

# Planning Reforms 2020

## 1. 'Planning for the Future' White Paper

Published on 6 August. Responses are required by 29 October.

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

### Proposals in the White Paper

#### 1. Streamline the planning process

- Land to be identified on digital mapping under 3 categories - Growth, Renewal and Protection (areas and sites within the new Local Plan would be annotated and colour-coded in line with their designation, with explanatory descriptions set out in the key and accompanying text, as appropriate to the category.)
- Areas identified as Growth areas (suitable for substantial development) would automatically be granted outline planning permission for the principle of development, while automatic approvals would also be available for pre-established development types in other areas suitable for building.
- Renewal Areas – Local Plan sets out what is acceptable, presumption in favour of sustainable development. If a proposal meets this it may be permitted development. If it doesn't permission will need to be applied for.
- Protected Areas – doesn't mean absolutely no development in some areas, planning permission will need to be sought.
- Local Plans to contain rules rather than general policies. Development Management Policies to be contained within a new NPPF
- Standard templates for Local Plans
- Replacing existing tests of soundness with a suitability test
- 30 months to write a Local Plan (simplified 5 stage process). 42 months if recently adopted a Local Plan (in past 3 years).
- Far Greater use of data and digital technology
- Twin track approach need to prepare Local Plan, design guides, design codes, possibly master plans, design patterns, as well as supporting neighbourhoods plans at the same time.
- Need to review Local Plan legally every 5 years to be retained

#### 2. Digital-first approach

- More digital engagement for Local Plans and decision-making
- Use of software for planning applications
- New PropTech Innovation Council

#### 3. Focus on design and sustainability

- New climate change mitigation, energy efficiency standards
- Quicker assessment of environmental impact - abolishing the Sustainability Appraisal system, developing a simplified process
- Greater focus on 'placemaking' and 'the creation of beautiful places'
- Automatically permit proposals for high-quality developments where they reflect local character and preferences
- Design guidance and codes - rules for the design of new development - to be produced for a whole local authority area, or for a smaller area or site
- This Autumn the government will publish a 'National Model Design Code' to supplement the National Design Guide. Will complement a revised and consolidated Manual for Streets
- Establish a new body to support the delivery of design codes
- Revive 'pattern books' approach, for local areas
- Local Planning Authorities to have a chief officer for design and place-making

#### 4. Infrastructure delivery

- New 'Infrastructure Levy' to replace S.106 and Community Infrastructure Levy - based on a flat-rate, valued-based charge, set nationally, at either a single rate, or at area-specific rates. Exemption for self and custom-built development to continue
- Under the Infrastructure Levy, authorities would be able to use funds raised through the levy to secure affordable housing
- Remove exemptions for the new Levy

#### 5. More land

- New nationally determined, binding housing requirement that local planning authorities have to deliver – abolish standard method for Local Housing Need
- Propose to maintain the Housing Delivery Test and the presumption in favour of sustainable development as part of the new system. Abolish the 5-Year Land supply test
- Speed up construction by encouraging more phases of development to come forward together
- Encouraging competition amongst developers
- Location of new public building to support renewal and regeneration of town centres

**National Planning Policy Framework** - to be amended

#### Neighbourhood Plans

- To be retained. Content should become more focused to reflect new Local Plan proposals
- Greater use of digital tools and data (new digital co-creation platforms and 3D visualisation technologies to explore proposals within the local context)
- Spread use of NPs in towns and cities
- Possible scope to extend and adapt the concept for very small areas, such as individual streets
- Role in producing design guides/codes
- Neighbourhood share of the new Infrastructure Levy to be kept

## 2. Changes to the current planning system

The Government also published a consultation setting out proposals to improve the effectiveness of the current planning system, consultation closes 1 October 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

- **Standard method for assessing housing need:** Proposals to revise this to increase the overall number of homes being planned for and achieve a more appropriate distribution in light of Gov ambition for 300k new home per year.
- **Delivering First Homes:** Proposals include setting a requirement that 25% of all affordable housing secured through developer contributions should be First Homes. Options for the remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions, and views sought on transitional arrangements, level of discount, interaction with CIL and how First Homes would be delivered through exception sites.
- **S106 and small sites:** Proposals to temporarily raise the threshold which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing, up to 40/50 units for an initial 18-months. In designated rural areas it is proposed to maintain the current threshold. It also seeks views on whether there are any other barriers for SMEs to access and progress sites.
- **Permission in Principle:** Proposals to increase the threshold for Permission in Principle by application, to cover sites suitable for major housing-led development, rather than being restricted to just minor housing development.