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.

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