

Planning for The Future - Government White Paper Announced March 2020

Briefing Note

12/03/2020

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Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick MP, has made a Ministerial Statement on planning reform today (12/3/20) to be considered as part of a White Paper alongside the Spring Spending Review. This outlines proposals for changes to the planning system and the need to improve the capacity, capability and performance of local planning authorities and to accelerate the development process to support the delivery of homes, utilise brownfield land and create greener communities. The Statement also highlights some changes that might occur prior to the White Paper (by a review of the National Planning Policy Framework 'NPPF' or National Planning Practice Guidance 'NPPG'). These more immediate potential changes include:

- **Supporting LPA's consider innovative options, such as housing-led regeneration of their high streets, building upwards on already developed land and stations;**
- **Encourage densifying gently in existing residential areas (though this is not defined, this may include infill and backland development)**
- **Encouraging Local Planning Authorities to make the most of their under-utilised brownfield land;**
- **Introducing measures to encourage Authorities to put ambitious plans in place now and incentivise them to play their part in delivering the homes this country needs.**

As part of this, the Statement sets a deadline for all local authorities to have an up-to-date Local Plan by December 2023. Government intervention will occur where local authorities fail to meet the deadline. This is not the first time a Government has set such targets and in any event the fact many Councils have availed themselves of the opportunity to progress plans under the NPPF 2018 transitional arrangements, will mean that many of the up-to-date plans at 2023 will be based on delivering housing at a much lower rate than that required to deliver the restated objective of 300,000 dpa. This highlights the need for Government to reconsider what is meant by up-to-date in the context of the forthcoming consultation.

The Statement outlines a series of reforms for consultation upon, including:

- **A reform of planning fees to resource planning authorities linked to a new performance framework;**
- **Automatic rebate of fees where planning applications are successful at appeal to promote proper consideration of applications by planning committees;**
- **Expand the use of zoning tools such as Local Development Orders to support development;**
- **MHCLG to provide more support for the take-up of Compulsory Purchase Orders to help facilitate land assembly and infrastructure delivery.**

Delivering a green housing revolution is also recognised as a key contributor to the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050. As part of this, the Government will continue to back brownfield development, encourage greater building in urban areas and introduce new tools to support communities to 'densify' and make best use of underutilised brownfield land. These will include:

- **Investing £400m to use brownfield land productively;**
- **Launching a national brownfield map and a call for proposals for building above transport stations;**
- **Reviewing the formula for calculating Local Housing Need whilst ensuring the country is planning for the delivery of 300,000 new homes per annum;**
- **Encouraging building upwards, increasing density in line with local character and making the most of local infrastructure, which will include new permitted development rights for building upwards on existing buildings by summer 2020, including to extend residential blocks by up to two storeys;**
- **Consultation on the details of a new permitted development right to allow vacant commercial buildings, industrial buildings and residential blocks to be demolished and replaced with well-designed new residential units.**

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Specific support for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, including a new spatial framework and up to 4 new development corporations in the corridor between Milton Keynes, Oxford and Cambridge in recognition of the Arc's high-productivity, jobs and development potential. Notably however further development of the Oxford-Cambridge expressway has been paused while further work is undertaken on other potential road projects that could support the ambition for the Arc.

Proposed revisions to the National Framework on design and placemaking are suggested, building on the ***Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's Report***. The Statement also advances other potential, quite radical approaches on design matters, including requiring local authorities to ensure that new homes conform to local residents' ideas of beauty. This will, it is proposed, be based on a new ***National Model Design Code***, which will set out clear parameters for promoting the design and styling of homes and neighbourhoods which local people may want to see.

Also referenced are future proposals for a ***Building Safety Bill*** and a ***Renters' Reform Bill*** to provide greater stability for those who rent their homes, as well as a Social Housing White Paper to ensure that residents in social housing are treated fairly.

These papers will form the basis of a ***housing strategy*** to be published later in the year, setting out longer-term plans to deliver new housing with the intention of creating a fairer housing market.