

Planning Reform

Planning Updates

October 2021

Introduction

- This paper will provide a brief overview of the progress and timeline of planning reforms proposed under the *Planning for the Future* White Paper to date.
- It will provide links to resources that may be useful in the tracking of progress of reforms, or for greater detail.

Background

- From August 2020, the Conservative Government proposed a series of long-term planning reforms, through six consultations (see Appendix, Figure 1).

Planning for the Future White Paper and Consultation

August – October 2020

- The [Planning for the Future White Paper](#) covers a package of 24 proposals for reforms to the planning system in England.
- The White Paper groups proposals under three pillars (as summarised in Table 1 below).
 - See DAC Planning’s full summary of proposals [here](#).
 - See RTPI one-pager on proposals [here](#).

Table 1 – Summary of the three pillars of planning reform proposed in the *Planning for the Future* White Paper.

Pillar 1: Planning for development	Pillar 2: Planning for beautiful and sustainable places	Pillar 3: Planning for infrastructure and connected places
Introduction of Growth, Renewal and Protected zonal system	New National Model Design Code to complement National Design Guide	New Infrastructure Levy to replace S106 and CIL
Sustainable development test to replace existing soundness tests	Local design codes to be prepared by LPAs	Levy to capture change of use through PDR
Statutory 30-month timeframe for map-based Local Plan development	Chief officer for design in each LA	Increased flexibility on how levy is spent
Retention and possible extension of neighbourhood planning	Fast track process for development with good design and beauty	

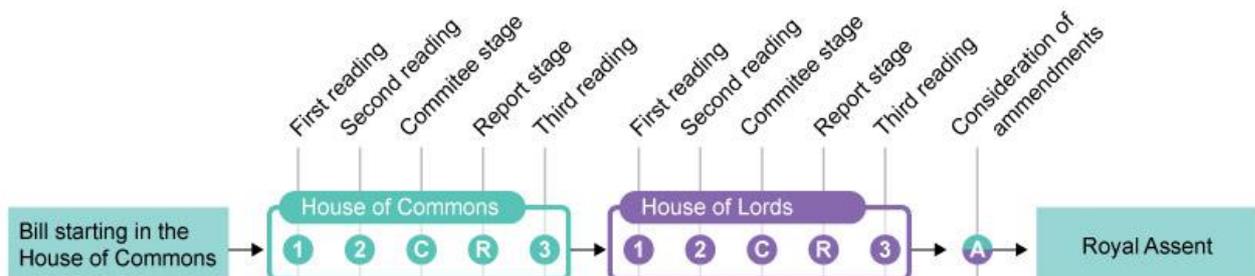
- The Consultation on the reforms closed on 29 October 2020 with 44,000 responses.
- Several bodies responded to the consultation, with mixed views. Links to some of these responses are available below:
 - [DAC Planning](#)
 - [LGA](#)
 - [TCPA](#)
 - [RTPI](#)
 - [CPRE](#)
- The Government has not yet responded, promising a response in Autumn 2021.

- Labour brought forward a bill in opposition to the proposals, the [Planning and Local Representation Bill](#).
- Select Committee for MHCLG report, [The Future of Planning System in England](#), criticised the zonal system approach and called for greater resources for planning.

Planning Bill

May 2021

- A Planning Bill was announced in the [Queen's Speech](#) in May 2021, that would:
 - Change local plans to provide certainty on different categories of land.
 - Decrease timescales for development through the planning system.
 - Introduce a more predictable and transparent levy.
 - Simplify and enhance environmental assessments.
- The Bill has not yet been brought forward to Parliament and no solid details of the Bill have been released.



- Once the Bill is introduced to Parliament, its progress can be monitored officially [here](#).

White Paper proposals watered down

Summer 2021

- It was rumoured that around [100 Tory MPs had raised serious concerns](#) and could rebel against the Planning Bill and proposals.
- At the [LGA Annual Conference 2021](#), Robert Jenrick MP suggested a less radical reform.
- Powers to councils to ensure build out was hinted at, however there was still a commitment to many of the proposals, including zoning and the infrastructure levy.
- [Further speculation](#) in September 2021 suggested a scrapping of the zonal system and mandatory housing targets.

Cabinet reshuffle

September 2021

- Robert Jenrick MP was replaced by Michael Gove MP.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) became [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#) (DLUHC).

Planning Bill paused

September 2021

- [Gove announced](#) that planning reforms have been “paused”, and a review into how White Paper proposals can be improved would be conducted.
- [At a Committee meeting](#), DLUHC Undersecretary Eddie Hughes MP stated Planning Bill will come in “reasonable time”, in the “relatively near future”.

- [Michael Gove's speech](#) did not address planning or planning reform, apart from a focus brownfield regeneration for homes.
 - Gove attended a [fringe event](#) promoting the release of the [Trusting the People](#) report. The report calls for making neighbourhood planning “universal and the ultimate arbiter of local development”.
- [Boris Johnson's speech](#) did not reference planning reform.
 - However, he spoke of a need for “beautiful homes on brownfield sites”, and to protect and “re-wild” 30% of the countryside and a shift of development away from the South East of England.
- [Oliver Dowden MP's speech](#) confirmed planning reform proposals are being reviewed.
 - Chesham and Amersham by-election was cited as a reason for this review.
 - The protection of countryside, towns, and villages against “ugly development” through law was stressed.
 - Dowden stated to “watch this space” in reference to planning reform.
- [Fringe event discussion](#) with Christopher Pincher MP, Minister of State for Housing appeared to confirm that:
 - 30-month timeframe for local plan production is still being considered.
 - S.106 developer contributions are “too opaque”, and the Government are discussing a locally set levy.
 - We will see the White Paper response and Bill “shortly”.

Conclusion

- It is important to stress that there is currently no Planning Bill timetable.
- There is also no official detail or press release from the Government regarding the contents of the Planning Bill.
- Reforms are confirmed as under review and currently paused, but they are coming. The form of these changes is to be confirmed.
- However, under Robert Jenrick changes were rumoured to have been significantly watered down from the proposals of *Planning for the Future*:
 - No “ripping up” of the planning system.
 - Zoning considered to have been scrapped.
 - 300,000 mandatory target for housing.
- A few of the original White Paper proposals are still considered to be coming forward as a result of the Conservative Party Conference 2021:
 - Locally set infrastructure levy and replacement of S.106.
 - 30-month timeframe for local plan production.
 - Retention and possible extension of neighbourhood planning.
- Conservative Party Conference focussed on the protection of green field and the countryside through law, and the development of brownfield for housing.
 - This may be an issue to be aware of and may form part of any proposed, reworked reform.
- A number of proposals from *Planning for the Future* and other consultations have been implemented and are currently ongoing, such as:
 - NPPF revisions (July 2021) and National Model Design Code.
 - PPG updates: Plan-making paragraph 083 and 084.
 - [Environment Bill](#) in Lord's 3rd reading stage.
 - Minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for development.
 - [Digital planning reform](#).

Appendix 1

Figure 1: Government planning reform consultations August 2020 – January 2021

Consultation	Consultation Dates	Overview
White Paper: Planning for the Future	August – October 2020	Proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process
Changes to the current planning system	August – October 2020	Proposes 4 main measures to improve the effectiveness of the current planning system
Transparency and Competition A call for evidence on data on land control	August – November 2020	Call for evidence seeking views on proposals to require additional data from beneficiaries of types of interests in land
Raising accessibility standards for new homes	September – December 2020	Consultation considers whether government should mandate higher standards of accessibility
Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure	December 2020 – January 2021	Proposes changes to permitted development rights for residential, public service infrastructure and use class orders
National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code	January 2021 – March 2021	Consultation proposing draft revisions to NPPF and a new National Model Design Guide for design code/policy guidance

Source(s): gov.uk