

**Westminster Social Policy Forum conference:
Next steps for developing new towns in England**

Timing: Morning, Friday, 18th September 2026

*****Taking Place Online*****

Draft agenda subject to change



**WESTMINSTER
SOCIAL POLICY
FORUM**

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Key recommendations from the New Towns Taskforce Report and progress so far**
Dame Kate Barker, former Deputy Chair, New Towns Taskforce
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Practical considerations for new towns development - funding, planning and delivery**
assessing funding programmes and support measures / alternative models for investment and financing / land value capture, tax increment funding and the National Housing Bank / infrastructure-first delivery / considerations for land assembly and compulsory purchase / use of Planning and Infrastructure Act powers / mitigating impacts on the historic and natural environments / findings from the Strategic Environmental Assessments / Green Belt and NPPF reform / integration of net zero development principles / masterplanning and coordinated delivery / expectations for development corporations / transport, utilities and digital connectivity / delivering BNG and nature recovery requirements on large sites / practicalities for procurement and cost-efficiency
Paul Thomas, Director, Planning and Placemaking, Milton Keynes City Council
William Smith, Director, Planning, Berkeley Group
Robert Lloyd-Sweet, Head, Devolution and Local Government Policy, Historic England
Caroline Foster, Development Director, Urban&Civic
Liz Garlinge, Director, Network Development, National Highways
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.20 **Delivering housing at scale - new towns, local priorities and strategic growth**
Sarah Greenwood, Programme Director, New Towns, Homes England
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Lord Best, Co-chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on New Towns
- 11.05 **New towns in practice - regional growth and local priorities**
Lee Arnell, Head, Place and Regeneration Programmes, Leeds City Council
- 11.15 **Leadership, skills and delivery mechanisms for new towns development**
practicalities for delivery and oversight of developments / collaboration mechanisms with development corporations / coordination across national government, Homes England, local authorities, infrastructure providers and developers / sequencing delivery and managing risk / Technical Excellence Colleges and construction skills funding / workforce capacity and supply chains / maximising local employment benefits / opportunities for small and medium-sized developers and contractors / maintaining quality and addressing delay risks
Simon Rawlinson, Deputy Chair, Construction Industry Council; and Head, Strategic Research and Insight, Arcadis
Jo Hall, Director, North West Construction Technical College
Senior speaker confirmed from **Anglian Water**
- 11.30 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.50 **Lessons for delivery, governance and stewardship**
Senior representative, development corporation
- 12.00 **Long-term considerations for placemaking, social inclusion and community engagement**
implementing New Towns Planning Policy and New Towns Placemaking Principles / community engagement and building public trust in the programme / placemaking and social cohesion in new towns / lessons from current developments, Garden Cities and previous new towns / long-term stewardship arrangements / delivering services, amenities, and social and cultural infrastructure / aligning new towns with SDGs and Local Plans / affordable housing mix and tenure diversification / social inclusion and accessibility / stewardship and delivery of green spaces / alignment with growth corridors, economic clusters and strategic sectors
Fiona Howie, Director, Communities and Placemaking, Cratus Group
Dr Mike Burke, Sustainable Development Portfolio Director, Natural England
John Lewis, Executive Director, Sustainable Places, Peabody
Councillor Tom Plater, Cabinet Member, Resources and Transformation, Stevenage Borough Council
Senior speaker confirmed from **The Landscape Institute**
- 12.25 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.45 **Next steps for delivering the new towns programme**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.10 **Chair's and Westminster Social Policy Forum closing remarks**
Lord Best, Co-chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on New Towns
Harry Nelson, Westminster Social Policy Forum