



Chartered
Institute of
Housing

What you need to know about 'Planning for the future'



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On 5 August 2020, the Government released ['Planning for the Future'](#), the new white paper which aims to overhaul the English planning system in what it called a "once in a generation shake-up".

This what you need to know briefing for CIH members summarises the government's proposed plans as set out in the white paper. This consultation marks the start of a major process of reform that will require primary and secondary legislation and plans may be subject to change, depending on the outcome of the consultation.

The government's ambition is to deliver its reforms by the end of the parliament.

What is being proposed?

The white paper is underpinned by the aspiration that new homes need to be beautiful and sustainable. Proposals to reform the planning system focus on streamlining the planning process to accelerate the delivery of new homes.

Key proposals include:

- Local housing plans to be developed and agreed in 30 months - down from the current 7 years.
- Local communities will be consulted from the very beginning of the planning process by 'harnessing the latest technology through online maps and data'.
- Every area must have a local plan in place. At present, only 50 per cent of local areas has a plan.
- The planning process is to be turned into a 'rules based system'. Currently around a third of planning cases that go to appeal are overturned at appeal.
- The creation of a fast-track system for 'beautiful buildings' and establishing local design guidance for developers to build and preserve 'beautiful communities'.

- Valued green spaces will be 'protected for future generations' by allowing for more building on brownfield land and all new streets to be 'tree-lined'.
- Scrapping developer contributions through agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which are one of the main sources of affordable homes.
- As part of a plan to support small and medium-sized builders in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the Government is considering expanding the rule that exempts developers providing affordable housing on small sites to include developments as large as 40 or 50 new homes.
- All new homes are proposed to be carbon neutral by 2050, with 'no new homes delivered under the new system needed to be retrofitted'.

What will these reforms mean?

There will be categorisations of land, which means that permission to build new homes relies on the categorisation given to the land on which it is going to be built. Land will be designated for:

- Growth: areas that are categorised as suitable for substantial development with permission granted automatically for the types of development specified in a local plan.
- Renewal: areas that are considered 'suitable for development' and intended for 'existing built areas where smaller-scale development is appropriate'.
- Protected: areas which 'justify more stringent development controls', which could include areas such as green belt, areas of outstanding natural beauty, conservation areas, local wildlife sites, areas of significant flood risk and areas of green space.

Local design codes will be established as part of the Government's aspiration for design standards, with the support of a national body based on the ideas developed by the Building Better, Beautiful Commission and a fast-track system for "beautiful" developments. Local authorities will be tasked with doing so 'in ways which reflect local character and community preferences'.

The Government is aiming to be carbon neutral by 2050, with proposals for improvements in energy efficiency standards. New homes will be required to produce 75 per cent to 80 per cent lower CO2 emissions compared with current levels from 2025.

The white paper proposes ending developer contributions, known as 'Section 106 agreements', which are one of the main sources of affordable homes. Under what government calls a 'new and simpler system of developers contributions', Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy will be replaced by a new 'Infrastructure Levy' that will be a 'fixed proportion of the value of the development, above a set threshold, helping to deliver more affordable housing'.

What does CIH think?

CIH supports the intention to build good quality homes at a quicker pace, and it is positive to see recognition that it is not just about numbers - that new homes need to be built in the right places and provide well designed places for people to live and work. However, any changes must ensure more genuinely affordable homes will be built to meet housing demand, and proposals must be underpinned by a commitment to housing design standards that meet diverse needs. The country needs a planning system that ensures we have the right kinds of homes, in the right places and at the right prices - particularly homes at social rents. These changes will not only cause uncertainty, at least in the short term, but could delay the step change government is seeking.

We know we need to build at least 90,000 new social rented homes each year and investing in a programme to deliver this would give the post-COVID19 economy the boost it desperately needs. Section 106 agreements are providing around 40 per cent of our new affordable homes each year and removing them without a robust alternative is a real concern.

We need more good quality homes of all kinds that address the real needs of local communities. The First Homes initiative will enable some people to become homeowners who may not have been able to do so, but we also need homes at social rents. Everyone deserves a safe, secure, comfortable place to call home, and we need a planning system and government investment to make this happen.

Our policy advisor John Perry has written [a comment piece](#) for Inside Housing explaining the important part that Section 106 plays in providing the affordable homes we need and why we need to be careful about how it is replaced.

Join our member opinion panel

CIH will be seeking members' views as we prepare our response to a range of government consultations, including the planning white paper. Why not join our member opinion panel and make sure your views help shape our responses to government proposals? You can sign up [here](#).