



Spatial Economics Research Centre

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Housing Policy Course Strikes Again

I see that Hilary Benn has been struck by the housing market policy curse (that makes politicians say silly things when talking about housing policy). This follows on from recent incidents including [the budget](#), and announcements by [Nick Clegg](#) and [Ed Balls](#)

Here's Hilary Benn talking about planning in the Telegraph: "I believe communities can make these [planning] decisions for themselves. I don't think that if given that power, communities will ignore the needs of young people and the nation as a whole. In fact, if they can shape what happens – deciding where the homes will go, being certain that the extra infrastructure (schools, shops, and GPs surgeries) will be there, feeling comfortable with the design and knowing that their children and people on the local waiting list will be at the head of the queue - then I am confident that communities will take the right decisions about what is best for their needs."

In short, Hilary Benn thinks that local homes for local people will produce local plans that allow much more housing. Will this work? Well, the coalition is already promoting local plans which give people say over what happens where in their communities, but there's [precious little evidence that this will deliver more housing](#). Hilary Benn thinks that this would change if we introduced a "local homes for local people policy". That is, he is proposing to moving housing allocation to a system that recognises the right to live where you are born (residency criteria) or where you work (employment criteria). As I have written before [I don't like the politics of this](#): Putting aside issues of how it would be implemented, do the Labour party feel that these are sufficiently strong rights to weaken those around housing need (the current criteria)? If they do, then that is an important policy shift which will have big (negative) implications for many of our poorest families (as well as for the functioning of the economy). Of course, I don't believe that the Labour party intend to abandon the principle of needs based housing allocation and move to a local homes for local people policy, in which case Hilary Benn is essentially calling for the implementation of a (local plan) policy that already exists. The curse strikes again ...

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Friday, June 07, 2013](#)

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