



By Email Only

Message from Chief Planner

August 2024

This Newsletter provides updates on the latest announcements from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and other government departments and agencies relating to planning practices and policy. Please see overleaf for the list of contents.

On 30 July 2024, the Deputy Prime Minister set out to the House of Commons [the Government's plan to build the homes the country need](#), announcing the launch of a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other aspects of the planning system including the introduction of strategic planning, changes to planning fees and new thresholds for some National Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). This newsletter also introduces other announcements by the new Government that relate to planning in England, including the New Towns Task Force, New Homes Accelerator Task Force and affordable housing programme; and provides details of where to find out more.

The proposed changes to the NPPF underline the Government's commitment to a plan-led system that supports sustainable and high-quality development, boosts housing supply, increases affordability, makes effective use of land and supports a modern economy. The consultation closes at **11.45pm on Tuesday 24 September 2024** and we encourage you to share your thoughts and provide feedback on the proposed changes.

Attached here is a [letter](#) from the Deputy Prime Minister to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives, setting out the changes and emphasising the important role that local government has to play.

I also attach in Annex A an [open letter](#) from the Minister for Housing and Planning sent to the RTPI President noting "The Deputy Prime Minister and I have enormous respect for the planning profession." The letter goes on to quote the Deputy Prime Minister who said in her announcement, "skilled, professional planning officers are agents for change and drivers of growth, playing a crucial role in delivering the homes and infrastructure this country needs." Please pass this letter on to your teams.

All previous Chief Planner Letters and Newsletters are available on GOV.UK [here](#).

With kind regards

Joanna Averley
Chief Planner



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Policy and Delivery Updates

NPPF Consultation

On 30 July, MHCLG launched a [consultation](#) seeking views on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the system. The consultation is open now and will close at **11.45pm on Tuesday 24 September 2024**.

A description of the key changes is provided below, but the full detail on the changes MHCLG propose to make are set out in the consultation document, with the draft track-changed NPPF text found [here](#). The Government will respond to this consultation and publish NPPF revisions before the end of the year.

Specifically, the changes proposed will:

- Make **targets mandatory and reverse other changes** made under the previous Government, which undermine housing supply;
- Implement a **new standard method formula** to ensure local plans are ambitious enough to support the Government's manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament;
- Identify **grey belt land** within the Green Belt, to be brought forward for homes and other important development through both plan and decision-making;
- Deliver affordable, well-designed homes, with new **"golden rules"** for land released in the Green Belt to ensure release delivers in the public interest;
- Make wider changes to ensure that local planning authorities are able to **prioritise the types of affordable homes their communities need** and that the planning system supports a more diverse housebuilding sector;
- **Support economic growth** in key sectors, including laboratories, gigafactories, datacentres, digital economies and freight and logistics – given their importance to our economic future;
- **Deliver community needs** to support society and the creation of healthy places; and
- **Support clean energy and the environment**, including through support for onshore wind and renewables.

Alongside these policy changes the Government are consulting on:

- whether to reform the way that the **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects** (NSIP) regime applies to renewable energy, commercial and



water development, as the first step of the government's NSIP reform plans;

- whether the **local plan intervention policy** criteria should be updated or removed, so the Government can intervene where necessary to ensure housing delivery;
- proposals to increase some **planning fees**, including for householder applications, so that local planning authorities are properly resourced to support a sustained increase in development and improve performance.

Finally, it sets out how and when we expect **every local planning authority to rapidly create a clear, ambitious local plan** for high quality housebuilding and economic growth.

For further information, please see the press release [here](#) and Written Ministerial Statement [here](#).

As confirmed in the King's Speech, these changes to the NPPF will be followed by further reforms in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Details of what the Bill will do can be found [here](#).

Social and Affordable Housing

The announcement on 30 July also set out how the Government is taking steps to provide more flexibility and certainty to councils and housing associations to deliver the biggest boost to social and affordable housing in a generation. This included increased flexibilities on how councils can use their Right to Buy Receipts and the launch of the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund. The Government also pressed Homes England and the GLA to maximise the number of social rented homes in allocating the remaining funding in the 2021-2026 AHP.

The announcement signalled the Government's intention to review the Right to Buy scheme more widely, bring forward details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the spending review; set out plans at the next fiscal event to give councils and housing associations the rent stability; and introduce Awaab's Law into the social rented sector. More details will be shared in the Autumn.

New Towns

The Government have also set out how it intends to deliver on our commitment to build a new generation of new towns. This will include large-scale new communities built on greenfield land and separated from other nearby settlements, but also a



larger number of urban extensions and urban regeneration schemes that will work with the grain of development in any given area. More details can be found [here](#)

New Homes Accelerator Task Force

The Chancellor announced the New Homes Accelerator Taskforce as part of her [speech](#) on 8 July, which included the first four schemes that the Taskforce and Homes England will support - Liverpool Central Docks, Worcester Parkway, Northstowe, and Langley Sutton Coldfield, together delivering more than 14,000 homes. Homes England is leading the effort to accelerate these schemes. MHCLG look forward to working with local planning departments to identify and unblock sites. More details on the Taskforce will follow in the next newsletter.



Annex A: Open Letter to the RTPI President



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State

**Ministry of Housing, Communities &
Local Government**
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/mhclg

Dear Lindsey,

1 August 2024

The vital role of professional planners in building the homes we need

On 30 July, the Deputy Prime Minister set out to the House of Commons this Government's plan to build the homes this country needs. As a crucial first step in this plan, we have launched an eight-week consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and several other changes to the planning system.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I have enormous respect for the planning profession. For my own part, I have seen first-hand the positive impact of your vision and leadership; your engagement with local people; and your collaboration with colleagues across disciplines.

I therefore wanted to write to you, as President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, to convey a clear message on behalf of Government to professional planners – and in particular those serving in local authorities across England.

First, we fully recognise the critical role that planners and related professions, working hand in hand with elected members, have and will play in unlocking the growth the country needs. Second, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that many of the reforms we set out yesterday represent significant change, which will require leadership and professional commitment. The Government knows how important it will be to bolster capacity and capability in planning departments up and down the country, which several of our proposals are designed to address – including increases in planning fees and placing more trust in planning officers.

As the Deputy Prime Minister said yesterday, "skilled, professional planning officers are agents of change and drivers of growth, playing a crucial role in delivering the homes and infrastructure this country needs". I look forward to working with you, and the whole profession, in the months and years ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State