

**LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

**FOURTH EXTRAORDINARY  
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR  
(Councillor B Cleasby)

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**VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: I now open the next meeting. You have been very good so far. If you want a comfort break fine, go, but let us get on with the business.

The fourth meeting of the day. Councillor Andrew Carter.

ITEM 3 - GOVERNMENT TARGETS FOR NEW HOUSING

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I will endeavour not to speak for my fully allotted time because this is an area where there are, I think, very clear divides. I am going to start by trying to explain to members opposite in particular why we believe that it is important to oppose the draft RSS numbers that the Government has put forward for new housing in Leeds.

I think we are in a very strong position to explain that to you but also to tell the Government because we are not one of those authorities who have singularly failed to meet its housing targets. Indeed, to set Leeds a target now of 4,770-odd is perverse when we have consistently, throughout the period of the current RSS, exceeded to some tune the number of houses that we have provided.

In the last five years the average number of completions has been not 1,900, not 2,000, not 2,500, but 3,300. This city has never provided, not since before the 1930s, the sort of housing numbers this Government is now wanting in the draft RSS.

I also think that we are in a strong position to say to the Government no, this is too much, because a lot of other local authorities have singularly failed to hit their targets, not by tens but by hundreds. It seems to us that what is happened yet again is because Leeds performs, because Leeds achieves, we are being penalised. The result of being penalised, if we accept these numbers, is that we will see large parts of our green environment destroyed. Let me say that is not just, as you would portray it, in the leafy suburbs. It is everywhere. It includes what you would call greenfield sites in inner city areas - areas where I think we would all agree we should be trying to create more green space, not build on what is left.

The reason why I am not prepared to accept your amendment is because it is a cop out. Yet again you are not prepared to say you are opposing the numbers, although at this stage they are only in draft, so implicitly, therefore, you are accepting that this city can at some point in the very near future, even if the Government accept that next year is too soon and is absolutely crazy, that at some point in the near future we can actually deliver sustainably 4,700 new dwellings a year. It cannot be done, it will not be achieved and we should not be afraid of telling the Government that that is the case.

Of course we would like to be able to say to the housing minister that all parties on this Council are agreed with that, because it would help us, I guess, considerably, but if you cannot bring yourselves to say no, this is too far, we are a Council that under your administration and ours has delivered in excess of the RSS year after year after year and you should not be doing this to us now. If you cannot bring yourselves to say that with us, then I think that is a pity because let me tell you this, the Government's mates in the building industry are not bothered about affordable housing. They are bothered about building as fast as they can, as easily as they can on sites that are easily accessible. That is what they want to do. I will tell you now that in most wards in this city they are already sticking flags on bits of land that they think your Government will let them build on.

Just take heed. This is your opportunity to join with us. Do not come whingeing in here when you find out what is going on - and you will find out, we will find out and very quickly.

To make matters worse, these figures the Government are asking us for do not include the proposals for eco-towns and growth points and I can tell you - I do not know where they are but I can tell you that the private house building sector is already flagging up to the Government what they think are growth points and what they think are eco-towns within the boundaries of this city. Your Government is going to make the decision - not the planning authority. Your Government is going to tell the house building industry where they can build houses in this city and encourage them to put planning application in.

Let me turn to my colleagues on the Plans Panels. You are wasting your time, boys and girls, because you can take your planning judgment and throw it out and this lot's inspectors will overturn you. Gordon Brown has taken over housing policy, housing numbers for this country and has effectively castrated planning committees. That is what has happened and if you do not stand up for yourselves, you may as well not bother being here - it is as simple as that.

Even the economic logic does not make sense. A leading economist only this week, a professor of economics from Nottingham University, said - and I quote, "Brown's mass building programme would risk serious consequences for existing home owners and the economy in general." He went on to say, "The Government simply does not have the information they need to accurately predict future demand for housing. Over supply would lead to the sort of slump that is now affecting the US."

You know and we know that when it comes to predictions, Governments are notoriously bad. What I would say to you is, when the sites have done they have gone - it is too late.

Do we have housing problems in this city? Of course we do and, I have to say, I am prepared to defend what we have done against what you lot did any day of the week. Earlier, Richard, you referred to how you were stopped building houses by the Thatcher Government. What has your Government done since 1997 to encourage you to build Council houses? What legislation have they brought in to make it easier for this administration to deliver some Council houses? If they have, indeed, brought in things that help, why for the 14 years when you could have built houses, didn't you? That is the question you have to answer.

We have made a commitment and Les, Richard and myself intend to stick to it. We are starting a Council house building programme again because we know there will always be groups of people who want to rent and there will always be, I think, a need for Council housing because, actually, I do not think we are bad landlords any more. Back in the 1960s and 1970s with the sort of building that went on then, bad quality housing led to major problems. I think actually - and I agree with Richard here, the ALMOs have been a success and actually I think there are some housing associations that could learn some lessons from the practices of the ALMOs in Leeds, and they will get better.

We have set up a special purpose vehicle to provide low cost housing predominantly to buy but also to rent in the housing association sector. You might say too little too late, but what on earth were you doing for all those years? You could have done exactly what we have done and I will take responsibility for our three-and-a-half years and perhaps we are not moving fast enough, but my goodness, you had better take responsibility for your 24 when you did damn all.

That is why I believe we are in a very strong position to say to this Government, Leeds is doing its bit and will continue. We will continue and we will deliver more affordable units both for sale and for rent to housing associations and Council properties. We are not going to see the environment of this city destroyed. If you want to sign up, Richard, to houses that run from York to Huddersfield without a field in between, you tell the people of Leeds that because I am not going to let you do it. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I second and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The reason we put down an amendment was because the White Paper put down by Andrew Carter is a very negative White Paper in terms of what should be a whole picture about housing needs for the city. A few months ago you might have seen some members of Calderdale Council were calling for no new housing development. What a message that sent to their local residents.

I think we have got to be very careful that we have a rounded message for people about our concerns about meeting needs and, at the same time, saying to the Government saying, we think you have got things wrong.

I will just answer Andrew's point about housing legislation and what have you. There is not any legislation but you now have freedoms and flexibilities for Two Star ALMOs to build. That did not come under the Tories, you might remember. There is nothing to stop you building now.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Not the Two Star yet. Three Star.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: In about six months' time. We will be doing it. In terms of the number of years when we were not doing anything. My recollection is 1993 to 2004, those years when the Tories did not give us any money. When Labour started giving us money we had such a huge backlog on housing stock, our own housing stock, that that was the place where you had to put the money.

Andrew always says about 'Atha-isation' that you would not spend money on something you actually owned to repair it but you would build something new. That is what you called 'Atha-isation'. That is what you are guilty of, surely, is it not, if you are saying that you would not spend money on improving your own stock to build something new, and that is what I am proud of us doing. Again, look to the record of the Conservative Government. Do not ever say anything about housing investment, public housing investment and claim the credit, because all the things that you are doing now - PFI, whatever - is all down to the largesse of the Labour Government.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: If you think PFI is largesse you ought to do your sums.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: If you do not want it do not do it, Andrew. You have got to make the choice. We made the choice, you have got to do it as well. You have got to decide whether it is the right thing to do.

There are some serious points here. I think we do all have concerns about the Government's figures and I have to say that one of the reasons for them hiking our numbers above everybody else's is our previous delivery of large numbers of properties. We then have to look at what we as a Local Authority have been doing, why we have been seen as such a soft touch in planning terms?

Councillor Illingworth brought to my attention the other day the discussion on Kirkstall, the new Kirkstall district centre site, where effectively we had allowed a private firm to examine the model and viability of putting affordable housing on the site and lo and behold, we had the situation where the consultants, the private consultants, said, "No, the model of the developers is absolutely right and they cannot afford to put any affordable housing on."

Let us be honest, this Local Authority has got to...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is their job. Come on, Richard, get a grip.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: We have a situation where what we have been delivering in this city through being a soft touch is the city centre development. We have got the mess in the city centre where we have 30% under occupied, where we have the types of property that people do not want to live in delivered through the market and this Council being supine on the whole issue.

Just a couple of issues. It is a big increase, we cannot pretend otherwise. We cannot pretend that Leeds is not being treated differently to the other Local Authorities in the area. I think two of them have an increase of around about 55% to about 90%. We are way above the others and we have, as you say, delivered a huge number of properties of developments over the past few years.

There is a role, there must be a role for us in saying what we have as an alternative here. What we do have to say is there is huge housing need in this city that we want to meet. That is partly through Council housing. Again, I would say to you, where is your money coming from? What is your figure for putting in said Council housing, because that is desperately important? You cannot just say it is a principle that we believe in Council housing. There has to be some money on the table as to what you are going to do, where you are going to do it. We are committed to Council housing, we are committed to looking at the current housing stock in the city and using it better. That means all the under-occupied properties that we have in our ownership that we should be encouraging people by building new properties for one or two people to move into to free up those homes for other people. We want to build Council homes across the city because it is not - and I will repeat this because you still have not found any sites in your wards - it is about finding sites in the likes of Yeadon, it is finding the sites in Moortown and all those places where you still have not found any. I do not think you are looking hard enough.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You sold them all, did you not, Richard?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Plenty of sites - you have a look, Andrew. I could find them for you. Just one or two little comments. We have a huge role, there is huge need. We are making a very sensible suggestion about when these figures should kick in because, to be honest, I am very doubtful about trends over 15 years. I remember about five years ago all the academics were running round and saying there is a huge housing market crisis all along the M62 from Hull to Liverpool, every housing market in every Local Authority area is under threat, they are going to collapse. That is because one or two academics go off, do a bit of number crunching and they get it wrong because they do not know what they are talking about.

We had a position where the Government was creating the idea of housing market renewal, which was not the right answer to the problems that certainly we were facing in Leeds. Although we tried to get hold of the money, that was not where the real crisis was. Such crises as we did have and those kind of pockets that we did have we could have dealt with in many other ways.

I do not believe that in five years we will be in the same position as we are now but we do have to say that overall there are going to be more households needing a home, there are going to be more people living on their own, there are going to be more people living on into their eighties and nineties - that means that you do have a serious issue to contemplate about how you house those people and a place like Leeds, because it is a big city, because it has a dominant role in the region, has a particular role to play in that. We must have a positive message to go back to Government on that it is not just about saying we do not agree with your numbers. It is about us saying that we can do something about the housing needs of this city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I second, Lord Mayor, and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am disappointed in Andrew's response to our, what I thought was a constructive amendment, because we have acknowledged here that the figures of 4,700 would place pressures on our passland, on our green belt and our greenfield. I think that is important and that is why our amendment reflects the Yorkshire Assembly's position, of which we are part. I think you were there on Thursday, Richard. What they have said is something that says let us not run away from this problem, let us do it starting, if we are going to have to accept these figures, firstly we ought to argue that windfalls are a part of those numbers. We ought to argue that these figures ought not to start till 2011 because you are right, developers will cherry pick sites if we go for those numbers immediately in 2008, so I think it is right to pause. That is why it was a constructive amendment because it reflects what other Leaders, Tories and Liberals, are thinking about this alongside the issue of sequential planning and, indeed, bidding for infrastructure costs.

I think where the Assembly is, where we play a leading role, is somewhere where we should support. I do get a bit wary of Andrew's numbers. I just wonder what Richard said having resonance with me. Firstly, I remember in 2003 when I chaired the RSS, the figure was 2,200. It then went up to 2,700 in 2005 when Andrew was Chair and, to be fair to him, he was consistent - he opposed it. He opposed that as being too high. He now admits we are building 3,300 and if we are not careful we could be seen as a city that is putting up the sign saying, "No business in Leeds", similar to what Richard said.

What I really would like to know when you sum up, Andrew, is what figures you would like, because if you are saying that we all share a vision of this city, we want to be the driver of the Yorkshire economy, an international city, a place that is overtaking others, because we are booming and economically successful, I think it is only right and proper you should say how many numbers of houses this city should have in order to sustain that ambition. I do worry that this city sometimes over as a lack of ambition.

I want to address another issue about your press statements. Actually, Bernard was right. What you are saying here is far better than what you say in the press. I remember quite recently both you and Les Carter blamed the pressures of homelessness on economic migrants which frankly was flirting with the BNP propaganda. I am pleased you have not done it here but you certainly, both of you, did it in the Evening Post and I thought it was a disgrace because the truth is different.

The truth is this, that we are successful as a city and we reversed the decline in this city and this region. People want to stay in this city. People want to move up into this city. Yes, there are pressures from economic migrants but you cannot say

how successful you are and not take the responsibility for that. I have to say that Richard is absolutely right about the failure of the market that you all extol. The figures that Richard has mentioned - that is 20,000 empty homes, 11,000 families waiting, 30,000 people who are waiting for a house - is really a legacy of leaving it to the free market. Frankly, it has failed families. We have 11,000 families waiting for a home while we have got empty flats. How immoral is that by allowing the market to dictate what should go up and should not?

I say this about housing - what I want to see is housing that is Council houses, affordable houses, right across the city in every community and not just in Labour areas. We need them but so does every community in this city in order to solve what is a housing crisis of your making and particularly Les Carter's laid-back attitude to the problem. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, in Planning quite a few of us have what might be termed sycamore sayings in which we say things time and time again hoping that someone will take heed. One of my sycamore saying is that planning targets often are not planning at all, that they are merely commentaries on what is happening already and this had led to a Government attempt to give a sharp increase to Leeds Housing Supply Targets.

We thought we were doing well by building larger numbers of new dwellings than had been set in both the Unitary Development Plan and the provisional Regional Spatial Strategy and at the same time defending our green land. A good deal of this was because of the booming city centre speculative flat building, which may not endure in its present form. City centre living is here to stay and I have no doubt about that, but there must be a pause to allow the market and the City Council Development Department to adjust to what people really want, which would mean larger, better finished flats with more and better green space and more car parking as well at more reasonable prices.

In the recently published draft targets we saw that there would be 4,740 new dwellings each year in Leeds, leaving 4,300 net of 440 demolitions. In contrast, the annual target for the whole of South Yorkshire would be 4,830 new dwellings or 4470 net of demolitions and that would be every year from 2008 to 2026. That would be harmful to both Leeds, which would be overloaded, and South Yorkshire where there would be a lack of investment in renewal - in other words the Leeds target is almost the same as that for the whole of South Yorkshire.

Property speculators often complain that they are held back by the bureaucracy of the planning system and that is certainly not so in Leeds. There are many unimplemented planning permissions for houses and flats in Leeds. The controlling factors seem to be the physical capacity of the building industry and the prices which are being charged. Annual completions in Leeds have never got much beyond 3,000 in recent years and that is well above the published targets. If we had to grant annual permissions based on the target of 4,740, we would have lots of land standing idle but with speculative planning permission and it would be extremely difficult to arrange any kind of orderly or sequential building. We would just have fields with planning permission which were not being built on, in other words.

One of the attractions of West Yorkshire is that it is not solidly built up, that there is open land close to towns like Morley, Pudsey and Dewsbury which are in the heart of the conurbation. What we have seem to have got out of our success with numbers so far is new dwellings targets which have been vastly increased and which would, if achieved, destroy one of the main attractions for inward investment by forcing us to release large areas of greenfield land for housing, such as Laneside Farm at Cherwell. I do not pretend that we have not got an interest in it in Morley.

That would not do much for affordable housing. None of these targets seem to do a great deal for affordable housing.

Thank you, my Lord Mayor, and I hope that the Government will pay heed to the many representations which I have no doubt are going in during the consultation period which finishes on 21<sup>st</sup> December. There is still time to get your official consultation form filled in and sent to the Government office before Christmas. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR EWENS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We are pleased that there is going to be money, obviously, for Council houses but unfortunately it is not money to acquire land and you cannot build houses on thin air. That is one of our problems, I suspect. Where will they be built? Not in vast estates, as was the fashion some half a century ago, or some three-quarters of a century ago when vast estates were slum clearance - certainly in my home down of Liverpool that is the case. We do have spaces, small spaces around the city which developers will not be interested in because they are too small for them to make any kind of profit, and where they will go into all sorts of areas of the city because we need Council property and affordable rented property in all areas for all the people who will supplement some of the better paid jobs - I am thinking of people like classroom assistants, who are needed in every area of the city and are not going to be able to afford expensive housing.

They will also then move into areas where there is already the infrastructure as far as sewage and electricity lines are concerned, which will simply mean extending and not building from scratch, because I do not think we do want vast estates and I quite agree we have got to look after our green spaces.

We do have unoccupied one-bedroom flats which have been developer-led building and are not always bringing in money for the costs that they were hoping for and which are not flexible. The same goes for the student flats. We have cluster flats which are not flexible. There has been one student development where it would have been possible for it to be used by a family because they were three-bedroom flats and they could have been used for anybody, but while we are still building, allowing developers to build what I call coffins with their own loo, which is what some of the cluster flats are, we are not going to be able to make it. If they were flexible then the developers could adapt to a change of market when the students do not want them, but that is not going to happen.

Yes, I want more Council houses; yes, I want them all over the city, but what we have to bear in mind is that we have a prospective list of Council properties which can be sold, some of which are listed as being worth less than half a million pounds. If we use those instead of selling them - and this I agree would mean considerable consideration because we cannot afford to lose capital but neither can we afford capital to buy land, so perhaps we just need to look at things a little differently. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. City Development Scrutiny asked a question fairly on in the municipal year about where the houses that Leeds was planning to build would be built and we particularly wanted to know whether there was enough land available that the Planning Department knew about. The reply that came back from the Department said yes, the builders had quite extensive land banks ready. They had existing planning permissions and they could build the properties that they were expecting to build according to our plans as they then were. Of course, we have heard from Councillor Carter and through his motion that the Government is off the target considerably. I have severe concerns as to where the extra houses are going to go.



If the Government intends us to put those extra houses in the existing built-up areas, we will inevitably be building in the back gardens in Roundhay and we know from the Roundhay Councillors and a number of Labour Councillors that is fairly unpopular although not with Councillor Lyons.

They would also be building on the very small sites which have been listed for us by City Services in their search for a site for the residual waste treatment facility. There is an example of that, fairly near to where I live at Scarth Avenue in Harehills where Councillor Les Carter was responsible for the demolition of a number of completely unfit houses.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I was laid back at the time though.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Yes and it is a pleasant, grassed site, not used for car parking and it is an amenity to the local area. If members have not been to Harehills lately I will remind you that it is the most densely populated part of Western Europe. We lack open space in Harehills. Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, just down the road, the ward I happen to represent, we have the highest concentration of high rise dwellings, again lacking facilities.

I noticed of course in the motion, and Councillor Wakefield mentioned as well the plea for sequential planning and bidding for infrastructure costs. That is a very fine aspiration. We do have sequential planning but we know in Leeds that when we bid for infrastructure costs we just do not get them. Either the Government wants us to infill just about everything available in the city, or it means we are going to have to build on greenfield sites - perhaps even former cemetery sites at Whinmoor, which might be popular with Whinmoor members, I do not know.

Another problem we have in the city which people know about is the over supply of small flats in the city centre, nearly all of which were given planning administration by the previous Labour administration. The reason why you did not insist on them being four-bedroom flats or three-bedroom flats at the time is because you knew you would be overturned on appeal. In consequence you gave permission for two- and one-bedroom flats. They have been bought up by buy-to-let landlords and the Government, rather anxious to keep the housing market up in the air and not have a housing crash, has changed Capital Gains Tax regulations, reduced CGT from 30% to 18% - something like that, 16% reduction in CGT - and we have seen more recently that they are willing to put £24.5 billion into Northern Rock to keep the bubble going for a little bit longer.

A major failing for the Labour Government over the last ten years is that you will not engage in private rent control and that means that private landlords owning a grotty, run down, two-bedroom back-to-back terrace in Crossgreen, can charge £190 a week for it. That is a scandal and it is your Government's responsibility - we cannot control rents in the private sector but your Government can, but your Government will not because it believes in the market and it thinks the market is more important than even we do on this side. I think you really have to look at your own laurels on this. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Lord Mayor, I was going to try and respond to something that Richard said but there is only one thing that I can respond to and I will cover that later on.

There can be no doubt that the level of house building is unsustainable. If you look at the RSS document, where has the sustainability appraisal gone? All we have been given is an extract of the Executive report now. The actual sustainability appraisal has not been given to me as a member of the Regional Planning Board.

When the first RSS was brought forward, Leeds was showing red - that was based on the lower house building figures. Now they have increased it so the sustainability appraisal must, by definition, get worse and why is that? Because we still are going to be asked to build on the flood plains? That is going to cause us massive problems.

There is no plan - none, zero, zilch - from this Government in terms of putting infrastructure in. Where is the money for the transport to take people from A to B if we build these new houses all over the place? One of the other things in the RSS that suddenly came out of the review was that they want to see more leisure facilities and leisure centres built. That means taking land, so we have got a dilemma there. How do we balance and square that circle up?

Health. There are no plans as to how they are going to meet the infrastructure needs for health needs, for community facilities, for education, for retail, for the energy needs, for the waste management. Absolutely nil. No plan whatsoever. They just think, "We will blame the Local Authorities when things go wrong."

Then another new thing that came out in their Government's review of the RSS was this new thing called a Green Infrastructure Plan. Nobody had ever heard of it before. They suddenly introduced it. Someone needs to try and tell Government if you are having a Green Infrastructure Plan, it cannot then be used for other purposes, so where is the open space going to be? Where are these green lungs that we are going to have? Where are the city centre areas that people can go and sit and enjoy themselves? Under this Government, it does not matter, let us blame the Local Authorities.

What about the recreation space that we all desire? Again, the Government have got no idea what we are doing. To make matters worse, some of these data, the housing data, is actually based on faulty economic data. The model that they used we are actually challenging and we are having to put it through again to try and get the basis of it.

One thing that Councillor Carter put into his motion but did not say a great deal about was the effect that this would have on urban regeneration. A lot of redevelopments we are planning in EASEL, areas like that, are going to be put at risk by this Government's fascination by building on the green belt. I think it was John Prescott that said that it was something to be built on. They are certainly implementing that policy that he came up with.

We have also got, as I said, a conflict of land use. Which do the Labour Party believe land in this city should be used for? Employment - do you think we should use the land for employment or should we use it for housing or should we use it for green infrastructure or should we use it for leisure facilities? Make your mind up. Tell your Government what you think your view is because I certainly believe that we should use some of this land to increase employment in this city. If we use it for employment it cannot then be used for housing. If we suddenly build houses on it, you cannot then knock the houses down and use it for employment later on. Make your mind up what you are planning to do.

When we were at the Regional Planning Board, a Labour member asked the question, "Does building more houses result in lower housing prices?" He contended it will not do so, so it will not solve one of the problems that your Government keeps wittering on about. Can the market actually deliver the volume of houses? They might be able to deliver the quantity but they certainly will not be able to deliver the quality that we need. They will be built and then we will have to come along and

repair them later on because they will be getting thrown up because of the mighty dollar that they will try and chase.

Then there is the housing mix. We can go for numbers but numbers, as we have already argued in the city centre are building flats, but that is not what we need. We need family housing, we need homes for the elderly, places to go to. These all take up land. We are land intensive to build all these types of houses. Then there is the Government's agenda which some people across there do not agree with, that they want 90% home ownership and yet we are getting them going on about Council houses.

We believe in affordable housing. What do you believe in? Your Government wants more co-ownership. Make their mind up what direction they are going to go in.

Then the point that I was going to pick up here about windfalls. In the amendment it says, "To press for the inclusion of windfall sites in the figures for Leeds." What difference is that going to make to the housing numbers??

THE LORD MAYOR: Finish your next sentence, Councillor Anderson, please.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: What you have done is you have mixed up the five year land supply and the housing numbers; totally unrelated, nothing to do with it. What I would say is, get your MPs told because I do not think they understand. I was at a seminar down...

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Anderson, you have finished your last sentence.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: ... and only two turned up, Greg Mulholland, Paul Truswell and nobody else bothered to turn up.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson, sit.

COUNCILLOR FOX: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am sure that had Councillor Anderson been allowed to continue he would have pointed out that we have this debate against a background of Government figures that talk about three million new homes - that is the phrase they use - by 2020. It is interesting to note that this Authority is already building at the three million target by 2020. The pro rata of this population would require this Authority to build 2,800 houses per annum. That is something we have been doing quite comfortably over the last three or four years.

That 2,800, which would have achieved our contribution towards three million, has been transformed into a target of 4,300 net. In other words, we are being asked to contribute 50% more houses than anywhere else would be required in order to attain this three million target. I sometimes wonder, my Lord Mayor, how far people appreciate what the true impact of 4,300 dwellings a year is. It means that a new ward is created in electoral terms every two years and three months, we have the equivalent of a new ward created in this city. It means in under nine years we will be required to create a full Parliamentary constituency. The impact of those numbers on this city are quite frankly startling and it means in a generation this city would increase by a third on its existing numbers. The numbers are huge and I submit, as many other speakers have, that these numbers are simply unattainable.

I do note in the amendment from the Labour Group reference to windfall sites, advocating that we press for their inclusion in the numbers. For goodness sake, we have been pressing for them. Every submission that we have made on this topic we

have said windfall sites are crucial. Of the 3,000 houses built this year, only 1,000 appeared as designated planning sites, designated units. The other 2,000 are windfall sites and this Authority has for many, many years achieved over 70% windfall. The reason we are achieving as many as 3,300, whatever it is, units, is largely attributable to windfalls and the expectation is that those windfall sites will continue to emerge.

It is a complete nonsense that we are to get a Government dictat - and it is quite simply a Government dictat - you cannot include windfall sites in your figures. It is a complete nonsense. To a degree the Labour amendment recognises that. It is no different from saying that they urge it - we have been urging that all the time.

Finally, my Lord Mayor, if I may just touch on the issue of affordable housing and come back to a point mentioned earlier this afternoon when we were discussing the airport sale. There was reference, if you recall, to the Sharp Lane site and that is a site that the City Council sold for a considerable sum of money and I was absolutely astonished when I was chairing Plans East a couple of years ago that this site came up for planning consent, it had been the subject of a development brief by this Authority and the development brief emerged during the Labour administration and stated that we want no - repeat no - affordable housing on the Sharp Lane site of over 400 houses. That is a true reflection of the approach that the Labour administration had to affordable housing.

As it happens there was consensus on the Plans Panel that at least something must be secured and from memory at the end we achieved something like 22 or 24 affordables out of over 400 on that particular brief. Of course, had there been affordable housing, then it would have reflected the capital receipt, it would have been a lower price received by the Council. When we asked the Council Housing Officers why there was no provision for affordable housing, we were told it would unfairly compete with existing Council houses in that area. What a nonsensical approach and thank goodness things have changed on that front.  
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I want to draw Council's attention to one of the core bodies who does research into these areas which is, of course, the Core Cities Group. The Core Cities Group was actually set up by the Government and it looked into many issues relating to core cities. One of the biggest findings that they found was that Leeds as the central economic hub actually draws on a much wider area than its metropolitan boundaries. Indeed, people do not recognise the boundaries we set down in political format in this country. They may work in Leeds and may want to live in North Yorkshire. Indeed, what the Core Cities have found is that the influence Leeds has over the area - which stretches as far down as Barnsley and as far up as Craven, over in the Harrogate area, into East Yorkshire, lots more of North Yorkshire and South Yorkshire - it seems nonsensical that the Government could set up a body which does this research and looks around, comes up with a solution and then is totally ignored by the very people who set it up.

Yes, Leeds is a vastly growing economic hub and we all welcome that in this Chamber. It is becoming one of the powerhouses of the North of England. The Government's own research has shown that the people who want to work in Leeds do not necessarily have to live in Leeds. Government would be far better putting resources into proper transport infrastructures going into the city centre of Leeds which would be able to draw people away from living within these boundaries and therefore creating that economic hub without crowding us out.

The Government's proposals for housing will have a very significant impact on my ward and my constituents. I have mentioned in this Council Chamber before when we had the flooding debate that there is an area of land at Collingham which is a protected search area land. That land is potentially going to have 125 houses built on it. That land was under water by six inches last week. That land if built on will not just remove that water into another area and flood Collingham again, which was six feet under water in June, but does not leave anywhere for the water to soak away to. A lot of these areas are protected search area at the moment not necessarily what you would regard as a flood plain but play a very important part in draining and soaking up water so it does not affect other areas.

Really the Government needs to take notice of the bodies it puts in place. Councillor Carter sits on the Core Cities Group and it does some very good work and as Lead he chairs it when it comes to Leeds and I know it is something that every political party in this Chamber will have had experience with and help with, so really it is a plea for the Government and this Council to send a message to the Government, listen to your own party, listen to the things that have been put up, do not just ignore it. We are the economic hub of the area, we all welcome that, we can have a successful future but we do not need to completely drown out our city with houses. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: Lord Mayor, I am here today with a simple message. My constituents need affordable housing. It is really as simple as that and I want to ask the administration what they are going to do about it. This is not an issue just for the inner city - it affects everyone. The outer areas are in just as much need as the inner areas.

Garforth, Swillington and Great Preston need housing, as does Wetherby. It is only former Council housing land which has been identified as potential sites. Where is the land in Wetherby? Where is the land in Garforth? Is the need of the people in these areas not recognised or would it be too much to admit that all is not well in the leafy outer areas, and Heaven forbid to admit that the Tory wards have the same problems as the Labour wards.

It is time the administration woke up and recognised the scale of the problem. You have criticised the Government for its solution; you have come up with no alternatives. Step up to the mark and tell us what you are going to do to alleviate the affordable housing problems, crisis, in Leeds, especially in the outer areas.

This is a complex issue that needs a lot of thought and a one size fits all approach will not work. What are you going to do about the increasing number of empty properties? What are you going to do about the 31,000 people currently waiting for a house? What are you going to say to the people who have been waiting for years for a house? When are you going to give them the one thing that they want above anything else - a home? This is a city wide crisis that needs immediate action and I want to know what this action will be. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR G HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. While welcoming the paper the other day on social housing, it is interesting, is it not? I would like to know, Andrew, when, how and how many, because I have in my ward lots of people living in a one-bedroom flat with two kids and have done for a long time, cannot get a house on the waiting list. Also lots of people homeless. I have got a young man who is sleeping in a van and has been sleeping in a van for nine months, actually in his friend's drive.

It is interesting, it really is urgent and it needs to be dealt with. You need to sort out the problems on our big estates as well as the rest of the city. EASEL has

been mentioned today by Barry. It is an interesting concept, is EASEL. EASEL is about building on brownfield sites and I think we all agree we do not really want to build on greenfield sites, but the Council, Richard will remember at our area meeting about EASEL that we asked officers to present to us other alternative options for building social housing and affordable housing and the big debate we were having is, what is affordable? Will somebody in South Seacroft be able to buy a house on affordable? Not on the figures that we were presented by the Housing Strategy Document, Andrew. They cannot buy it because they do not earn enough money, even on 50/50. There have to be some imaginative ways of how we are going to actually deal with that and I think there are some gaps in the document that I have seen. I have not seen any affordable lenders coming in and having discussions with this Council how we are going to do it. It is really important that we get people into these houses.

I have to agree, Andrew, with you about the numbers but I think our approach that has been presented by our Leader is probably a way because that is the Humberside view, that is the Assembly view and we need to act together to try and resolve the issues and densities are very important. There is sufficient land to build on brownfield sites in the city, I think - I need to be proved wrong on that - but there are some real issues about what we build, if we are going to build social housing or affordable housing. EASEL proposes to build lots of elderly people's accommodation to release social housing to let to families. We have started via East North East homes building our first bungalows on St James's Approach which is private housing, which is affordable, which actually has been very successful, but we still need to move on because I do not think we are going to achieve, even if EASEL is going to build 6,000, that is four-and-a-half times, probably, what the Government is wanting. Those figures are a little bit high and I think we all agree in this Chamber that something needs to be done about it.

My Leader and our colleague Richard have put a White Paper down, an amendment to your White Paper, which tries to help in this situation, tries to get consensus in this Chamber. We are not happy about the figures but we need to get some way forward. I do plea I would like to know when, how because I have people who are in a one-bedroom flat with two children and I had a case the other night where she had fallen down the stairs with a young baby, newborn baby with another child in her arms. That is not acceptable in this day and age and I think we all would agree because we all have very similar cases in this Chamber, Lord Mayor. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, thank you very much indeed. Here today we listened to Councillor Lewis and it was like All Our Yesterdays. Indeed, I thought at the time that he was talking about at that stage Neil Evans would have been about 16 and John Proctor about eleven. From then onwards they did nothing, nothing at all. When you tackle Councillor Lewis he refers back to Partnership Homes which were a great success in the 1990s. What happened after that? They keep attacking us after three-and-a-half years. What happened from 1990 to 2004? I will tell you what happened - nothing at all. They had no planning, they did nothing at all.

Since we have come in, in the short period of time we have been in, it is a relatively short period of time, we have moved things along further than at any time in the last 20, 25 years. If I was laid back I am delighted I am called laid back and I shall tell my officers that I am known as Laid Back Carter now, and see if they believe it. I do not think they will, actually.

This amendment here, though, is a false amendment and I will tell you why it is a false amendment. This is a planning issue. It was put down by Andrew Carter

as a planning issue. They are trying to make a smokescreen because they did not want to vote for this as a planning issue, so they tried to put other things in.

Let us just look at one thing. Once again, Councillor Lewis, you are wrong again. Let us take voids. In the top ten in this country there are two core cities who are in the top ten for improvements on voids in the last three years. You are referring to your amendment to address the void properties. The amendment actually states that, so you may not have said it but it is in your amendment.

The amendment refers to voids. There are two core cities in the top ten. Not one - not one - is controlled by a Labour Group. I do not know who the other one is controlled by, it is the city of Liverpool. The other one is the city of Leeds. Let me just tell you, Councillor Lewis, the top in this country is the city of Leeds. That is the top on voids across the whole country. *(Applause)*

These are not my figures, they are Government figures. Every time he opens his mouth he gets knocked down. We are leading on affordable housing, his Government recognise it, he does not recognise it. We now talk about - and this has really got in their throat, about building Council houses. Let me just tell you my view on this and my take is this. My take is, we have to manage our stock better. We have 58,000 houses. We cannot manage that stock if it is blocked. There are elderly people in homes which can be released and families can go into and I want to see a lot of Council homes in effect for elderly people which are released and help us to manage our stock better. Whether we got to 12,000 is something which is an aspiration and is an aspiration which people may push for. I want quite a large number but I want that stock to move. I want to see young couples be able to get in three-bedroom accommodations that are currently blocked and I can assure you, we will do it and you know we will do it. In fact, I have never known anybody as bad as the party opposite. I go back to the days of Kevin Gaunt and I was told about Cohen, I was told about all sorts of Labour housing chairmen and by golly, some of these were great men but they ain't got one sitting over there now who could match them. Not one of you could match them, because all that you do is carp, carp, carp. Whatever happens, you carp.

Richard Lewis got to telling us that the only thing he had to worry about was repairing houses. He did a damn good job of that. We have three million legal claims every year against us because he did not repair houses. We have got this down to penny numbers now. You did not repair houses, whatever you say, we did it.

Whatever you look at. PFI, he tried for five years to get a PFI scheme. We in three-and-a-half have got one, we are on our way to another two. Was he able to get it? No. If I was laid back he must have been dead, that is all I can say!

Lord Mayor, this is an important issue. Let me just finally say this. I remember Andrew Carter in this Council Chamber some years ago and warning everybody on planning about mobile masts. The people opposite screamed blue murder. As time went by they said, "Oh, my God, I wish we had listened to you." This is another one. This time take heed, listen. You are going to find plots of land being built on which you do not want building on and your MPs are going to scream blue murder when it comes to elections. Listen, for once in your life - listen and act. I do not want Andrew to alter this in any way, shape or form but vote with him. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I think the Council housing issue has been well and truly sorted by Councillor Carter and congratulations on that record for the empty homes strategy.

I am going to move on a little bit, hopefully, on to the area of planning. I have to say I am just a little bit confused after the speeches from Councillor Lewis and from Councillor Wakefield as to exactly what the Labour position is on this, because Councillor Lewis came to us and said we need to not throw the baby out with the bathwater but be able to tell the Government what they have done wrong, but then I did not actually find out what his group thought the Government was doing wrong by the targets that they proposed for our city. Indeed, when it came to Councillor Wakefield, the implication was that he did not find anything wrong with the numbers that were proposed for our city and that in the fact that we were actually criticising them we were showing lack of ambition for our city and that we did not want our city to be successful.

I was under the impression that our successful city is built upon a collection of successful communities and those communities I think are the best judges as to how their areas should be developed. I thought that was an idea that we were all actually joined up with. I know that Councillor Minkin, for instance, put a huge amount of effort into the UDP and then that turned into the Leeds Development Plan and all of this is all about communities having aspirations for their area and shaping what comes for them.

Then we have this announcement about housing figures. We have well-meaning phrases from Government ministers. This one: "Our ambition for 240,000 houses by 2016" - that is nationally - "strikes a sensible balance between stabilising affordability, ensuring we protect the environment and building in a sustainable, well-planned way, providing the infrastructure communities need."

That statement is almost virtually identical to the précis for a planning proposal that has come through very recently for my ward. The developer has very carefully used all of those terms to show how what they are proposing is just what the community wanted. I can assure you, the pieces of land which they have chosen to build their housing on is not the land that the community wanted and that community voiced it very plainly when it came to looking at the development plan.

That area of land is passland and there are three areas of passland in Rothwell and already just weeks after these comments have been made by Government ministers, we have already had two of those areas of passland subject to speculative planning proposals which leaves only one left. We also note the developer in question has made sure he has bought quite a bit of land around those pieces of passland.

I will point out that in the city there are 34 other areas of passland and I will point out actually to Councillor Wakefield, that one of them is Moorgate at Kippax and the other is Middletown Road at Methley. Now, I assume that he will tell me that his residents have the ambition that they want those areas filled up with housing because that is the way that this city gauges itself as being successful. I assume that is what it is in your area, Councillor Wakefield, because that is what you said today.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You have not listened at all.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I think I did. I think you need to explain it a bit better if it is wrong. I have to say, when it comes to affordability as well, I will trust this Council to provide affordable homes, given its record on making sure the empty home strategy is fulfilled, and I think our Council housing strategy, you might talk about not having money on the table - I do not particularly remember there being money on the table when the Labour Government took over from the Tory Government and still continued their policy of keeping Council house receipts and not



giving them back to the Authority to allow them a little bit more flexibility in terms of building houses.

When you are talking about also the largess of the Labour Government, you mentioned that earlier in terms of PFI, if I recall PFI is something that the Government gives now but we pay later. That is investment that this Council will actually end up paying for. I do not take any lessons from the Labour Government or from the Labour Group opposite.

What I will say is that the passland area that is in this city is all very valuable, green chunks of land and as a whole, as you have already heard from Councillor Fox, it accounts to virtually, in space, a constituency that we would want to take from being green areas beloved by communities and cherished and turned into housing to achieve affordable housing by building 75% more luxury housing. That does not seem to make sense and I think I would trust our Council Housing Strategy a little bit better to provide affordable housing for people in this city. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MORTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Looking at the White Paper from a Liberal perspective, there is a lot that is actually quite supportable. Fundamentally this is a battle between Central Government dictat and local communities being able to choose how they want to develop. I am always going to come down on one side of that rather than the other. I think Les is absolutely right, it is essentially a planning debate which has strayed on both sides of the Chamber into a wider housing debate.

Given that that has happened, I do just want to make a couple of points. I think that there is a danger that some of the rhetoric that we are using may be heading towards the rocks. One of the urgent political tasks in Britain today is to build the support needed to build a lot more houses because we need them. There is a housing crisis in Britain, there is a housing crisis in Leeds and the only way we are getting out of that is to build more accommodation.

That may sound like a statement of the obvious but it is not what we have been hearing today. We have become obsessed with seeing housing as a threat and now given the way Britain is going about it I can understand why that has happened. Let us try and be positive for a moment and give an example and, as it is Christmas, I will be uncontroversial and talk about a simple site in my own ward which is Leeds Girls' High School.

The windfall site, OK - that is good news. Nobody, I have not met a single constituent who thinks that this will not be a substantial housing development and that is good news. We have an articulate and well organised community group that wants to negotiate. That is good news. There are existing buildings that could be converted into accommodation - that is good news. There are some less nice buildings that we can demolish and get some land to build on - that is good news. We have pre-existing green spaces on the site, the kind of green space provision that other developments would kill for is already there. That is good news. It is in an urban site that is within easy walking distance of the city centre, let alone Hyde Park or central Headingley. This is a sustainable developer's dream and it is exactly the kind of opportunity where we could build political consensus to provide more homes for people and families.

Given that there is all that good news, what actually has happened? Firstly, we have spent the first part of the year fighting off the lot of development brief, which I have to say, because it is a fact, was passed off by our own Planning Board and I am grateful to the Executive for taking an altogether more sensible view on it. We would build on all the green spaces and that would allow us no homes or family

houses but the entire complex of one- and two-bedroom flats in utilitarian blocks, badly designed of six storeys high, a development brief that had no affordable housing whatsoever in it and, as I say, with the green spaces gone.

Why is that? Is it because somebody somewhere wants to destroy the area? There are huge economic forces in housing debates we never talk about that force this kind of development. Imagine for a moment, Councillor Wakefield thinks I do not live in the real world - perhaps he is right - but let us imagine also an alternative for a moment where food, everyday food, had actually become not a commodity to be used for what it was meant for - eating - but had become a pension fund, that people had invested so much of their pension funds in food stocks that some people in Britain did not have enough to eat. That is what is going on with housing. Housing was never intended to be an alternative source of pensions and that is what is feeding much of the stuff and that is why you get one- and two-bedroom flats everywhere. We never talk about that as part of it.

What about buy to let? Who wants to stand up and actually challenge the very powerful individuals that have bought up so much of the housing stock? I have landlords in my ward who say that they are not big landlords, or even dispute the word "landlord", because "I only have 20 houses." Some people do not have even one. We never talk about the underlying factors that are actually forcing one- and two-bedroom flat developments.

I might be being naïve and I might be, as Keith says, living in an alternative universe, but I think one of the ways out of this is if the Government instead of saying, "We are using a stick", a socially authoritarian stick, Keith, "to say you will build so many houses", actually offered a carrot to say "We will allow Councils to build communities", you might be surprised in some cases, and it will take political leadership, even in some tough areas of the city, how quickly you can actually build support to get housing built if it is the kind of housing that people feel that their sons and daughters are actually desperately need it are actually going to live in, and that is not the message, I have to say, that has come out of today and I think it is a shame.

Hopefully - and the Government will listen and hopefully the Government will back off - and my request to the Government is not that they do not come back and give us a little bit of a prod, but that they prod us in the direction of better design, better community facilities. I know there have been some documents about it and if you have ever sat in a Planning Committee, as I have, trying to insist on these things is virtually impossible. There will not be anybody sitting here who has not seen an Inspector's decision in their wards and is not horrified at the way we are all overruled and allow us to build communities and begin the task that perhaps we have not done to day, which is to say we need more houses and not just for imaginary immigrants; we need more houses for our own communities and let us build political support and not see it as a threat. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BEVERLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I did intend to begin my speech today by welcoming Councillor Rhodes-Clayton on to the Council's naughty bench here with me today but it seems like you are just sitting over there and coming over here to vote. Nevertheless there are still a few spare seats here, so if anybody else want to join me. *(Laughter)*

Getting back to the point at hand, this motion when it was originally put forward came at a very interesting time, actually, because it came in the wake of the media attention that the Office for National Statistics' new figures for population growth were in the media. The statistics were released to suggest that the population of this country was expected to reach about 71 million by 2031 or, put

another way, the population was set to rise by about a third in the life time of today's children.

Clearly it is this rise in population which is fuelling the need for more houses more than any other factor. Yes, there are other factors - a lot of people are splitting up - but nevertheless this is the single biggest factor which leads to the need for new housing and clearly this rise in population more than anything else is caused by mass immigration.

I am going to quote Sir Andrew Green now, a Chairman of MigrationWatch and this is from the Daily Telegraph recently. He says of this:

"This increase will be 90% due to immigration. These numbers are, frankly, alarming. Our schools and hospitals are already struggling and we have a major housing crisis. The new projections imply that we will have to build 260 houses every day of the week for the next 20 years just to house new immigrants. Put another way, of Gordon Brown's much vaunted three million homes by 2020, one-and-a-quarter million will be needed for new immigrants."

That is not my words, that is from Sir Andrew Green quoted in the Daily Telegraph. I will give you one more piece of supportive evidence here. This is from Robert Rowthorn, who is Professor of Economics at Cambridge University. He had to say - this is from the Sunday Times recently:

"Quite a lot of the population increase is due to the fact that migrants are younger than the average population and tend to have more children per head."

Rowthorn also said:

"The public have been misled on the economic benefits of immigration. To those who are competing with immigrants for jobs, the effect of immigration is going to be largely negative. The most affected are likely to be previous immigrants, many of whom belong to ethnic minorities"

so as you can see it is not just a question of race either and shame on those politicians who try and make it into a racial issue in order to make the whole issue of immigration completely taboo.

The Office of National Statistics themselves have said that almost half of the population increase in the UK over the next few decades will be fuelled by migration, so I could stand here reading out various other quotes like this all day and I am sure you would sit as enthralled as you are listening and learning as well, but it is not necessary to make the point that I am making today. Whether you believe the Office of National Statistics and their rather conservative estimate - 50% fuelled by immigration, the rise in population - or whether you believe Sir Andrew Green who says it is more like 90%, which I am sure is much closer to the truth, immigration is fuelling the huge rise in population we are experiencing in this country and it is this issue that is fuelling the need for new houses.

I support the thrust of this motion but I would suggest that any discussion of this issue, if you want to take this up with the Government, really does need to include the issue of immigration and we really do need to stop ignoring the elephant in the council Chamber. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor, can I put on record that I wish to dissociate myself completely with the last speaker. I feel those racial remarks, racial comments, did little to help this debate forward and if he said I would associate myself with the resolution, I for one would hope he would not.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, it saddens me to have to stand this evening, Lord Mayor, and say that there is no elephant in this room. I believe it is still correct to say that more citizens of this country exit than people come in. Without the people who are coming into this country, to save our economy we would be in a dreadful situation in this country at the moment and I too would like to disassociate myself from the remarks made.

COUNCILLOR RHODES-CLAYTON: Can I also dissociate myself from the last comments, as Councillor Campbell did?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Let me deal with those last points first. It is no part of my resolution, as you see, but I want to refer to the comments that Councillor Wakefield made with reference to Councillor J L Carter and myself.

Keith, I do not think anybody who sits in a party whose Leader said British jobs for British people can start lecturing anybody else on the issues and I take a very dim view of you attempting to imply that Councillor J L Carter and I were, because of comments which actually are accurate, there are certain issues that have to be addressed and if you do not believe that there are, then you are deluding yourself and you are in denial. I hope you never again in this Chamber attempt to imply the sort of racial connotations that you did earlier on. I am particularly upset about that when it comes from somebody who was recently quoted, rightly or wrongly, in The Times in connection with postal votes.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We know what dirty games you play.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can we ask, Lord Mayor, if Councillor Carter would explain that comment because if he can explain it properly then in fact he is certainly opening himself up to the most...

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Atha. Sit, please. Continue, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I will not explain myself to Councillor Atha. I suggest he stays in his seat - it would be most helpful if he did.

Councillor Wakefield made some dreadful insinuations. I have replied and defended myself. You sit down.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, sit down, please.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I saw the comments; so did others.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, if we can return to the major and substantive issue. I am not going to accept the amendment from the Labour Group. They have got themselves into this fix and let me tell you on this side of the Chamber, in the months to come, as it becomes public where the builders, the mates of their Government start to stick the flags, when Councillor Dobson spots surveyors on the green belt in Garforth, when he spots surveyors on the green belt in Kippax,

they will be in here whining and whingeing and wishing they had supported our recommendations.

Do not lecture me either, Keith, about ambition. Your successor on the end put a motion to the Council which would have meant the scrapping of the arena earlier on. That is lack of ambition that you could do nothing about.

My Lord Mayor, back to the major issue. We have been praised by your Prime Minister for our initiative on affordable housing. Unfortunately, Mrs Balls, the Housing Minister, did not seem to understand what she had done when she answered the question to Paul Truswell in the House of Commons. There will be some interesting domestics in that family when Mr Balls realises what is going to happen in his future constituency because of the housing numbers your Prime Minister, like Stalin, is dictating to every Local Authority in the country and if you want to do something constructive, Keith, tell them to give us more planning powers, then our excellent Planning members could turn some of these applications down, could insist on more family housing, get more sustainable communities and make sure on Leeds Girls' High School site - I will tell you what you lot are frightened of, you are frightened to death Leeds Girls' High School slap a planning application in, we turn it down, they go to appeal and your Government lets them build all over the green space on Leeds Girls' High School site because that is what your Government is up to.

Councillor Lewis, you cannot sit both sides of the fence. You either accept that we are taking initiatives that we failed to do to create affordable housing and at the same time that helps us defend our record on housing to the Government and support us in getting these numbers reduced, or you are personally implicated in the massive building on greenfield and green belt sites that will happen around the city, including in Pudsey, and you know it.

My Lord Mayor, this is our opportunity. We are making all the right representations through the Assembly, independently to Government but we know this Government only understands a tough response. We spent 15 years with two Governments - and actually Governments of all persuasions only understand a tough response. We spent 15 years, ten of which have been with this Government arguing over Supertram. We were very reasonable. We did not do the Manchester thing, we did not have placards in the street, call for the Secretary of State's resignation. What did it get us? Absolutely nowhere. This time it is too important unless, of course, your aspiration is to make us like Greater Manchester where you can drive from Oldham to Trafford and never see a piece of green space. I have said to you before, I did not get involved in local politics to watch all our environment destroyed and for no good reason when we can deliver the houses this city needs anyway (*Applause*).

THE LORD MAYOR: Call for a recorded vote - is that seconded? Thank you. Gentlemen, you have all had your chance to speak. Chief Executive.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment)*

THE LORD MAYOR: The figures are present 85; 'Yes 35'; Abstain zero; 'No' 50. That amendment is LOST.

We move on to the motion in the name of Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Move a recorded vote. Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that seconded? It is, thank you.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: This is the last opportunity Members will have to record a vote this year.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Present 84; Abstain zero; 'No' zero; 'Yes' 84. CARRIED.  
*(Applause)*

We are not finished yet, I have not closed the meeting. Unlike the Chief Executive, I can say I am absolutely delighted that we do not have to do a recorded vote yet again this year.

The Banqueting Hall is already booked by Achievers of the Year, so I decided as Lord Mayor that was very important to proceed, so we cannot use it for food so that is in the Members'. I would like to join you there where I wish you a very Merry Christmas. If you are not, can I wish you a very safe journey home. With that I will close the meeting

*(The meeting closed at 5.40 pm)*