

Nicolson, P., Burgess, B., Dorling, D., Harrison, F., Hill, S., McMahon, W., Murphy, R., Nadel, J., Regan, P. and Tizard, J. (2020) Letter: Tackling the housing crisis, The Observer, February 23rd, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/23/observer-letters-boris-johnson-risks-it-all-with-power-grab>

Tackling the housing crisis



‘The defenestration of Sajid Javid means dark clouds are already gathering around Boris Johnson’s premiership.’ Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

Polly Neate is right that “social housing and homes for first-time buyers don’t have to be either/or”. ([“Britain has a housing crisis: First Homes is just a comfort blanket”](#), Comment) They do have to be a both/and.

A new way out of our dire housing crisis into truly affordable housing for low- and middle-income, renters and first-time buyers must be

found. The growing numbers of homeless demand it, as do nurses, police, bus drivers, carers, cleaners and others in low-paid essential services.

For too long, local authorities have used high-value public land to help developers build private housing with rents and prices that are too high. All public land ought to be reserved for building only truly affordable social housing to rent or to buy, while prioritising building homes for low-income homeless renters. Also, the length of time that land or property can be left unused or empty should be limited to six months.

Reverend Paul Nicolson, Taxpayers Against Poverty; **Tom Burgess**, Progressive Policy Unit; **Professor Danny Dorling**, University of Oxford; **Fred Harrison**, Land Research Trust, **Stephen Hill**, director, C2O futureplanners; **Will McMahon**, director, Action on Empty Homes; **Professor Richard Murphy**, City, University of London; **Jennifer Nadel**, co-director, Compassion in Politics; **Paul Regan**, chair, London Community Land Trust; **John Tizard**, social activist & strategic adviser