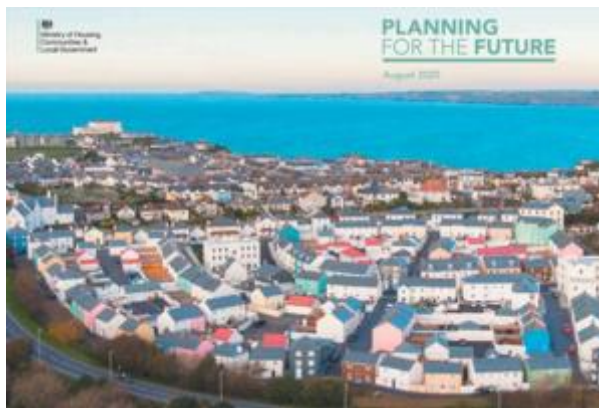


CONSULTATION FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Planning for the future, White Paper

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

Consultation closes 29th October. Email responses via planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk or via the website <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>



This White Paper is potentially the biggest change in the planning system since Town and Country Planning Act, 1947

Central government perceive the current planning system to be:

- Too complex
- Discretionary, not rules based
- Taking too long to adopt a Local Plan

- Housing needs assessments, viability and environmental impact statements are too opaque
- To have lost public confidence
- Based on old tech
- Developer contribution negotiations are complex, slow and unclear
- Not have enough focus on design; and
- Not enough homes being built

There are 24 proposals in the White Paper, split under three Pillars or headings – Planning for Development; Planning for beautiful sustainable places and Planning for infrastructure & connected places. The numbers in brackets below are the proposals.

Pillar one - Planning for Development

The idea is that Local Plans should be simplified, digitized, standardized, slimmed down and their production speeded up and to have a 10 not 15 year life span. All areas to have Local Plans by 2023. They should identify three zones – Growth, Renewal and Protect. (1)

Growth Areas – suitable for substantial development such as new settlements, urban extensions and areas for redevelopment such as ex-industrial land suitable for urban regeneration. Automatic outline approval – Permission in Principle would be conferred by adoption of the Local Plan. (5) Detailed permission secured in one of three ways – reformed reserved matters; Local Development Order prepared by LPA in parallel with the Local Plan, linked to Master Plan and design codes or for exceptionally large sites a Development Consent Order under Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

Renewal Areas – suitable for smaller scale development, infill, densification and rural areas. General presumption in favour of development established in legislation (plan led system). Consent given for pre-specified forms of development. A new route to automatic planning permission if it meets certain design and other criteria.

Protected Areas – Green Belt, SSSI's, AONB's, flood risk areas, wildlife sites etc. More stringent control to ensure sustainability but planning application to the LPA.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be the primary source of policies (2), set nationally along with development control policies, not repeated in the Local Plan which just has the site or area specific policies. Local Planning Authorities to produce local design codes in parallel with the Local Plan.

The Local Plan to be subject to a single sustainability test - "*Will the Local Plan contribute to achieving sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF*". Abolishing the duty to co-operate between LPA's, slimmed down deliverability text and remove existing test of soundness. (3)

There will be a standard national method for establishing housing requirements and for distributing the 300,000 new annual homes requirement. The 5 year land supply requirement will go (4)

Faster decision making with firm deadlines; shorter more standardized applications, national digital templates and supporting technical information; standard national conditions and LPA's to return fees if appeals are successful. (6)

Local Plans to be visual, map based with standardized data sets to a new national template (7)

30 month Local Plan production timetable to be adhered to, 5 stage method. Review every 5 years. Risk government intervention if non-compliance. (8)

Neighbourhood Plans to be retained and supported, more use of digital tools (pilots) (9)

Masterplans should seek to include a variety of development types by different builders to encourage faster build out. Few details (10)

Pillar Two Building Beautiful, sustainable places

The White Paper suggests that a slimmed down faster planning system is just the start of high quality development and better place making. It refers to the work of the [Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission](#). It expects design codes and guidance to be prepared locally and to be binding on decisions. (11). MHCLG will set up a body to support delivery of local design codes and each LPA is to have a Chief Officer for design and place making. (12)

[Homes England](#) to provide leadership in giving emphasis to delivering beautiful places (13). There will be a 'fast track' for beauty for applications which comply with established good design principles, incentivizing attractive and popular development which reflects local character (14)

Amend the NPPF to strengthen but simplify the way the planning system considers environmental issues (15 &16)

Review and update the planning framework for listed buildings, allowing sympathetic changes to support continued use of buildings. Perhaps allowing experienced architectural specialists autonomy from listed building consent. (17)

Introduce ambitious improvements in energy efficiency standards to net-zero by 2050 (18)

Pillar Three Planning for Infrastructure and connected places

Consolidated Infrastructure Levy (IL) replaces L both Sec 106 agreements and CIL. A mandatory nationally set rate/s. Abolish planning obligations. (19)

IL to be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development which don't necessarily create additional floor space. (20) IL to deliver affordable housing on site which CIL currently doesn't. (21)

More freedom for LA's on what they spend IL on, 25% for parish councils to be kept. MHCLG is interested in ways to enhance community engagement about how funds should be spent (22)

Proposals 23 & 24 are about providing resources & skills for the planning sector and strengthening enforcement powers and sanctions.

Observations – Pro's:

- Recognition of the need for proper resourcing of the planning system
- Great to have encouragement of Building for Beauty, this has been much neglected by volume housebuilders
- Maintains the foundation of a plan led system
- Continued support for Neighbourhood Plans and parish councils getting 25% of IL
- Good to encourage better use of digitization
- Suggests the reforms will "radically and profoundly re-invent engagement with local communities" which is a pro but can't see how this will happen in reality (con)

Cons:

- Thin on detail
- Narrow emphasis on build to buy ([First Homes](#) - 25% of affordable homes, only 5% other tenancies), little about other tenancies and Community Land Trusts. Will affect rural affordable housing (CPRE very critical <https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/major-planning-reforms-criticism/>)
- Massive centralization with government templates for Local Plans, binding housing numbers set nationally, Development Management policies, national body for design codes
- Where is the duty to co-operate, or joined up strategic planning across an area?
- General presumption in favour of development. Development, simplicity or speed of delivery aren't the answer to everything and probably mean less rigorous and less effective local scrutiny, less democratic engagement
- Only three categories of zoning. Towns and countryside are far more nuanced, three zones is too blunt an instrument. Sub-zones for self-build will be introduced.
- Climate change has slipped down the agenda and environmental assessments appear to be marginalized

- Streamlining or speeding up of the planning permission system is likely to mean less opportunity/time for parish councils to comment.
- Ironic emphasis on 'beauty' (subjective?) and place making when current system allows office to rabbit hutch conversions with no windows! Volume house builders have never been known for beauty.