



This briefing sets out how the Autumn Budget 2026 can provide long-term funding and a Centre for Regeneration to support Mayoral Strategic Authorities, councils and housing associations to unlock at least 500,000 good quality homes across the North, and with it, growth in northern postcodes.

There is a housing crisis in this country, with high housing costs, rising homelessness, and long waiting lists for social housing. But the housing crisis is different in different places. In the North, there is an opportunity to deliver 500,000 good quality homes through regeneration, and in the process create the places that attract investment and foster growth:

- Empty shops and offices signal decline but replacing some of them with housing can bring new footfall to **revive half-empty high streets and town centres**. Cities across the North have plans for a combined 100,000 new homes in city centre densification, supporting stronger labour markets. These should be accelerated, and the approach should be expanded.
- 100,000 social rented homes in the North will be lost within a decade – they simply weren't built to last this long or don't meet the needs of their residents today.¹ Regenerating them means **new, healthy, energy efficient homes and renewed neighbourhoods**.
- Changing industry and business in the North means there is a large amount of brownfield land that needs remediation – almost 6,500 hectares. Where industry has been lost, an area's sense of identity has sometimes been lost with it. Northern brownfield land has capacity for 320,000 homes. **New homes bring new communities, new business and new purpose to the places that are underused.**

Housing-led regeneration generates skilled jobs, benefits local businesses, and offers opportunities for valuable training. If regeneration could be scaled up across the North, this would develop a valuable workforce. Particularly where Combined or Strategic Authorities are in place, there are opportunities to align development with skills spending, including more than £32 million they already have specifically for construction skills.

Housing-led regeneration improves streets, towns, estates, and cities. Polling shows that this is what communities want to see: investment in the quality of their homes, not just in new homes elsewhere.² Places with empty high streets, derelict land and poor-quality homes feel the impact on their wellbeing, health, and sense of community. These problems drag down land values and business confidence, holding back growth, opportunity and housebuilding. **When you regenerate, you open up land for more homes and create the conditions for investment: valuable places where developers want to build and businesses want to invest.**

¹ 100,000 homes approaching the end of their usable life by 2035. [Northern Housing Monitor | Northern Housing Consortium](#)

² YouGov found 66 per cent of English adults supported investment to 'improve existing properties to meet basic housing standards, even if it means reducing the number of homes that are built each year'. Just 15 per cent favoured the opposite: investment to 'build more new homes each year in the places that need them, even if it means neglecting improvements to existing properties'.





Regeneration can attract new residents and businesses and become a catalyst for local growth. Regeneration is better than greenfield development at bringing together people, jobs, and businesses to help local economies grow. Regeneration deepens labour markets and supports the agglomeration effects that drive productivity, innovation and higher wages. A sustained programme of housing-led regeneration that increases density in well-connected locations offers one of the strongest available mechanisms for narrowing the long-standing productivity gap between the North and the rest of the country. In the North, town and city centre regeneration is as much an economic growth strategy as it is a housing one.

Case studies: homes to strengthen two different labour markets

Salford Central is regenerating over 50 acres of underused land on the edge of Manchester City Centre. It has already contributed more than 1,000 much-needed homes of mixed tenure, helping with labour market agglomeration in a high-growth region. Alongside this, it has developed new workspace alongside a better public realm. However, the long-term masterplan faces viability gaps and a challenging process of land assembly.

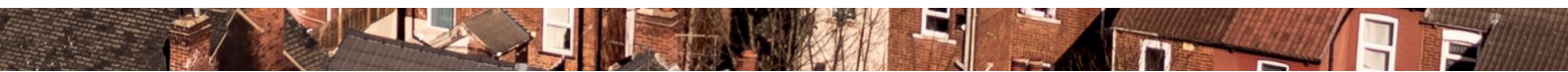
In Middlesbrough, a live-work housing development has been built on a brownfield site for the kinds of workers that the local video games industry wants to attract. A brand new secondary school has supported this, and there is space for much more housing. As the long-term local anchor institutions, the local council and local social housing providers began the transformation of the area. They intend to build more homes, which will make the area more attractive to private investment, but it takes public sector leadership and investment to make a place more attractive for the private sector to invest

However, from Salford to Teesside, this type of regeneration is too often financially unviable and this is holding back local opportunities for growth.

How the Autumn Budget can unlock housing-led regeneration across the North

Regeneration is challenging to fund and deliver anywhere, but low land values in the North hold it back further. **The places that most need regeneration for health, growth, and their community are the places where it is least financially viable to deliver.** There hasn't been any national dedicated housing regeneration programme in 15 years. This Government is investing in essential new social housing, warm homes and the Pride in Place Programme, but the Renew inquiry has identified how the Autumn Budget can unlock regeneration faster and, in more places.

The Government can support Mayoral Strategic Authorities, councils and housing associations drive growth in every postcode, create thriving communities and unlock at least 500,000 good quality homes across the North by:

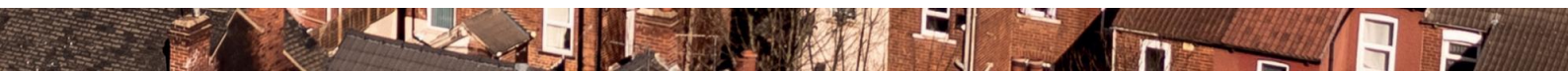




- **Establishing a new “Centre for Regeneration” in the North** to build the capacity and capability needed to deliver regeneration at scale, while supporting Mayors with workforce development. Local government has lost expertise in regeneration over decades, but establishing this as part of Homes England, would offer placements, knowledge exchange, and best practice sharing to rebuild missing capability.
- **Extending the term of the National Housing Delivery Fund to ten years**, this will help unlock all the North’s brownfield land and 320,000 new homes.
- **Providing northern Mayors and combined authorities with devolved, place-based flexible funding of £500m per year alongside existing funding.** Over ten years this investment would help transform the North's 100,000 end-of-life social homes
- **Adjusting and further devolving existing funding to better support regeneration**
 - **Give Mayors and combined authorities greater flexibility to use the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) for regeneration projects that meet local needs.** “Continuous Market Engagement” funding should not cap regeneration.
 - **Introduce Homes England performance measures focused on homes renewed and replaced, not just new homes delivered.** Current indicators are heavily weighted towards new supply, limiting investment in regeneration projects across the North.
 - **Allocate National Housing Bank funding specifically for housing-led regeneration.** This would help unlock schemes that are currently stalled by viability and funding challenges.
 - **Implement zero-rate VAT on building safety works and extend the zero-rating of energy-saving materials until 2030.** This would maintain momentum in retrofitting, improving and regenerating older and colder homes.

A Budget that makes regeneration viable and achievable across the North will mean more people have access to a warm and healthy home. It will help end neighbourhood decline with warm, healthy homes and more investable places. Renew the North to drive growth in northern postcodes.

The Renew Inquiry is bringing together northern social housing providers, Mayoral Combined Authorities, local authorities, the Government, politicians, residents, and other stakeholders who want to make sure everyone has access to a safe and warm home in a place they’re proud of. Earlier this year, we received evidence from housing associations and local authorities who own or manage nearly one million homes. That represents over





70% of the North's social housing and included evidence on 160 regeneration sites. Renew is learning from site visits across the North that have delivered regeneration and those where progress has stalled. We will also learn from tenant engagement to understand how to ensure tenant rights and benefit from regeneration, and will conduct public opinion research.

Please contact Saskia.Neibig@northern-consortium.org.uk for more detailed briefing or to get involved.

Social housing offers people safer, healthier, more secure housing than other tenures, and is an affordable, stable foundation for life. Local authorities and housing associations are anchors: they are long-term investors in neighbourhoods.

Northern Housing Consortium members provide the vast majority of social housing across the north, and we bring them together to access better value in procurement, share good practice and collaborate in Housing Partnerships. NHC provides the secretariat to seven of the nine northern housing partnerships across the strategic authorities to attract investment, co-ordinate delivery and deliver more for the regions' residents.

