

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – REFORM OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That the Cabinet:

- a. Notes the key elements and implications of Government consultation
- b. Delegates authority to the Chief Planning Officer to respond to the consultation on Changes to the current Planning System in consultation with the Planning and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 On the 6th August 2020 the Government launched two consultations on proposed changes to the planning system.

The '**Planning for the Future**' White Paper on proposals to fundamentally reform the planning system; and

The '**Changes to the current planning system**' which is a consultation seeking views on a range of proposed changes to the current planning system including;

2.2 This report relates to the first consultation. The consultation closes on the 29th October 2020. A report relating to the second consultation was considered by Cabinet at the September meeting.

3. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

3.1 The consultation paper sets out that *'the reforms that follow are an attempt to rediscover the original mission and purpose of those who sought to improve our homes and streets in late Victorian and early 20th Century Britain. The original vision has been buried under layers of legislation and case law.'*

3.2 The paper emphasises that Planning matters and acknowledges that where we live has a measurable effect on our physical and mental health on how much we work, on how many neighbours we know or how tense we feel on the daily journey to work or school. Places affect us from the air we breath to our ultimate sense of purpose and wellbeing.

The White Paper is based on three 'pillars'

- **Pillar One – Planning for development**
- **Pillar Two – Planning for beautiful and sustainable places**
- **Pillar Three – Planning for infrastructure and connected places**

The aims set out:

- be more ambitious for the places we create
- move the democracy forward
- improve the user experience of the planning system,
- support home ownership,
- increase the supply of land available for new homes where it is needed
- help businesses to expand
- support innovative developers and housebuilders,
- promote the stewardship and improvement of our precious countryside and environment,
- create a virtuous circle of prosperity in our villages, towns and cities,

Attached as Appendix 1 is a more detailed summary of the content of the White Paper setting out the 24 proposals made in the paper. The following paragraphs set out the key issues.

The White Paper sets out that the government will undertake a fundamental reform of the planning system and wants to hear views on its proposals to:

Firstly - it will streamline the planning process with more democracy taking place more effectively at the plan making stage, and will replace the entire corpus of plan-making law in England to achieve this

It promotes simplifying the role of Local Plans to identify land under three categories –

1. Growth areas suitable for substantial development, and where outline approval for development would be automatically secured for forms and types of development specified in the Plan;
2. Renewal areas suitable for some development where there would be a general presumption in favour of development
3. Protected areas where development is restricted.

Local Plans will set clear rules with development management policies set nationally. There will be a fundamental change in the way communities are engaged in the whole process with most of the engagement at Plan making stage.

Secondly - introduce a radical, digital-first approach to modernise the planning process. This means moving from a process based on documents to a process driven by data.

Support local authorities use of digital tools to support new civic engagement in Local Plans and decision making. Local Plan will be digital, visual and map-based.

Thirdly - deliver a new focus on design and sustainability.

Ensure the planning system supports efforts to combat climate change and maximises environmental benefits.

Facilitate ambitious improvements in energy efficiency standards for buildings to help deliver our world leading commitment to net-zero by 2050.

Ask for beauty and be far more ambitious for the place we create with a greater focus on place making.

Make it easier for those who want to build beautifully through the introduction of a fast-track for beauty.

Expect design guidance and codes – which will set the rules for the design of new development.

Fourthly - Improve infrastructure delivery in all parts of the country and ensure developers play their part, through reform of developer contributions.

The Community Infrastructure Levy and the current system of planning obligations will be reformed as a nationally-set value-based flat rate charge ('the Infrastructure Levy').

We will be more ambitious for affordable housing provided through planning gain, and we will ensure that the new Infrastructure Levy allows local planning authorities to secure more on-site housing provision.

Fifthly - Ensure more land is available for the homes and development people and communities need, and to support renewal of our town and city centres;

A new nationally-determined, binding housing requirement that local planning authorities would have to deliver through their Local Plans. This would be focused on areas where affordability pressure is highest to stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built. We propose that this would factor in land constraints, including the Green Belt, and would be consistent with our aspirations of creating a housing market that is capable of delivering 300,000 homes annually, and one million homes over this Parliament.

Revise the NPPF to make it clear that masterplans and design codes for sites prepared for substantial development should seek to include a variety of development types from different builders.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Council makes a detailed, technical response' to the consultation. Preparation of the response is recommended to be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Planning and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder.

5. FINANCIAL, CRIME & DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AND DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None in responding to the consultation, but potentially significant financial and environmental implications depending on how the proposed reforms are progressed.

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 6.1 That the current planning system is in need of reform is almost universally agreed, and the White Paper contains much that may be welcomed. However, many of the proposals give cause for serious concern. For example, I doubt that national development management policies will afford the same level of protection, nor ensure that development is a sympathetic, to the unique character of our District. I am sure

that the Chief Planning Officer will ensure that a constructive response is submitted, welcoming many of the objectives of the White Paper, but also expressing the Council's concerns that many of the proposals will not deliver the more streamlined process the Government appears to desire, and that in attempting to do so protections to the environment may be eroded and the quality of new development diminished. I support the recommendations.

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Proposal 1: The role of land use plans should be simplified. We propose that Local Plans should identify three types of land – *Growth* areas suitable for substantial development, *Renewal* areas suitable for development, and areas that are *Protected*.

This new-style Local Plan would comprise an interactive web-based map of the administrative area where data and policies are easily searchable, with a key and accompanying text. Areas and sites would be annotated and colour-coded in line with their Growth, Renewal or Protected designation, with explanatory descriptions set out in the key and accompanying text, as appropriate to the category.

In Growth and Renewal areas, the key and accompanying text would set out suitable development uses, as well as limitations on height and/or density as relevant. These could be specified for sub-areas within each category, determined locally but having regard to national policy, guidance and legislation (including the National Model Design Code and flexibilities in use allowed by virtue of the new Use Classes Order and permitted development). For example, it may be appropriate for some areas to be identified as suitable for higher-density residential development, or for high streets and town centres to be identified as distinct areas.

In Growth areas, we would also want to allow sub-areas to be created specifically for self and custom-build homes, and community-led housing developments, to allow a range of housing aspirations to be met and help create diverse and flourishing communities. In the case of self and custom-build homes, local authorities should identify enough land to meet the requirements identified in their self-build and custom housebuilding registers. For Protected areas, the key and accompanying text would explain what is permissible by cross-reference to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Alternative options: Rather than dividing land into three categories, we are also interested in views on more binary models. One option is to combine Growth and Renewal areas (as defined above) into one category and to extend permission in principle to all land within this area, based on the uses and forms of development specified for each sub-area within it. An alternative approach would be to limit automatic permission in principle to land identified for substantial development in Local Plans (Growth areas); other areas of land would, as now, be identified for different forms of development in ways determined by the local planning authority (and taking into account policy in the National Planning Policy Framework), and subject to the existing development management process.

Proposal 2: Development management policies established at national scale and an altered role for Local Plans.

With the primary focus of plan-making on identifying areas for development and protection, we propose that development management policy contained in the plan would be restricted to clear and necessary site or area-specific requirements, including broad height limits, scale and/or density limits for land included in Growth areas and Renewal areas, established through the accompanying text. The National Planning Policy Framework would become the primary source of policies for development management; there would be no provision for the inclusion of generic development management policies which simply repeat national policy within Local Plans, such as protections for listed buildings (although we are interested in views on the future of optional technical standards). We propose to turn plans from long lists of general “policies” to specific development standards.

Local planning authorities and neighbourhoods (through Neighbourhood Plans) would play a crucial role in producing required design guides and codes to provide certainty and reflect

local character and preferences about the form and appearance of development.

This is important for making plans more visual and engaging. These could be produced for a whole local authority area, or for a smaller area or site (as annotated in the Local Plan), or a combination of both. Design guides and codes would ideally be produced on a 'twin track' with the Local Plan, either for inclusion within the plan or prepared as supplementary planning documents.

We want to move to a position where all development management policies and code requirements, at national, local and neighbourhood level, are written in a machine-readable format so that wherever feasible, they can be used by digital services to automatically screen developments and help identify where they align with policies and/or codes.

This will significantly increase clarity for those wishing to bring forward development, enabling automation of more binary considerations and allowing for a greater focus on those areas where there is likely to be greater subjectivity.

Alternative options: Rather than removing the ability for local authorities to include general development management policies in Local Plans, we could limit the scope of such policies to specific matters and standardise the way they are written, where exceptional circumstances necessitate a locally-defined approach. Another alternative would be to allow local authorities a similar level of flexibility to set development management policies as under the current Local Plans system, with the exception that policies which duplicate the National Planning

Proposal 3: Local Plans should be subject to a single statutory “sustainable development” test, replacing the existing tests of soundness.

A simpler test, as well as more streamlined plans, should mean fewer requirements for assessments that add disproportionate delay to the plan-making process.

Specifically:

- we propose to abolish the Sustainability Appraisal system and develop a simplified process for assessing the environmental impact of plans, which would continue to satisfy the requirements of UK and international law and treaties (see our proposals under Pillar Two);
- the Duty to Cooperate test would be removed (although further consideration will be given to the way in which strategic cross-boundary issues, such as major infrastructure or strategic sites, can be adequately planned for, including the scale at which plans are best prepared in areas with significant strategic challenges); and
- a slimmed down assessment of deliverability for the plan would be incorporated into the “sustainable development” test.

Plans should be informed by appropriate infrastructure planning, and sites should not be included in the plan where there is no reasonable prospect of any infrastructure that maybe needed coming forward within the plan period. Plan-making policies in the National

Planning Policy Framework will make this clear.

The new-style digital Local Plan would also help local planning authorities to engage with strategic cross-boundary issues and use data-driven insights to assess local infrastructure needs to help decide what infrastructure is needed and where it should be located.

- Alternative option: Rather than removing the existing tests of soundness, an alternative option could be to reform them in order to make it easier for a suitable strategy to be found sound. For example, the tests could become less prescriptive about the need to demonstrate deliverability. Rather than demonstrating deliverability, local authorities could be required to identify a stock of reserve sites which could come forward for development if needed.

Proposal 4: A standard method for establishing housing requirement figures which ensures enough land is released in the areas where affordability is worst, to stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built. The housing requirement would factor in land constraints and opportunities to more effectively use land, including through densification where appropriate, to ensure that the land is identified in the most appropriate areas and housing targets are met.

Local Plans will need to identify areas to meet a range of development needs – such as homes, businesses and community facilities – for a minimum period of 10 years. This includes land needed to take advantage of local opportunities for economic growth, such as commercial space for spin-out companies near to university research and development facilities, or other high productivity businesses. It is proposed that the standard method would be a means of distributing the national housebuilding target of 300,000 new homes annually, and one million homes by the end of the Parliament, having regard to:

- the size of existing urban settlements (so that development is targeted at areas that can absorb the level of housing proposed);
- the relative affordability of places (so that the least affordable places where historic under-supply has been most chronic take a greater share of future development);
- the extent of land constraints in an area to ensure that the requirement figure takes into account the practical limitations that some areas might face, including the presence of designated areas of environmental and heritage value, the Green Belt and flood risk. For example, areas in National Parks are highly desirable and housing supply has not kept up with demand; however, the whole purpose of National Parks would be undermined by multiple large scale housing developments so a standard method should factor this in;
- the opportunities to better use existing brownfield land for housing, including through greater densification. The requirement figure will expect these opportunities to have been utilised fully before land constraints are taken into account;
- the need to make an allowance for land required for other (non-residential) development; and
- inclusion of an appropriate buffer to ensure enough land is provided to account for the drop off rate between permissions and completions as well as offering sufficient choice to the market.

Proposal 5: Areas identified as Growth areas (suitable for substantial development) would automatically be granted outline planning permission for the principle of development, while automatic approvals would also be available for pre-established development types in other areas suitable for building.

There will therefore be no need to submit a further planning application to test whether the site can be approved.

In areas suitable for substantial development (Growth areas) an outline permission for the principle of development would be conferred by adoption of the Local Plan.

In areas suitable for development (Renewal areas), there would be a general presumption in favour of development established in legislation

For pre-specified forms of development such as the redevelopment of certain building types, through a new permission route which gives an automatic consent if the scheme meets design and other prior approval requirements

For other types of development, a faster planning application process where a planning application for the development would be determined in the context of the Local Plan description, for what development the area or site is appropriate for, and with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework; or a Local or Neighbourhood Development Order.

In both the Growth and Renewal areas it would still be possible for a proposal which is different to the plan to come forward (if, for example, local circumstances had changed suddenly, or an unanticipated opportunity arose), but this would require a specific planning application.

Areas for protection would include areas such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Conservation Areas, Local Wildlife Sites, areas of significant flood risk and important areas of green space. At a smaller scale it can continue to include gardens in line with existing policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. It would also include areas of open countryside outside of land in or areas

Proposal 6: Decision-making should be faster and more certain, with firm deadlines, and make greater use of digital technology.

Want to see a more streamlined digitally enabled end to end process which is proportionate to the scale of development proposed. In particular the validation of applications should be integrated with the submission of the application so that the right information is provided at the start of the process. For Spending Review, the Government will prepare a specific, investable proposal for modernising planning systems in local government.

Proposal 7: Local Plans should be visual and map-based, standardised based on the latest digital technology and supported by a new template.

Interactive, map-based Local Plans will be built upon data standards and digital principles.

Standardisation of Local Plans across the country. To support open access to planning documents and improve public engagement in the plan-making process, plans should be fully digitised and web-based following agreed web standards rather than document based. Will allow for any updates to be published instantaneously

Shifting plan-making processes from documents to data, new digital civic engagement processes will be enabled. making it easier for people to understand what is being proposed where and how it will affect them.

Proposal 8: Local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate will be required through legislation to meet a statutory timetable for key stages of the process, and we will consider what sanctions there would be for those who fail to do so.

Local Plans to be prepared in 30 months.

Stage 1 [6 months]: The local planning authority “calls for” suggestions for areas under the three categories, including comprehensive “best in class” ways of achieving public involvement at this plan-shaping stage for where development should go and what it should look like.

Stage 2 [12 months]: The local planning authority draws up its proposed Local Plan, and produces any necessary evidence to inform and justify the plan. “Higher-risk” authorities will receive mandatory Planning Inspectorate advisory visits, in order to ensure the plan is on track prior to submission.

Stage 3 [6 weeks]: The local planning authority simultaneously

(i) submits the Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination together with a Statement of Reasons to explain why it has drawn up its plan as it has; and

(ii) publicises the plan for the public to comment on. Comments seeking change must explain how the plan should be changed and why. Again, this process would embody ‘best in class’ ways of ensuring public involvement. Responses will have a word count limit.

Stage 4 [9 months]: A planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State considers whether the three categories shown in the proposed Local Plan are “sustainable” as per the statutory test and accompanying national guidance and makes binding changes which are necessary to satisfy the test. The plan-making authority and all those who submitted comments would have the right to be “heard” by the inspector (whether face to face, by video, phone or in writing – all at the inspector’s discretion). The inspector’s report can, as relevant, simply state agreement with the whole or parts of the council’s Statement of Reasons, and/or comments submitted by the public.

• Stage 5 [6 weeks]: Local Plan map, key and text are finalised, and come into force.

Statutory duty for local authorities to adopt a new Local Plan by a specified date - 42 months for local planning authorities who have adopted a Local Plan to adopt new style plan from when the legislation comes in force.

A requirement for each planning authority to review its Local Plan at least every five years.

Proposal 9: Neighbourhood Plans should be retained as an important means of community input, and we will support communities to make better use of digital tools

May extend and adapt the concept so that very small areas – such as individual streets – can set their own rules for the form of development which they are happy to see.

CREATING FRAMEWORKS FOR QUALITY

Proposal 11: To make design expectations more visual and predictable, we will expect design guidance and codes to be prepared locally with community involvement, and ensure that codes are more binding on decisions about development.

As national guidance, we will expect the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code and the revised Manual for Streets to have a direct bearing on the design of new communities. But to ensure that schemes reflect the diverse character of our country, as well as what is provably popular locally, it is important that local guides and codes are prepared wherever possible. These play the vital role of translating the basic characteristics of good places into what works locally, and can already be brought forward in a number of ways: by local planning authorities to supplement and add a visual dimension to their Local Plans; through the work of neighbourhood planning groups; or by applicants in bringing forward proposals for significant new areas of development.

Proposal 12: To support the transition to a planning system which is more visual and rooted in local preferences and character, we will set up a body to support the delivery of provably locally-popular design codes, and propose that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making.

The vision set out will require a step change in the design skills available in many local planning authorities.

We will explore the options for establishing a new expert body which can help authorities make effective use of design guidance and codes.

We will also bring forward proposals later this year for improving the resourcing in planning departments more broadly. However effective leadership is also critical to drive a strong vision for what each place aspires to be.

Proposal 13: To further embed national leadership on delivering better places, we will consider how Homes England's strategic objectives can give greater emphasis to delivering beautiful places.

The government recognises that the work of Homes England has an important role to play in leading by example. It will engage with Homes England in the forthcoming Spending Review process to consider how its objectives maybe strengthened.

Proposal 14: We intend to introduce a fast-track for beauty through changes to national policy and legislation, to incentivise and accelerate high quality development which reflects local character and preferences.

Schemes which comply with local design guides and codes have a positive advantage and greater certainty about their prospects of swift approval.

Where plans identify areas for significant development (areas), legislate to require that a masterplan and site-specific code are agreed as a condition of the permission in principle which is granted through the plan. This should be in place prior to detailed proposals coming forward, to direct and expedite those detailed matters. These masterplans and codes could be prepared by the local planning authority alongside or subsequent to preparing its plan, at a level of detail commensurate with the size of site and key principles to be established.

Legislate to widen and change the nature of permitted development, so that it enables popular and replicable forms of development (pattern book development) to be approved easily and quickly, helping to support 'gentle intensification' of our towns and cities, but in accordance with important design principles.

Develop a limited set of form-based development types that allow the redevelopment of existing residential buildings where the relevant conditions are satisfied – enabling increased densities while maintaining visual harmony in a range of common development settings (such as semi-detached suburban development). These would benefit from permitted development rights relating to the settings in which they apply. To enable further tailoring of these patterns to local character and preferences, we also propose that local planning authorities or neighbourhood planning groups would be able to use local orders to modify how the standard types apply in their areas, based on local evidence of what options are most popular with the wider public.

EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP AND ENHANCEMENT OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Proposal 15: We intend to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that it targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and maximising environmental benefits.

These measures, and the reform of our policy framework, provide an important opportunities to strengthen the way that the environmental issues are considered through the planning system.

In doing this we will want to be clear about the role that local, spatially specific policies can continue to play.

Proposal 16: We intend to design a quicker, simpler framework for assessing environmental impacts and enhancement opportunities, that speeds up the process while protecting and enhancing the most valuable and important habitats and species in England.

Processes for environmental assessment and mitigation need to be quicker and speed up decision-making and the delivery of development projects. The environmental aspects of a plan or project should be considered early in the process, and to clear timescales.

Proposal 17: Conserving and enhancing our historic buildings and areas in the 21st century

Will review and update the planning framework for listed buildings and conservation areas, to ensure their significance is conserved while allowing, where appropriate, sympathetic changes to support their continued use and address climate change. Will consider whether suitably experienced architectural specialists can have earned autonomy from routine listed building consents.

Proposal 18: To complement our planning reforms, we will facilitate ambitious improvements in the energy efficiency standards for buildings to help deliver our world-leading commitment to net-zero by 2050.

To work towards ensuring that all new homes are fit for a zero carbon future we will also explore options for the future of energy efficiency standards, beyond 2025.

Local Planning Authorities, as well as central Government, should be accountable for the actions that they are taking, and the consultation response will look to clarify the role that they can play in setting energy efficiency standards for new build developments.

We will also want to ensure that high standards for the design, environmental performance and safety of new and refurbished buildings are monitored and enforced. As local authorities are freed from many planning obligations through our reforms, they will be able to reassign resources and focus more fully on enforcement.

Pillar Three – Planning for infrastructure and connected places

Proposal 19: The Community Infrastructure Levy should be reformed to be charged as a fixed proportion of the development value above a threshold, with a mandatory nationally-set rate or rates and the current system of planning obligations abolished.

Propose that under the Infrastructure Levy, authorities would be able to use funds raised through the levy to secure affordable housing. This would be secured through in kind delivery on site.

To better support the timely delivery of infrastructure we would also allow local authorities to borrow against Infrastructure Levy revenues so that they could forward fund infrastructure.

Proposal 20: The scope of the Infrastructure Levy could be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development rights.

The scope of the Infrastructure levy would be extended to better capture change of use.

Proposal 21: The reformed Infrastructure levy should deliver affordable housing provision.

Developer contributions currently deliver around half of all affordable housing, most of which is delivered on-site. It is important that the reformed approach will continue to deliver on-site affordable housing at least at present levels.

Affordable housing provision is currently secured by local authorities via Section 106, but the Community Infrastructure Levy cannot be spent on it. With Section 106 planning obligations removed, we propose that under the Infrastructure Levy, authorities would be able to use funds raised through the levy to secure affordable housing.

This could be secured through in-kind delivery on-site, which could be made mandatory where an authority has a requirement, capability and wishes to do so. Local authorities would have a means to specify the forms and tenures of the on-site provision, working with a nominated affordable housing provider. Under this approach, a provider of affordable housing could purchase the dwelling at a discount from market rate, as now. However, rather than the discount being secured through Section 106 planning obligations, it would instead be considered as in-kind delivery of the Infrastructure Levy. In effect, the difference between the price at which the unit was sold to the provider and the market price would be offset from the final cash liability to the Levy. This would create an incentive for the developer to build on-site affordable housing where appropriate.¹⁶ First Homes, which are sold by the developer direct to the customer at a discount to market price, would offset the discount against the cash liability.

Under this approach we recognise that some risk is transferring to the local planning authority, and that we would need to mitigate that risk in order to maintain existing levels of on-site affordable housing delivery. We believe that this risk can be fully addressed through policy design. In particular, in the event of a market fall, we could allow local planning authorities to 'flip' a proportion of units back to market units which the developer can sell, if Levy liabilities are insufficient to cover the value secured through in-kind contributions. Alternatively, we could require that if the value secured through in-kind units is greater than the final levy liability, then the developer has no right to reclaim overpayments. Government could provide standardised agreements, to codify how risk sharing would work in this way.

We would also need to ensure the developer was incentivised to deliver high build and design quality for their in-kind affordable homes. Currently, if Section 106 homes are not of sufficient quality, developers may be unable to sell it to a provider, or have to reduce the price. To ensure developers are not rewarded for low-standard homes under the Levy, local authorities could have an option to revert back to cash contributions if no provider was willing to buy the homes due to their poor quality. It is important that any approach taken maintains the quality of affordable housing provision as well as overarching volumes, and incentives early engagement between providers of affordable housing and developers.

Local authorities could also accept Infrastructure Levy payments in the form of land within or adjacent to a site. Through borrowing against further Infrastructure Levy receipts, other sources of funding, or in partnership with affordable housing providers, they could then build affordable homes, enabling delivery at pace.

Proposal 22: More freedom could be given to local authorities over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy

It is important that there is a strong link between where development occurs and where funding is spent. Currently, the Neighbourhood Share of the Community Infrastructure Levy ensures that up to 25 per cent of the levy is spent on priorities in the area that development occurred, with funding transferred to parish councils in parished areas. There are fewer restrictions on how this funding is spent, and we believe it provides an important incentive to local communities to allow development in their area. We therefore propose that under this approach the Neighbourhood Share would be kept, and we would be interested in ways to enhance community engagement around how these funds are used, with scope for digital innovation to promote engagement.

There is scope for even more flexibility around spending. We could also increase local authority flexibility, allowing them to spend receipts on their policy priorities, once core infrastructure obligations have been met. In addition to the provision of local infrastructure, including parks, open spaces, street trees and delivery or enhancement of community facilities, this could include improving services or reducing council tax. The balance of affordable housing and infrastructure may vary depending on a local authority's circumstances, but under this approach it may be necessary to consider ring-fencing a certain amount of Levy funding for affordable housing to ensure that affordable housing continues to be delivered on-site at current levels (or higher). There would also be opportunities to enhance digital engagement with communities as part of decision making around spending priorities. Alternatively, the permitted uses of the Levy could remain focused on infrastructure and affordable housing, as they are broadly are at present. Local authorities would continue to identify the right balance between these to meet local needs, as they do at present.

Proposal 23: As we develop our final proposals for this new planning system, we will develop a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of our reforms.

Some local planning activities should still be funded through general taxation given the public benefits from good planning, and time limited funding will be made available by the Government in line with the new burdens principle to support local planning authorities to transition to the new planning system as part of the next Spending Review.

There will need to have sufficient leadership, strong professional planners and good access to technical expertise, as well as transformed systems which utilise the latest digital technology. There must be a fundamental cultural change on how planning departments operate needing to be more outward looking and proactively.

Proposal 24: We will seek to strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions

We will review and strengthen the existing planning enforcement powers and sanctions available to local planning authorities to ensure they support the new planning system. We will introduce more powers to address intentional unauthorised development, consider higher fines, and look to ways of supporting more enforcement activity.