



Glenda Jackson MP

**Affordable Housing
16th July 2007**

In 2005 I took part, as did London MPs from all the main parties, in an adjournment debate, the subject of which was Affordable Housing (London). A more precise title would have been the *lack of Affordable Housing!* Virtually all the contributors, regardless of party, highlighted the severe lack of decent housing with affordable rents. In an extremely helpful briefing, the London Housing Federation gave the pound, shillings and pence realities for buying and renting in Camden.

An average home in 2005 cost more than 388K, while the average gross income for someone in full-time employment was just over 34K. Renting one bedroom property, within the private sector was more than £215 per week. For a 3-bedroom house, the average was more than £356 per week while the average weekly take-home pay, was just over £472.

In a similar briefing from the same Federation, published in October 06, those prices had risen. An average house costs almost 446K, a one-bed flat to rent £218 per week, and a three-bed of £461 per week. Incomes have also risen, to an average of almost 42K, but the gap has also increased between availability and affordability. Households on the LA waiting lists are reaching numbers of almost 17,000 and more than 2000 in temporary accommodation. These are the numbers of families, with children, who have a desperate housing need.

So when the PM made his statement to the House on what will be his Government Legislative programme for the next session of Parliament, his priority of, and I quote ‘putting affordable housing within the reach not just of the few, but the many’ certainly caused me, and probably all my colleagues, to cheer.

Housing, or rather the lack of it, is a constant concern raised by my constituents, both by letter and in person via my advice surgeries. And the damage done to individuals and families has been too well documented for there to be any serious opposition to what PM Brown proposed – a total of 3 million new homes by 2020. This means raising the annual target for house-building from 200,000 to 240,000 every year. More than 530 sites owned by the Government will be examined for their housing development potential.

New deals are being struck with the Minister of Defence, the Department for Transport, and the Highways Agency, enabling English Partnerships to acquire surplus and redundant sites. And the Department for Health is urgently reviewing the surplus land belonging to the NHS. The principal of protecting the green belt will, he said, ‘robustly’ continue. Indeed, he referred specifically to the need to reduce the environmental impact of new-build by enabling ‘eco-towns’ comprising low or zero carbon housing to be more quickly built.

However quickly, the new properties won’t be there overnight. However, the fact that this issue has been so quickly prioritised, given so much importance and presented with the will to achieve, certainly gives me hope that a present crisis will eventually be a thing of the past.