



Roundtable on 25th January 2023, with Paul Kitson

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Introduction

Paul Kitson met with the APPG to discuss the future growth and development of Birmingham as a city, as well as lessons it could provide with regards to Levelling Up for the UK as a whole. The speaker shared the city's ambition to achieve Net Zero by 2030, and the plan for accommodating the forecasted population growth of 130-150,000 people in Birmingham. The speaker also discussed the reshaping of Birmingham and the role of combined authorities in delivering affordable housing and inclusive growth. The discussion touched upon the blue economy, post-pandemic work from home trends and their impact on residential buildings, and the decarbonisation of heating in the city. Questions were raised about accommodating an ageing population and the role of housing associations in delivering affordable housing.



Key takeaways

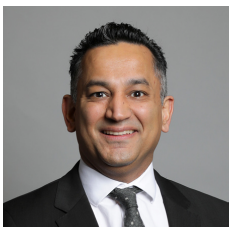
- There is a need to strengthen partnerships between local councils and housing associations to increase the number of affordable housing units in line with the UK's Levelling Up policy, and to ensure collaboration between different authorities to address regional disparities. Birmingham has created its own Levelling Up plan which aims to increase such collaboration.
- The role of local authorities in enabling public-private partnerships to go ahead is an important consideration in and central to Levelling Up. If approached with the right framework, these partnerships can be imperative to supporting the delivery of new housing, transport, and other infrastructure needed to accommodate population growth and drive inclusive growth.
- Birmingham is looking at ways to increase the number of new affordable housing units, through public-private partnerships and the use of public land for housing associations to build on. This is part of a wider Levelling Up goal of making sure that the benefits of growth are shared and accessible to everyone.

- Decarbonisation is a focal point of Birmingham's Levelling Up strategy. It is working on the retrofitting of decarbonised heating in 60,000 directly owned homes in the city to reduce energy use and spark a new industry. The plan to retrofit 60,000 homes with decarbonised heating systems reflects the UK's commitment to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050 and its efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

Issues raised

- There are shortages of skills in certain industries, such as retrofitting, which can hinder the ability of businesses to grow, the economy to reach its full potential or hit certain sustainability goals. The Government's Levelling Up strategy should ensure it places greater emphasis on upskilling on that basis.
- There seems to be a rebellion against tall buildings in Birmingham, as well as in other areas in the country, but this conflicts with the viability of the projects. Finding a balance between affordability, height, and viability is crucial.
- With cities that have a low density, such as Birmingham, it is necessary to increase the scope and range of infrastructure such as transport into the city and ensure that the scale of growth is inclusive. Addressing such disparities requires a comprehensive approach that includes partnerships between government, business, and community organisations, as well as targeted investment. However, this is sometimes hard to achieve if there isn't a supportive regulatory environment and adequate access to finance.

We would like to thank the members of our Advisory Board for their contributions and continuing support.



Gagan Mohindra MP is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Regeneration & Development

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