

Building consensus for building homes

A practical communications guide to increase support in communities

Most people are concerned about the shortage of decent and affordable homes in the UK and support the broad idea that we need to build more. Yet we can sometimes face opposition when making the case for building more homes in people's communities, or on the green belt.

This practical guide looks at how we can frame our communications in ways that tap into collective concern, overcome barriers, and boost support.



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Start with why this matters for us all: we have a shared, moral responsibility

We need to open up people's thinking beyond a limited view of their individual interests. Reminding people that everyone needs a decent home they can afford – and that we have a moral responsibility to help make this happen – positions the need to build more new homes as a collective issue.

Talking about moral responsibility taps into a deeply shared belief that guides our thinking and behaviour. When we establish this common ground, it gives people a reason to care and helps to create a sense of shared moral obligation. This makes it harder for people to detach and distance themselves from those who would benefit from more homes being built. It makes the issue about all of us, not just 'other people'.

- ▶ Use words like 'we', 'us' and 'our' to build a sense that we're all in this together.
- ▶ Appeal to people's moral responsibility with phrases like "do the right thing", "live up to our responsibility", "do our bit", "play our part".

For example:

"It's only right that everyone should have a decent and affordable place to call home. By building more homes in <location> **we can play our part** in making that a reality."



Show why new homes are needed: harness explanation

To win hearts and minds, we must do more than *tell* people that new homes are necessary; we need to *show* them why.

People might think, for example, that there are enough empty homes to fulfil local need, or that brownfield sites would provide sufficient land for homes in the right places. Whilst agreeing that these approaches are part of the solution, we have to clearly explain why we still must build more new homes.

- ▶ Break it down: use step-by-step explanation to walk people through why building new homes in their community is needed.
- ▶ Put data in context: tell the story behind the stats, such as the number of empty homes not being enough to meet local demand; or the number of people who have been living in temporary accommodation in the area for long periods of time, and how this accommodation is not meeting their needs.
- ▶ Spell out what different types of housing are – such as social homes, affordable homes and shared ownership.



Share the vision: show the benefits of genuinely affordable homes and strong communities

Paint a picture of the positive benefits that new homes will bring – both to the people living in them, and to the wider community. Presenting this positive vision can help to show what we all have to gain from building more homes.

- ▶ Frequently make connections between our homes and our health and wellbeing.
- ▶ Give examples to illustrate different ways that new homes will positively impact people's health and wellbeing – physically and mentally.
- ▶ Talk about homes as the foundations of our lives.

For example:

"Building more social homes in <location> will give more families and young people a firm foundation to plan for the future. Instead of being priced out of the area by the cost of private renting, and living with that constant stress and uncertainty, they'll be able to settle in <location> and be part of the next generation of our community."



Putting it together

Example 1

'We' helps to make the case that we're in this together.

The 'foundation' metaphor shows the benefits that decent homes bring to our lives.

We all need a decent affordable place to call home – it's **the foundation for our lives**. That's why **we need to do our bit** in Southwark and support plans for building more social homes.

Social homes are deliberately more affordable than private renting and provide a more secure, long-term way for people to put down roots and be part of our community.

Right now 3,500 households in Southwark are living in temporary accommodation – often in **poor quality, cramped conditions, without places to prepare food; all of which puts a huge strain people's mental and physical health.**

Even if all 2,920 empty homes in Southwark were brought into use as decent quality, affordable homes, we'd still be falling short of the number that are needed to meet this essential need. And we need to make sure people can live in the right places too – close to where they go to work and school and their support networks.

By choosing to build more homes here, **we're building a firm foundation for a thriving and healthy Southwark community.**

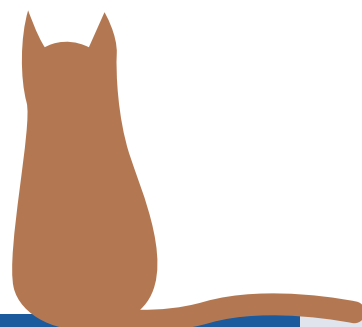
'We need to do our bit' is a nod to moral responsibility.

Spelling out what social homes are and the benefits they bring to people's lives and the wider community.

Making the connection between our homes and our health.

Putting the data in context to explain why we still need to build more homes.

Sharing the vision for people to get behind.



Example 2

'We' nods to this being an issue we all have a stake in.

'Do the right thing' and 'live up to this responsibility' invokes a sense of moral responsibility.

We all need to **do the right thing** and make sure that everyone in the UK has a decent home they can afford. To **live up to this responsibility**, we need to support plans to build more homes on a range of different sites.

Building on brownfield land is part of the answer, and we need to do more of it. But there's limited brownfield space left in many parts of the UK, much of it is taken up by other important infrastructure. Plus the need for more homes is urgent, while developing this kind of land tends to take a long time.

Building on appropriate green belt land allows us to deliver a substantial number of new homes, considerably quicker, and that will give people the homes they are desperately waiting for.

By being open to new homes, that are well-designed and well-planned, we will provide more people with a **solid foundation**. These good homes will **support people's wellbeing – building good lives** and thriving communities.'

Taking the time to explain why a range of solutions are needed.

Showing the benefits – the solid foundation that more homes would provide, and the impact of our homes on our health and wellbeing.

Further framing guides on how to talk about homes and how to grow support for building social homes can be found at www.jrf.org.uk/housing

This guide was written by Sophie Gordon, Principal Communications Strategist at FrameWorks UK, as part of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Nationwide Foundation's co-funded Talking about Homes project.

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