Steve Reed

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Semantic Summary

Steve Reed is the Labour (Co-op) MP for Streatham and Croydon North and the current Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. A seasoned local government figure turned cabinet minister, Reed previously led Lambeth Council before entering Parliament in 2012. Under Keir Starmer, he served as Shadow Environment Secretary, then as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), before being moved to the housing brief in a September 2025 reshuffle — replaced at Defra by Emma Reynolds. A Fabian Society member and Labour Friends of Israel affiliate, Reed has faced criticism over his record as a landlord, his role in the bee-killing pesticide controversy at Defra, and the local elections wipeout of May 2026. As Burnham prepares to take over, Reed's political future is uncertain — described by critics online as "crawling for his political life."

Overview

Field	Details
Full Name	Steven Mark Ward Reed
Honours	OBE
Born	c. 1963 (age ~62–63)
Role	Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Previous	Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra); Shadow Environment Secretary; Leader of Lambeth Council
Classification	Cabinet Minister
Party	Labour and Co-operative
Constituency	Streatham and Croydon North (since 2012 by-election)
BookStack page	1620

Early Life & Career

- Born c. 1963
- Long career in local government before entering national politics
- Led Lambeth Council as Leader before becoming an MP — one of the few cabinet ministers with substantial local government executive experience
- Awarded OBE for services to local government

Political Career

Leader of Lambeth Council (pre-2012)

- Served as Leader of Lambeth Council, gaining experience in housing, planning, and local service delivery
- His Lambeth record later became both a credential (experience running services) and a liability (criticised for council decisions)

Backbench MP & Shadow Roles (2012–2024)

- Elected MP for Streatham and Croydon North in a 2012 by-election
- Re-elected in 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2024
- Served in various shadow ministerial roles under Jeremy Corbyn and Keir Starmer
- Appointed **Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** under Starmer's leadership

Environment Secretary — Defra (2024–2025)

- Appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs following Labour's 2024 election victory
- Tenure marked by controversy over the decision to allow farmers to use a bee-killing pesticide — a watchdog later ruled Defra **breached the law** in doing so
- The Guardian: "*Defra breached law when it let farmers use bee-killing pesticide, watchdog says*"
- Replaced as Defra Secretary in September 2025 by Emma Reynolds in a cabinet reshuffle

Housing Secretary (2025–present)

- Moved to Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in September 2025

- Planning Resource profile (Sept 2025): "*The planning track record and promises of new housing secretary Steve Reed*" — detailing his approach to housing delivery and planning reform
- **June 2026:** Branded Lib Dem housing spokesperson Gideon Amos a "NIMBY" during a tense parliamentary exchange (Somerset Live)
- **July 2026:** Scheduled to speak at the LGA Conference alongside Suella Braverman, James Cleverly, and Zack Polanski
- **July 2026:** Delivered keynote address at the Re:State conference on government reform alongside Darren Jones
- **Vagrancy Act repeal:** Oversaw the repeal of the Vagrancy Act, ending rough sleeping as a criminal offence (Ministry of Housing, June 2026)

Local Elections & Labour Infighting (May 2026)

- Following Labour's local elections wipeout in May 2026, Reed admitted on LBC that the party had suffered a "terrible" and "embarrassing" week
- Told Nick Ferrari: "*It has been a terrible week... it has been embarrassing*"
- The wipeout triggered a wave of party infighting and contributed to the pressure that ultimately led to Starmer's resignation

Controversies

Bee-Killing Pesticide (Defra)

- During his tenure at Defra, Reed's department permitted the use of a neonicotinoid pesticide banned for its harm to bees
- A watchdog subsequently ruled the decision unlawful — Defra had breached the law
- Environmental groups and The Guardian criticised the decision

Landlord Status

- Criticised on social media for being a landlord while serving as Housing Secretary — seen as a conflict of interest by critics
- Nitter/X users flagged the conflict: "*Yes, Steve Reed MP... is a landlord. Conflict of Interest???????*"

Labour Friends of Israel

- Affiliated with Labour Friends of Israel (LFI)
- In 2024, was part of an LFI delegation that met with Israeli President Isaac Herzog
- Criticism from pro-Palestine activists: labelled an "Israeli asset" on social media

- Accused of being "at the centre of the new antisemitism smear campaign directed at the Green Party" (Nitter, Jul 2026)

Mandelson Support

- Like Darren Jones, Reed was a supporter of Peter Mandelson — Nitter critics noted: "*Steve Reed... was a huge fan of Epstein friend and repeatedly disgraced Labour Lord Peter Mandelson*"

Political Survival Under Burnham

- With Burnham expected to become PM, Reed's position is uncertain
- Bluesky (4 Jul 2026): "*Steve Reed, MP for Streatham and Croydon North (when he can be bothered) is crawling for his political life as Burnham gets ready to take over*"
- His close alignment with the Starmer project may count against him in a Burnham administration

Political Positions

- **Fabian Society:** Long-standing ties to the left-leaning think tank, frequently participating in their conferences
- **Co-operative Party:** Represents the Co-op wing of Labour
- **Pro-housing delivery:** As Housing Secretary, has pushed for planning reform and increased housebuilding
- **Pro-Israel:** Active in Labour Friends of Israel
- **Local government devolution:** Local government background informs support for devolution and mayoral combined authorities

Significance

- One of the few cabinet ministers with substantial local government executive experience (former council leader)
- Represents the Starmer-loyalist centre of the party — now potentially vulnerable under a Burnham premiership
- His Defra tenure will be remembered for the bee-killing pesticide controversy
- His housing brief puts him at the centre of one of the government's most visible policy areas
- The Lambeth → Parliament → Cabinet pipeline is a rare career path that gives him credibility on local government issues

Social Media & Public Perception

- **Criticism from left:** Accused of being an "Israeli asset," too close to Mandelson, and out of touch as a landlord
- **Criticism from right:** Targeted over local elections wipeout and housing policy
- **Bluesky:** Speculation that his cabinet career may be ending under Burnham
- **LGA Conference (Jul 2026):** Speaking alongside cross-party figures — signalling continued relevance in local government circles
- **Re:State Conference (Jul 2026):** Keynote address on government reform

Sources

1. Somerset Live — "Taunton and Wellington MP branded 'Nimby' housing secretary during debate" (29 Jun 2026)
2. LBC — "Labour's most embarrassing week yet? Minister admits 'terrible' time" (15 May 2026)
3. Planning Resource — "The planning track record and promises of new housing secretary Steve Reed" (8 Sept 2025)
4. Farmers Weekly — "Emma Reynolds replaces Steve Reed as Defra secretary" (5 Sept 2025)
5. The Guardian — "Defra breached law when it let farmers use bee-killing pesticide, watchdog says"
6. Wikipedia — Steve Reed (politician)
7. UK Parliament — Steve Reed MP profile
8. Re:State Conference — keynote transcripts, gov.uk (Jul 2026)
9. LGA Conference 2026 — speaker programme
10. Nitter/X — "Steve Reed" housing secretary, DEFRA, Streatham
11. Bluesky — "Steve Reed MP" search (Jul 2026)

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