

Levelling Up White Paper

Briefing Note

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Introduction

On Wednesday 2nd of February 2022, the Government published its long-anticipated Levelling Up White Paper. This outlined its plans to end geographical inequality within the UK, to spread opportunity more equally, and is intended to build upon the funding announced at the 2021 spending review.

The White Paper seeks to do this by encouraging innovation and growth across the whole country, unleashing the power of the private sector to unlock jobs and opportunities. It signals an intent by Government to increase the direction of growth and investment away from London and the southeast towards the north and the midlands, the aim being to encourage the revival of the cities and urban centres of the north.

The 12 Missions to “Level Up” the UK

The Government’s plans for Levelling Up are based on 12 national missions, guided by four key principles. These are:

1. **Restoring a Sense of Community, Local Pride and Belonging**
2. **Empowering Local Leaders and Communities**
3. **Boosting Productivity, Pay, Jobs, and Living Standards by Growing the Private Sector**
4. **Spreading Opportunities and Improving Public Services**

To achieve these key principles, the Government has outlined various interventions. Those that are most relevant to the residential development sector for example are:-

Restore a Sense of Community, Local Pride and Belonging

The £2.6bn UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be used to ‘restore local pride’ across the UK, by focusing on three main areas for investment, comprising improving communities and places; people and skills; and, supporting local business.

This is proposed to be achieved through the following:

- **The £1.8bn investment in brownfield and infrastructure projects, announced at Spending Review 2021, will be available across England and will be used to regenerate underused land and deliver transport links and community facilities. A proportion will be distributed directly to Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and local authorities to unlock smaller brownfield sites in line with local priorities and needs.**
- **Extending the existing Brownfield Housing Fund to allow Mayors to identify and fund the projects most needed to support their areas’ Levelling Up ambitions.**
- **Launching a £1.5bn Levelling Up Home Building Fund without delay. This will provide loans to small and medium sized builders and developers to deliver 42,000 homes.**
- **Homes England is to be repurposed and its existing functions expanded, with new objectives to regenerate towns and cities.**
- **The introduction of the ‘80/20 rule’ which leads to 80% of government funding for housing supply being directed at ‘maximum affordability areas’. This means that much of the £1.8bn brownfield funding will be diverted from the “unaffordable” London and Southeast to transforming brownfield sites in the North and Midlands. The Metro Mayors will be allocated £120m of this funding.**
- **Exploring further options to limit the competition that first-time buyers face and simplifying the home buying and selling process.**
- **Encouraging empty homes back into use by introducing new powers for Councils to apply a premium of up to 100% to homes left empty for a year.**
- **Restating the Government’s intention to develop models for a new infrastructure levy, as well as wider planning reforms.**
- **Introducing new legislation to improve the quality and regulation of social housing. This will be supported by another White Paper that will be published later this year.**
- **Regenerating 20 towns and cities by assembling and remediating brownfield land and working with the private sector to bring about transformational developments combining housing, retail and business in “sustainable, walkable, beautiful new**

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- neighbourhoods”, supported by an Office for Place.
- Relocating more senior civil service roles to outside of London.

Empower Local Leaders and Communities

Mayors are seen by the Government as showing how strong local leadership can enhance economic and other opportunities in urban areas. Through the White Paper, the Government’s plan is to ensure that the model is strengthened, extended, and adopted more widely.

This will be achieved by the following:

- Extending, deepening and simplifying devolution across England.
- Opening negotiations on devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester combined authorities. This process will act as the blueprint for other MCAs to follow.
- Inviting nine areas to agree new County Deals and further MCA deals thus extending devolution to much more of England.
- A new independent body will be set up to empower citizens and to strengthen local leaders’ knowledge of their services

Boost Productivity, Pay, Jobs, and Living Standards by the Growing Private Sector

As noted in the White Paper, a well-functioning and productive economy in every part of the UK is essential to Levelling Up. By 2030, the UK Government wants to ensure that pay, employment and productivity levels have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas being reduced (Mission One).

They aim to achieve this through the following key initiatives:

- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will aim to invest at least 55% of its total domestic R&D funding outside the Greater South East by 2024 25.
- The large majority of the country is to gain access to 5G broadband by 2030.
- Implementing the £96bn Integrated Rail Plan, improving the rail network in the North and Midlands, and investing £24bn in our busiest roads and motorways, £5.7bn in City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements and £5bn for buses, cycling and walking networks. This will bring local public

transport connectivity across the country closer to London’s standards.

- Continuing to increase the National Living Wage.

Spread Opportunities and Improve Public Services

The White Paper states that strong public services not only support positive health and educational outcomes, but also attracts new talent and investment to an area, and boosts local economies. The White Paper aims to achieve these aims through the following:

- Driving further school improvement in England through 55 new Education Investment Area in places where educational attainment is currently weakest.
- Local Skills Improvement Plans, together with supporting funding, will be set up across England to outline the key changes needed to make technical skills training more responsive to the skills needs of the area.
- Nine new Institutes of Technology with strong employer links will be established in England, helping to boost higher technical skills in STEM subjects.
- Aiming to have significantly increased the number of people to have successfully completed high quality skills training in every part of the UK, including 200,000 more people successfully completing high quality skills training annually in England, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
- Introducing the In Work Progression offer to help people on low incomes address barriers to better employment opportunities.
- Creating the UK National Academy, to support pupils from all backgrounds and areas of the UK. The UK National Academy will be free and made available online to support the work of schools up and down the country.

In summary, the White Paper seeks to provide both greater clarity around the framework for devolution and reinforce the aim to Level Up what is seen as the geographical inequality across the UK. In structuring the White Paper around a series of missions and principles, its authors have attempted to move away from a single departmental view of the country and instead to encourage individual organisations to harness these missions and to translate them into appropriate coordinated policy and actions.

If you wish to find out more about Levelling Up White Paper or how DLP can assist with this or any other queries, please get in touch at enquiries@dlpconsultants.co.uk.