard for all newly built homes, an increased focus of the development of adaptations services to help older people live independently, the Care Act 2014 placing greater emphasis on the role of housing in the delivery of health and social care, and calls for a dramatic increase in the supply of retirement housing.

The average cost of providing these features is £1,500, a small amount when compared with the savings achieved by a stair lift, sufficient turning space for a wheelchair, and inclusive controls, handles and levers that work for everyone. And the West has, of course, its very expensive concomitant of colonialism. The Chinese can say they colonised nothing, but the Chinese hallmark of huge domestic liquidity reserves, based on a bet. The bet is that China

Do not hallucinate.
Membership Application Form

Yes, I wish to join Chinese for Labour

Personal details

Title
Surname
Forenames
Address:
Postcode:
Home Tel No:
Mobile No:
Trade Union (optional):
Occupation:
Email address:

Type of Membership & Fees

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Individual Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed/student over 60 years</td>
<td>£5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation (if applicable)</td>
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Methods of Payment

By Cheque:
Please make cheque payable to Chinese for Labour.

By Standing Order:
Please complete the form on the next page.

Declaration:
I/my Organisation am/is (delete as appropriate) not a member of any other Political Party or Political Organisation.

Signed:
Please send the completed Application Form to:
PO Box 277, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 1DR.

www.chineseforlabour.org.uk
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Branch:
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£5
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