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WHITEPAPER

The New Urban Revival: Time for Change

Contents

Introduction

A lot has happened since we published The Urban Revival whitepaper in 2021. Over half a million homes have been built, including the delivery of the highest number of affordable homes in nearly a decade. Cyber-attacks have increased, with threats to councils and housing associations ever-present. And, of course, a new government has emerged, bringing with it hopes of urban regeneration, more social and affordable housing, and a new deal for local authorities.

In The New Urban Revival: Time for Change, we look at what lies ahead, and the role digital solutions can play in shaping our cities. We discuss the importance of good governance, and why having robust digital security is more important than ever. We take a look at smart cities across the world to see how innovative tech solutions can transform the way we live today.

The model of Greater Manchester forms an important part of this white paper – does the city provide the template for other urban centres in the UK? We look at funding and finance, and outline some innovative ways local and mayoral authorities can make the most of what they have.

We also talk about the evolution of office space and the change in working patterns. What do evolving working trends mean for now and for the future? Finally, we take a look at transportation, and consider the vital role electric vehicles can play in transforming our urban areas – and, of course, the health of those who inhabit them.

CHAPTER 1

Housebuilding and planning

As demand continues to outstrip supply, the need for social and affordable housing has never been higher. The recently installed Labour government has plans to dramatically increase these types of homes to alleviate waiting lists and ensure many more UK citizens have the opportunity to rent and buy within their means.

The target is certainly ambitious: the government says it plans to build 1.5 million new homes over the next 5 years, 50% of which must be social or affordable. In terms of the latter, It is not yet clear whether Labour will scrap or amend Shared Ownership, a scheme that has allowed 250,000 homes to be bought on a 'shared' basis with housing associations, with a view to 100% ownership over time.

In order to achieve its home building target, the government proposes to prioritise brownfield sites, followed by 'greyfield' sites – parts of the greenbelt deemed underused and undesirable. Currently, greenbelt-designated land is unable to be developed, despite serving little practical purpose. Examples include disused petrol stations, car parks and suburban wasteland.

Under the government's proposals, housing providers will be able to buy and develop these underused greyfield sites under the proviso of offering the requisite amount of affordable and social housing. This must be carried out with build quality as a priority in order to meet important tenant safety measures and stringent sustainability goals.

Meeting targets

In recent years, new building regulations have meant that new homes must be built with improved energy efficiency and lower carbon footprint. The government must continue to build on these regulations if net zero targets are to be met.

In tandem with the government's Great British Energy proposal, better insulated homes and the installation of solar panels and heat pumps should mean that home owners begin to see a reduction in their energy bills, although this is not expected to happen immediately.

A significant amount of additional planning will be needed if the government's 1.5m homes are to be built on time. Labour's proposal includes hiring 300 new town planners in the public sector – roughly one per local authority in England.

This volume suggests that town planners will need to be persuaded to cross over from the private sector; as such, salary expectations will need to be commensurate. The government says the scheme will be paid for by increasing the surcharge on stamp duty paid by non-UK residents.

Another key consideration is the number of construction workers needed to fulfil the government's quota. The Home Builders Federation (HBF) estimates that for every 10,000 new homes built annually, the workforce will need to grow by 30,000. The government has said it will achieve this by boosting construction apprenticeships through the creation of a new body, Skills England.

Funding and provision

To leverage funding and accelerate its building plans, the government will encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs). This collaborative approach will see public and private entities share responsibility for the construction of high-quality homes through performance-based contracts.

Funding for regeneration projects, including improvements to town centres and community spaces will come from disparate pots including the Levelling Up Fund (an initiative started by the previous government) and the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan.

In order to execute its homebuilding project successfully, **the government must balance the urgent need for housing against environmental impact.** Bodies including countryside charity CPRE have met the plans with some resistance; while the CPRE welcomes the government's 'brownfield first' policy, it has raised concerns over building on the greenbelt, much of which is says could be better repurposed as forestry land or flood defence.

Of course, large-scale housing developments will require additional infrastructure, including new roads, shops, doctor's surgeries, green spaces for recreation, and schools. The government must ensure private developers deliver on their infrastructure promises – if not, local people will face the burden of an expanding population without the needed levels of provision.

CHAPTER 2

Devolution

How money is spent on a local level will undergo a dramatic change under the new government. New devolved powers will fall under the proposed English Devolution Bill, designed to give more power to metro mayors and combined authorities (CAs).

As outlined in the King's Speech in July 2024, part of this extra power will come in the form of strengthened compulsory purchase orders. This means that CAs will be able to force through the sale of land earmarked for development, with compensation given at market value.

While compulsory purchase orders are not new, the government proposes to tweak the current rules, allowing combined authorities to purchase land at a fair price without having to factor in 'hope value' – i.e. the potential cost of the land once planning permission has been granted.

This should mean that they are able to fast-track land purchase for house building while saving considerable sums of money: according to the Centre for Progressive Policy, the cost of agricultural land per hectare can be worth up to 275 times more with planning permission.

While the proposed Bill gives enhanced control to combined and mayoral authorities, opponents worry that it will reduce control at a local level. The government has not yet been clear on the division of responsibility between authorities in relation to house building and planning.

What is clear however, is the direction of travel – **the government proposals will allow far more decision making outside of Whitehall**. As such, local authorities should be prepared for change, whether that means the formation of new combined authorities, or enhanced collaboration with neighbouring authorities in the delivery of strategic planning.

This strategic planning will encompass more than just new homes; it will concern town planning and regeneration, community development projects, and green spaces. It will form part of the entire local service and infrastructure need, requiring a close working relationship with employers, universities, colleges, and industry.

The Manchester Model

There are currently 10 combined authorities in England, 9 of which have a directly elected mayor. Greater Manchester, the first mayoral combined authority in the UK, has been given considerable devolved powers since its inception in 2011.

In recent years, Greater Manchester has started bringing private transportation under local control, with the creation of the Bee Network. This high-volume, low-fare network of low-and-zero-emissions buses connects all areas of Greater Manchester with the city centre.

The Bee network will expand to trains in 2025, with a contactless system (similar to that used on buses), and will include walking and cycling routes connected to transportation hubs.

The Bee Network is arguably a prime example of what the government hopes to achieve with the English Devolution Bill – a project that fosters economic growth by connecting multiple locations, while making it easier to access jobs and learning opportunities.

In 2023, Greater Manchester was given greater control over housing, with a 'trailblazer' devolution deal. This has allowed Mayor Andy Burnham to build on his Good Landlord Charter, a system designed to promote better accountability in the private and social rented sectors.

With a single payment of £150m, **the trailblazer deal has given the city the flexibility to build on brownfield sites it deems fit for development**. The Brownfield Housing Fund is set to deliver more than 7,800 homes in the city-region, with building commencing in 2025. Over half of these homes will be affordable, and 79% are set to meet the Future Homes Standard.

Arguably, the deal doesn't go far enough. Speaking at Housing 2024, Mayor Burnham stressed the need for the release of public land, telling attendees: "There is land owned by the NHS, Network Rail, in places you would really want to build, and yet the departments don't sell it, or if they do, they demand too much. This thinking needs to change."

While this 'fire sale' approach may mean that central government receives under market value for its brownfield land, Burnham concluded his speech suggesting that "...by building more productive, regenerative local economies, the treasury wins in the long-term."

CHAPTER 3

Maximising funding and investment

Despite the promise of more autonomy on spend, funding gaps are likely to exist for some time. As such, local, mayoral, and combined authorities should look towards ways they can maximise investment and funding provision.

One way authorities can boost investment for infrastructure projects is to harness private sector investment. This can be achieved, in part, through robust governance – authorities that can prove they have well established risk management practices, clear and transparent reporting, and a track record of fiscal responsibility are more likely to win the investment they need.

Furthermore, **authorities that can demonstrate they are moving with the times will be an attractive proposition for private investors**. This will mean ensuring digital systems are up to date, with cloud-based and automated solutions designed for accuracy of data and ease of use.

With good governance and modern digital infrastructure, local government organisations become closer aligned to the private sector, and can establish themselves as key partners.

In the case of combined and mayoral authorities, additional funding already comes direct from central government. The numbers are significant, with between £15m and £30m granted each year – again, authorities that can prove good governance are more likely to optimise funding provision.

For urban areas such as Greater Manchester, Liverpool, and the West Midlands, central government (and private) funding opportunities are more likely to come to fruition when regeneration projects are prioritised. With a fully developed policy on economic transformation and growth, funding and investment is seen as lower risk.

When it comes to urban regeneration, senior decision makers and planners will need to have an in-depth knowledge of their areas, with the willingness to consult local people on pressing issues. Investors want to be certain that the local economic, business, and social environment can bring opportunities for sustained growth.

Under the current government, further opportunities for large-scale projects will likely be realised under a new form of private finance initiative. PFIs were widely used under previous governments, and have been considered poor value for money.

Under the updated scheme, projects such as road and tunnel building will leverage private investment, but with greater independent oversight. This could include capped returns for investors, and stricter rules surrounding repayment costs.

The visitor economy

Tourism can have a transformative effect on local economies. By developing and maintaining existing public spaces, councils can attract additional tourism with festivals, performances, and musical events. The numbers are impressive: musical acts alone brought in £6.6bn to local economies in 2023 according to a recent report by UK Music.

Attracting filming for movies and TV shows is another area of growth for local authorities. While the returns can be high (Hull City Council estimates major film shoots bring in around £10m to the local economy), filming management in councils requires high levels of buy-in and joined-up thinking across departments.

Public-private initiatives may also be a consideration for regional areas looking to expand the visitor economy. In the first half of 2024, Northamptonshire Council announced plans for a private sector-led Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) which will work with Visit England to promote tourism in the area. It will also bid for all available government funding streams.

CHAPTER 4

Smart cities around the world

In many cities globally, technology is beginning to play an increasingly important role. Digital solutions are being used to improve the health, wellbeing, and safety of citizens, while underpinning eco-friendly construction and green waste management systems.

Singapore

One of the first places in the world to introduce contactless payment for public transport, Singapore often leads the way when it comes to urban technology. The island state has recently rolled out a digital health system for its elderly population, along with IoT-enabled wearable devices to monitor health.

Singapore is currently building a car-free city (vehicles will run underground) in the island's western region. Residents will live either side of a 100 metre-wide 'forest corridor' that will encourage biodiversity and provide recreation.

Seoul

In Seoul, thousands of AI-enabled CCTV cameras are being installed throughout the city's streets, parks, and hiking trails. The smart technology is able to detect erratic movement such as falling and assault, with the images automatically sent to police rapid response units.

The city also relies heavily on technology to make strategic planning decisions. Thousands of sensors across the city measure patterns such as traffic flow and speed, air quality, fine particles, wind direction, noise, and vibration.

New York

In a similar manner to Seoul, New York uses sensors to make informed decisions; here, technology is used to assess waste management, detect water leakage, and measure air quality. The city has introduced smart hubs for transport payment using smart phones and wearable devices.

Amsterdam

Beginning over a decade ago, Amsterdam has been gradually modifying businesses and homes with energy efficient insulation, ultra-low energy lighting, and auto-dimming light switches. A growing number of the city's buses are electric, using power from renewable energy sources.

Oslo

The 'EV capital of the world', Oslo is set to become the first city with 100% electric vehicle usage. Heavily incentivised, **EV drivers enjoy benefits such as free parking, lower taxes, and cheaper toll charges**. Other smart projects include zero-emissions construction, and retrofitting existing buildings with circular waste management and sustainable energy systems.

Zurich

In Switzerland's largest city, smart sensors in streetlights increase or decrease brightness levels according to traffic use. Since its inception in 2004, the streetlight project has resulted in an average energy saving of 70%. Smart lighting and waste management projects bring additional savings to the city.

What we can learn from smart cities

While there are undoubtably costs attached to implementing IoT technologies in urban areas, there are a number of apparent long-term gains. With long-term thinking, savings can be realised through energy reduction, waste management and recycling, and retrofitting new and existing buildings.

Alongside cost savings for the public purse, smart cities can bring immediate and long-term gains for citizens, with reduced traffic flows (leading to both improved commuting times and better health outcomes), rapid health assessment with wearable devices, enhanced green spaces, and improved safety.

Considerations

- What works for one city may not work for another. The type of predictive surveillance being implemented in Seoul, for example, raises the question of how to balance civil liberties with enhanced law enforcement capabilities.
- While few would argue that monitoring the health of the elderly is a bad thing, persuading elderly populations in the UK to wear IoT-enabled devices en masse (as in the Singapore example above), may require a concerted effort.
- With the increase in IoT comes an increased risk of cyber-attacks. With the overall attack area increased, those installing and maintaining urban IoT devices will have to undergo rigorous training to keep networks safe.
- Some cities have more resources than others, and are therefore better placed to drive improvements through innovation and spending. However, this should not be used as an excuse for inaction – inexpensive solutions can be put in place in virtually all cities, including the planting of trees, incentives for EV drivers, and the use of sensors to measure traffic flow.

CHAPTER 5

Urban governance: mitigating threat

For combined and mayoral authorities, maintaining robust governance is critically important. The devastating effects of the pandemic taught us that reacting quickly and effectively to unexpected change is crucial to the health of our citizens.

Alongside present and emerging threats to citizen health, domestic and international terrorism and public disorder are ever-present across the UK. How local authorities react is of key importance, and requires high levels of planning between central government and local agencies.

As such, urban authorities will need to remain flexible and agile. Resources should be immediately available, and be able to be deployed without hesitation. This will require autonomy from central government, allowing local bodies to react quickly and in the best interests of their areas.

Whether local authorities will be granted these extra powers of decision making remains to be seen. Yet, it appears that we are heading in this direction; CA's and **mayoral authorities should be prepared for the added responsibility that comes with further devolved powers**.

This need for preparedness means authorities should put governance at the forefront, with clear risk registers that take into account current and future threat. Digital systems can prove invaluable in this regard, giving board members and senior leaders a clear view on risk, with centralised, accurate data.

The latest digital systems can help board members keep up with legislative changes, making it easier to assess when changes to reporting and risk management are required. Keeping up with the pace of legislative change is crucial for good citizen outcomes – particularly given the scope and scale of the changes expected from the current government.

With the right digital systems in place, authorities can develop a joined-up governance framework with objectives on an organisational and departmental level central to decision making. These objectives can be linked to KPIs, compliance requirements, and risks, resulting in data-driven decisions.

The cost of cyber-attacks

The threat to the public sector from domestic and international cyber-attacks is both costly and ever-present. Housing associations have suffered multiple attacks in recent years, with Clarion and Red Kite Community Housing among those compromised. IBM-commissioned research puts the average cost of a data breach in the UK at £3.5m in 2024.

In 2023, Sefton Council fought off over 30,000 cyber-attacks per month, leading the authority to commission costly audits by Microsoft and the Local Government Association (LGA). The audits found that the council was being excessively targeted for the security of its infrastructure. It has since implemented new security systems and reviewed training provision.

Leicester City Council were victims of a cyber-attack in early 2024, forcing the authority to disable its communication systems. A ransomware group have since claimed responsibility, and have published confidential public documents online, including home addresses and passport details.

Three years before the Leicester attack, Gloucester City Council experienced a cyber-attack which disrupted services for thousands of residents, including benefits payments, house sales, and planning applications. Fixing the breach cost tax payers in the region of £800,000.

Tackling the threat

Given the level of historical and extant threat, **local authorities should prioritise the development of a cyber security risk register.** The register should be held on a trusted digital platform, and used to:

- Identify existing and future vulnerabilities (planned IoT implementation, for example).
- Record accurate information on current and past threats
- Record the costs and resources needed to mitigate future attacks
- Detail the likelihood of future attacks

Running alongside the risk register, organisations should maintain an ongoing cyber security action plan. Details should include how each threat is communicated across the organisation, and who is responsible for actioning the response.

Training plays a critical role in reducing the likelihood of cyber-attacks. All employees should receive full training on how to spot phishing attempts, whether through email, social media, or other communication platforms. They should also be given training on the heightened risk of security breaches through networks, including IoT devices.

There are a number of additional steps councils, housing associations, and other public bodies can take to improve cyber security. A key measure is to keep digital infrastructure consistently updated (end of life software is a common point of entry for hackers). This can be achieved by implementing cloud-based solutions, which are updated automatically.

The creation of strong passwords makes it much harder for hackers to steal data – IT leads should ensure employees create complex passwords, and change them periodically. Multi-factor authentication is also important when it comes to protecting local systems.

Restricting internet access to trusted sites is another tried and tested method when it comes to keeping work systems safe. Unknown websites can contain ads and click-throughs that can result in the installation of malware. Restricting the use of external devices such as USB will further reduce opportunity for attack.

CHAPTER 6

The way we work

In many countries around the world, the pandemic necessitated a change in how people lived. Forced to conduct our lives remotely, millions of us quickly got used to relying on messaging apps and video calling to communicate.

These communication methods became the 'new normal', and extended, of course, to work. And while remote work was far from suitable for many jobs, the fact that businesses – on the whole – were able to survive, became a catalyst for a shift in working patterns post-pandemic.

Many companies have since required their staff to return to the office on a regular basis. Others, however, have realised the value of remote and hybrid staff: with a wider geographical area to choose from, HR departments are more likely to find employees with the requisite skills and experience.

Whether working entirely from home, or attending an office setting on a hybrid basis, **flexible working arrangements are now seen as an expectation** for job seekers. In fact, the right to request flexible working arrangements on day-one of employment was recently protected by law under the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.

Most employees put a high value on flexible working arrangements. In a 2023 CIPD survey, 71% of respondents said flexible working is important to them when looking for a new job, while 69% said remote working is important. The survey shows a rising trend in flexible working – 60% of respondents said they have flexibility in their current role compared to 51% in 2022.

There are of course, disadvantages to flexible working, such as a reduction in teamwork, physical inactivity, and feelings of isolation. On the other hand, many employees report better productivity, a better work-life balance, and increased overall wellbeing. In short, what works for one may not work for another, and as such, companies with flexible working arrangements become an attractive proposition for future employees.

The changing shape of the office

With reduced numbers of employees working in-office, small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) have realised the advantages of serviced office space. For many companies, these work environments provide the levels of flexibility needed in convenient locations (many serviced office buildings are near train stations).

Serviced office spaces generally fall into two categories: shared space, where multiple companies utilise common workstations, and coworking, which enables businesses to hot desk and book meeting rooms for privacy and collaboration.

These spaces can deliver considerable cost savings compared to traditional office environments. Business comparison website Bionic estimates that small business save an average of £20,000 pa by moving into serviced office space.

There is also the matter of risk. Given that flexible office spaces typically operate with leases from 3 months to 2 years, companies are given the agility to seek alternative arrangements in case of unexpected changes such as an emerging pandemic or recession.

Flexible working environments are on the rise. A study by US-based Mordor Intelligence estimates the UK flexible office space market to be worth $1.85bn in 2024 with a projected value of $2.84bn by 2029. This will undoubtably require new construction to cope with demand (the volume of flexible workspace doubled between 2019 and 2023) and will need to be factored into urban planning strategy.

The tech advantage

As serviced office spaces rush to cope with demand, those that incorporate the latest technologies will gain a clear advantage over the competition. IoT-enabled devices will play a big part, whether in the form of smart energy saving lighting and alarms, door entry systems and surveillance, intelligent climate control, or windows with adaptive brightness control.

Buildings with green waste management systems, renewable energy sources, and biophilic design (the integration of natural elements into the built environment) will be attractive propositions to companies that put sustainable practice at the forefront of their operations.

Furthermore, shared office developments that provide the necessary infrastructure for effective collaboration will be the norm. This could mean soundproofing technologies that enable companies to present to clients or stakeholders, large touch screen monitors, or smartboards with cloud connectivity for brainstorming and planning.

Smart technologies will likely extend to health and wellbeing, with facial-recognition-operated gym equipment, adaptive break-out spaces, and workerless shops and restaurants. IoT devices may be powered with ambient energy using nearby radio waves, light, and heat sources.

CHAPTER 7

Zero emissions transport

The government's pledge to reinstate the 2030 ban on the production of new petrol and diesel cars has major implications for our towns and cities. Requiring an estimated 1.5 million additional home charging points and a dramatic increase in rapid charging points in urban areas, the move to zero emissions vehicles is unlikely to be straightforward.

However, now that auto manufacturers in the UK have a clear target, a concerted effort can be made to meet the 2030 cut off point. The government has pledged substantial investment in new charging points and incentives including tax breaks and subsidies to alleviate pressure on car buyers.

To increase uptake levels further, additional incentives may be required. Trade association ChargeUK, for example, recommends reducing the VAT on public charging points from the current 20% to align with the 5% VAT applied to home energy use.

Another priority is to accelerate the construction of battery gigafactories on UK soil (it is estimated that 10 such factories will be needed by 2040). To kickstart construction, the government has said it will invest heavily in battery production, starting with £1.5bn in assistance from the National Wealth Fund.

In terms of a skilled workforce, the Institute of the Motor Industry expects of shortage of over 5,000 technicians by 2032. The government aims to address this skills gap with a flexible Growth and Skills Levy that will give large employers extra scope for training provision.

Whether these targets can be met depends heavily on levels of investment and cooperation. Well regulated, public-private finance initiatives will be needed to accelerate the rapid expansion of charging points and factories. There will need to be strategic, joined up thinking between various public and private bodies including EV providers, city and town planners, and central government.

Buses and trains

The growth in zero emissions buses in recent years has been substantial, with the previous government funding 4,000 ZEBs across the UK. Coventry is set to be the UK's first all-electric 'bus city' by 2025, and the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has pledged to electrify the capital's entire fleet by 2034.

In 2020, the Department for Transport estimated that a town operating 200 buses could cut its CO2 emissions by 7,400 tonnes per year, equivalent to taking 3,700 diesel vehicles off the road. Diesel buses are the third highest producers of CO2, after plane flights and single driver car journeys.

When it comes to train travel, the government has promised to bring railway ownership back into public hands, with private contracts allowed to expire. It has stressed the importance of local collaboration, bringing mayors and combined authority leaders into decision making on local train needs.

Cycling

According to the latest figures, the number of people cycling to work has dropped – 2023 saw a 2.9% decrease compared to the previous year. This number correlates with an increase in car traffic over the same time period.

Safety is undoubtably a factor. In a 2021 government-backed survey, 55% of respondents said that they would cycle more often if there were clearer barriers between bicycles and car traffic. The same survey found that better links to public transport and improved bike storage would encourage two-thirds of residents to cycle more.

When looking towards 'bike-friendly' countries in Europe, high uptake has much to do with safe infrastructure. In the Netherlands for example (where 28% of journeys are covered by bicycle), residents enjoy an expansive network of bike-only lanes separated from car traffic. This initiative sits alongside the ability to rent bicycles at train stations and other public areas.

Public health

Cycling initiatives such as those in the Netherlands should form part of the government's efforts to push for a healthier nation less reliant on cars and public transportation.

While initial investment may be costly, **the positive effects on public health should lead to a significant reduction in NHS use**. A longitudinal study by the University of Glasgow published in BMJ journals found that residents who commuted to work by bike had a 51% reduced risk of dying from cancer, and a 24% reduced risk of requiring treatment for heart disease.

Alongside prioritising cycling infrastructure in towns and cities, the imminent ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles should mean better health outcomes for UK citizens – particularly for those living in urban areas.

A 2022 report by the American Lung Association found that a major shift towards EV usage in cities would help prevent up to 110,000 premature deaths and avoid 2.78 million asthma attack by 2050. This would amount to around $1.2 trillion in public health benefits.

While a similar study has not yet been carried out in the UK, it is nonetheless easy to see how mass EV take up can drive significant cost savings while improving health outcomes for citizens in urban areas.

Conclusions

There is little doubt that the urban landscape is set to change. Mass housebuilding efforts will see millions of new homes installed in cities and towns across the UK. To make it work, central government will need to give unprecedented levels of devolved power to local councils and combined and mayoral authorities.

Infrastructure projects and urban regeneration will require joined up thinking between disparate departments and private investment firms. Local authorities should ensure digital infrastructure is up to date, and that robust governance and risk measures are in place to maximise investment streams.

Building firms and local authorities will need to ensure each area can cope with the additional infrastructure pressures placed upon them by new builds, taking into account the need for schools, doctor's surgeries, supermarkets, and other public services.

Town and city planners should be preparing for changes in the way we live and work, with plans for safer cycling networks and new flexible office buildings near major transportation hubs. Decision makers should look towards global smart cities to learn how green waste management systems and city sensors can improve the lives of urban residents.

At the same time, mayoral and combined authorities can learn lessons closer to home. The Manchester model shows that devolution can lead to greater action on people-first matters including transportation and the development of affordable homes.

When it comes to the adoption of electric vehicles, central government should provide a raft of incentives, including tax breaks and optimised home and public charging points. The mass adoption of zero emissions vehicles will have a profound effect on the health of those who live in our towns and cities.

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