

The Consultation: Summary

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is consulting on substantial planning reforms. Its own summary of the reforms is:

“The planning for the future consultation proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development.”

The consultation covers a package of proposals for reform of the planning system, covering plan-making, development management, development contributions, and other related policy proposals.

The introduction of new primary and secondary legislation to give effect to the changes is likely to be in 2021.

The government is seeking comments on the White Paper: Planning our Future before **29 October 2020**.

A summary of the white paper proposals form appendix A to this report. In short, they seek the following:

1. Streamline the planning process:

- Simplifying the role of local plans, focusing on three land categories – Growth areas suitable for substantial development, and where outline approval for development would be automatic; Renewal areas suitable for some development, such as gentle densification; and Protected areas where development is restricted.
- Local plans to be based on clear rules rather than general policies with national development management policies to be introduced.
- Greater engagement at the plan-making stage and more streamlined at application stage.
- Introducing a single statutory “sustainable development” test replacing the existing tests of soundness and updating requirements for assessments (including on the environment and viability) and abolishing the Duty to Cooperate

- Requiring Local Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to meet a statutory timetable (of no more than 30 months) sanctions if not met - fee refunds and deemed permissions
- Compelling faster and more certain decision-making within firm deadlines.
- Strengthening enforcement powers and sanctions.
- Developing a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of the reforms.
- National fee setting to remain but to cover whole cost of planning

2. A digital-first planning process. Local authorities are to be provided with support and collaboration with tech companies to develop effective civic engagement and decision-making processes.

- Embedding social media and multi-device and platform use
- Interactive local plans and open and transparent access to information influencing planning decisions
- Modernising software used for case management systems

3. A new focus on design and sustainability, including:

- making it easier for those who want to build beautifully through the introduction of fast-track consenting for high quality design.
- the introduction of a quicker, simpler framework for assessing environmental impacts and enhancement opportunities
- establishing a new body to support the delivery of design codes in every part of the country.
- protecting our historic buildings and areas while ensuring the consent regime is modernised.

4. Improve infrastructure delivery. The Community Infrastructure Levy and the current system of planning obligations are proposed to be reformed as a single nationally set, value-based flat rate charge (the 'Infrastructure Levy'). The new levy would be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development rights. Potential forward funding of infrastructure to unlock development.

5. Make more land available for the homes and development people and communities need, and support renewal of our town and city centres primarily through a new nationally determined, binding housing

requirement that local planning authorities would have to deliver through their Local Plans. The aspiration being to create a housing market that can deliver 300,000 homes annually.

Summary table

Pillar 1: planning for development	Pillar 2: planning for beautiful and sustainable places	Pillar 3: planning for infrastructure and connected places	Delivering change
<p>A nationally set target of 300,000 homes per annum, with 'binding' targets for local authorities which factor in land constraints</p> <p>Five-year land supply and Duty to Cooperate removed</p> <p>Interactive map-based Local Plans produced on a statutory 30-month timeframe, identifying Growth, Renewal and Protected land over a minimum 10-yr period</p> <p>NPPF as the primary source of development</p>	<p>A new National Model Design Code and a revised Manual for Streets, to complement the existing National Design Guide</p> <p>Local design codes and guides to be prepared with community involvement by Local Planning Authorities</p> <p>A national design body to support the use of design codes and guides, and exploration of a new role for Homes England in delivering beautiful places</p>	<p>A new fixed rate Infrastructure Levy to replace S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy, based on the final value of development</p> <p>Increased flexibility for Local Authorities on how the Levy is spent</p> <p>Extending the Levy to capture changes of use through some permitted development rights</p> <p>Local authorities able to borrow against the new Levy to forward fund Infrastructure</p> <p>Affordable housing can</p>	<p>A comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector</p> <p>Cost of operating the planning system to be principally funded by the beneficiaries of planning gain (landowners and developers) rather than the taxpayer</p> <p>Strengthened planning enforcement powers and sanctions</p> <p>A focus on digital planning and freeing up development management resources</p> <p>A new performance</p>

Appendix A

management policies	The introduction of a 'fast track process for beauty'	be used to offset the levy	framework for Local Planning Authorities
Emphasis on engagement at the plan making stage	NPPF changes to require all new streets to be treelined		A regulatory review to identify and eliminate outdated regulations which increase costs for Local Planning Authorities
A single statutory 'sustainable development' test to replace the existing tests of soundness	A chief officer for design and place-making in each local authority		
A digital-first approach			