MISSION 3

Devolution and Housing

Devolution will not only change decision making at the local level, it could also provide new opportunities to support rural housing delivery. This mission sets out the CLA's housing objectives and what good looks like in the rural housing sector.

KEY ASKS

1. Develop and agree a strong national planning policy that includes a suite of permitted development rights, rural exception sites and changes to green belt policy;
2. Set local targets for rural housing delivery across a devolved area;
3. Ensure that there is mandatory specific rural and agricultural training for any member of the planning or housing department when assessing applications from a rural area;
4. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) needs to account for local infrastructure requirements across a strategic authority and remove the need for onerous Section 106 contributions negotiations.

1. Develop and agree a strong national planning framework that includes a suite of permitted development rights (not up to local discretion), the Rural Exception Site Planning Passport, and amendments to the Green Belt policy

Although the aim of devolution is to bring power into the hands of local communities, in terms of planning, local decision-making needs to be supported by a strong national framework. This is for two reasons: supporting members where local NIMBYism is restricting their ability to develop; and supporting communities with ambition to develop.

There is also a risk with devolution that resource within local authority planning teams becomes less localised, and more focussed on delivering large housing sites and infrastructure projects. There needs to be a strong suite of permitted development rights to lessen the resource strain on local authorities, de-risk development for landowning businesses, and give greater flexibility to those wishing to develop. These permitted development rights not only cover housing but also commercial, tourism and agricultural development.

The Rural Exception Site Planning Passport is a long-standing CLA objective, and, similar to Permitted Development Rights (PDRs), will reduce cost, de-risk, reduce resource and

increase the delivery of rural affordable housing. This will be particularly important in devolution as large housing targets across a strategic authority will take focus away from small rural sites.

The Green Belt is also at risk within larger strategic authorities as it may become more acceptable to avoid development on Green Belt land as areas have greater choice of land for meeting housing targets. It is therefore important that the CLA's asks for the Green Belt feature in National Policy before devolution happens on a wider scale.

2. **Local targets for rural housing delivery across a devolved area.**

A risk identified by devolution is that strategic authorities will have very large housing targets and will inevitably de-prioritise smaller rural sites. Therefore, we are calling for **local targets for rural housing delivery.** For example, if a strategic authority needs to deliver 100,000 homes, the rural target would set out how many of these, or what percentage, need to be delivered in rural areas on small sites, including in settlements of less than 3,000 inhabitants.

3. **Mandatory specific rural and agricultural training for any member of the planning or housing department that may be assessing applications from a rural area.**

Devolved authorities are likely to have larger planning teams, but there is a risk that local and rural knowledge may be lost as applications could be determined by anyone within the larger team. It will therefore be vitally important that all planning officers and members of planning committees have training on rural and agricultural matters. For this to be achieved, there needs to be sufficient training providers at the local level.

4. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) set across a strategic authority area which assesses the future infrastructure needs of the area, takes into account viability for different development types, and removes the need for onerous Section 106 contributions negotiations.**

Devolution can provide an opportunity to assess the infrastructure needs of a wider area, and to assess whether a development is 'sustainable' when considering neighbouring and nearby settlements within the area. This could mean that a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is more likely to collect funds which can be spent where they are actually needed.

Similarly, if the CIL is able to operate more effectively, it could remove many of the complexities of Section 106 negotiations which often attempt to claim individual sums from developments. This causes problems with the financial viability of sites, and delays the process. By using CIL and a tariff system of payments, development could happen more quickly, with more certainty for developers.

A more efficient CIL across a strategic authority would not be layered, but rather, would be a single levy, not multiple levies (as there is with the Greater London Authority). The single

levy would need to recognise the viability of different development types, such as, farm diversification, and affordable housing could pay a lower levy than market housing.