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Press release

'Biggest building boom' in a generation through planning reforms

Homes and key infrastructure will be built faster under Planning and Infrastructure Bill

From: **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government)**, **Matthew Pennycook MP (/government/people/matthew-pennycook)** and **The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP (/government/people/angela-rayner)**

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- HOMES AND KEY INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE BUILT FASTER UNDER PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BILL
- ENERGY SECURITY WILL BE BOLSTERED WITH CHEAPER, CLEAN HOMEGROWN POWER
- BILL IS KEY TO DELIVERING ON OUR PLAN FOR CHANGE TO BUILD 1.5 MILLION HOMES, MAKE BRITAIN A CLEAN ENERGY SUPERPOWER AND DRIVE UP LIVING STANDARDS

Homes and key infrastructure that hundreds of thousands of hard-working people and families need will be built quicker thanks to transformative

reforms to get Britain building, tackle blockers and unleash billions in economic growth.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill, which will be introduced to Parliament today (11 March), will see significant measures introduced to speed up planning decisions to boost housebuilding and remove unnecessary blockers and challenges to the delivery of vital developments like roads, railway lines and windfarms. This will boost economic growth, connectivity and energy security whilst also delivering for the environment.

By ensuring shovels can be put in the ground more quickly and projects are freed from unnecessary bureaucracy, these measures will help deliver a building boom that will deliver a major boost to the economy worth billions of pounds, and create tens of thousands more jobs as houses and infrastructure are built. It will make Britain a more attractive prospect for investment and development with a planning process that works for the builders, not blockers.

This Bill comes alongside wider planning reforms including the new National Planning Policy Framework and is at the heart of our Plan for Change missions to deliver the 1.5 million homes this country needs alongside 150 major projects, ensure Britain can become a clean energy superpower through building the necessary infrastructure, and help to raise living standards by ensuring working people have more money in their pocket.

People living near new electricity transmission infrastructure will also receive up to £2,500 over ten years off their energy bills, ensuring those hosting vital infrastructure benefit from supporting this nationally critical mission.

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Angela Rayner said:

> “ We’re creating the biggest building boom in a generation - as a major step forward in getting Britain building again and unleashing economic growth in every corner of the country, by lifting the bureaucratic burden which has been holding back developments for too long.”
>
> “ The Planning and Infrastructure Bill will unleash seismic reforms to help builders get shovels in the ground quicker to build more homes, and the vital infrastructure we need to improve transport links and make Britain a clean energy superpower to protect billpayers.”
>
> “ It will help us to deliver the 1.5 million homes we have committed to so we can tackle the housing crisis we have inherited head on – not only for people desperate to buy a home, but for the families and young children stuck in temporary accommodation and in need of a safe, secure roof over their heads.”

> “ These reforms are at the heart of our Plan for Change, ensuring we are backing the builders, taking on the blockers, and delivering the homes and infrastructure this country so badly needs.”

KEY MEASURES

Planning Committees
Housebuilding will be backed by streamlining planning decisions through the introduction of a national scheme of delegation that will set out which types of applications should be determined by officers and which should go to committee, have controls over the size of planning committees to ensure good debate is encouraged with large and unwieldy committees banned, and mandatory training for planning committee members. Councils will also be empowered to set their own planning fees to allow them to cover their costs – with the stretched system currently running at a deficit of £362 million in the recent year. This money will be reinvested back into the system to speed it up.

Nature Restoration Fund
A Nature Restoration Fund will be established to ensure there is a win-win for both the economy and nature by ensuring builders can meet their environmental obligations faster and at a greater scale by pooling contributions to fund larger environmental interventions. These changes will remove time intensive and costly processes, with payments into the fund allowing building to proceed while wider action is taken to secure the environmental improvements we need.

Compulsory Purchase Reform
Land needed to drive forward housing or major developments could also be bought more efficiently thanks to reforms to boost economic growth and drive forward local regeneration efforts. The compulsory purchase process – which allows land to be acquired for projects that are in the public interest – will be improved to ensure important developments delivering public benefits can progress. The reforms will ensure compensation paid to landowners is not excessive and the process of using directions to remove ‘hope value’ – the value attributed to the prospect of planning permission being granted for alternative development – where justified in the public interest is sped-up. Inspectors, councils or mayors where there are no objections, will take decisions instead of the Secretary of State.

Development Corporations
Development Corporations will be strengthened to make it easier to deliver large-scale development – like the government’s new towns – and build 1.5 million homes alongside the required infrastructure. They were used in the past to deliver the post-war new towns and play a vital role when the risk or scale of a development is too great for the private sector. Their enhanced powers will help deliver the vision for the next generation of new towns - a

new programme of well-designed, beautiful communities with affordable housing, GP surgeries, schools and public transport where people will want to live.

Strategic Planning
The Bill will introduce a system of ‘strategic planning’ across England known as spatial development strategies, which will help to boost growth by looking across multiple local planning authorities for the most sustainable areas to build and ensuring there is a clear join-up between development needs and infrastructure requirements. These plans will be produced by mayors, or by local authorities in some cases, and will ensure the level of building across the country meets the country’s needs.

National Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP)
The Bill will ensure a faster NSIP regime that delivers infrastructure projects faster. It will make sure the consultation requirements for projects – such as windfarms, roads or railway lines – are streamlined, and ensure the national policies against which infrastructure applications are assessed are updated at least every five years so the government’s priorities are clear. Other changes will be made to the Highways Act and the Transport and Works Act to reduce bureaucracy so transport projects can progress quicker.

The government will further overhaul the process by which government decisions on major infrastructure projects can be challenged. Meritless cases will only have one – rather than three – attempts at legal challenge. Data shows that over half – 58% – of all decisions on major infrastructure were taken to court, including windfarms in East Anglia which was delayed by over two years as a result of unsuccessful challenges.

Clean Energy
Further changes will make sure approved clean energy projects that help achieve clean power by 2030, including wind and solar power, are prioritised for grid connections. Some projects currently face waits of over 10 years. A ‘first ready, first connected’ system will replace the flawed ‘first come, first served’ approach to prioritise projects needed to deliver clean power, unlocking growth with £200 billion of investment and protecting households from the rollercoaster of fossil fuel markets, while reforming the grid queue will accelerate connections for industrial sites and data centres.

Around twice as much new transmission network infrastructure will be needed by 2030 as has been built in the past decade and Britain’s electricity grid needs a 21st century overhaul to connect the right power in the right places.

Bill Discounts
People living within 500m of new pylons across Great Britain will get money off their electricity bills up to £2,500 over 10 years, under these plans. Alongside money off bills, separate new guidance will set out how developers should ensure communities hosting transmission infrastructure

can benefit, by funding projects like sports clubs, educational programmes, or leisure facilities. The new community funds guidance means communities could get £200,000 worth of funding per km of overhead electricity cable in their area, and £530,000 per substation.

This would mean an upcoming project like SSEN Transmission's power line between Tealing and Aberdeenshire could see local communities benefitting from funding worth over £23 million. Developers will closely consult with eligible communities on the funds and how best to spend them, to ensure a fair and consistent approach across Great Britain.

Mark Reynolds, Executive Chair of Mace Group and Co-Chair of the Construction Leadership Council, said:

> " For too long the UK's planning systems have inhibited growth, with layer upon layer of checks and balances stifling productivity, confidence, investment and jobs. "
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> " These proposed changes show this government is listening to industry and taking reform seriously; recognising that new homes and infrastructure are necessary to inject life into the economy. "
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> " Our construction industry is ready to meet the challenge, and the measures highlight how mindful growth can support communities and our net-zero ambitions."

Neil Jefferson, Chief Executive of the Home Builders Federation, said:

> " The swift moves to address the failings in the planning system are a very welcome and positive step towards increasing housing supply. Removing blockages, speeding up the decision-making process and ensuring local planning departments have the capacity to process applications effectively will be essential to getting more sites up and running. If the other constraints currently preventing house builders delivering more homes can be tackled, the changes made to planning will really allow output to accelerate."

Brian Berry, Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders, said:

> " The new Planning and Infrastructure Bill is a crucial first step in getting Britain building again. In the 1980's around 40% of new homes were built by SMEs, yet today that figure is around 10%. Small builders across the UK stand ready to play their part in delivering the homes we need, but time and time again we've seen barriers keeping them out of the market."
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> " We know from research carried out by the FMB that around three quarters of small builders view the planning system as the number one issue holding back the delivery of new homes, while lack of viable and available land are also major challenges. Supporting small builders through the planning system and reducing unnecessary

bureaucracy will be key to opening up small sites, and today's announcement will be welcomed by many across the industry."

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, said:

" At a time when the housing crisis continues to blight lives across the country, it's welcome to see the introduction of this bill. With more than 160,000 children in temporary accommodation, it's never been more urgent to build the social homes we need. "

" Planning reform is an essential part of solving the housing crisis, and a return to strategic planning is welcome. A focus on certainty and enabling local areas to work together to plan for the homes, jobs and infrastructure needed in communities will ensure every area benefits from growth. Measures to reform compulsory purchase orders in the bill are also welcome, and will support the delivery of affordable housing and other local infrastructure such as GPs and schools."

David Thomas, Chief Executive of Barratt Redrow, said:

" It has been clear from day one that government is serious about tackling the housing crisis, and it continues to take strong action to unlock stalled projects and reshape the planning system to deliver the high-quality homes and sustainable places the country needs. "

" We share government's ambition to build more homes, to create good quality jobs and to drive economic growth. We look forward to supporting them on this mission and will respond positively to the bold reforms set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. "

Other measures included in the Bill:

- Streamlining the process to install EV charging infrastructure to help meet our net-zero ambitions
- A new scheme to unlock billions of pounds of investment in long duration electricity storage (LDES) to store renewable power and deliver the first major projects in four decades.
- Changes to the outdated planning rules for electricity infrastructure in Scotland that will streamline the consent process to enable decisions to be made faster.
- An extension to the generator commissioning period from 18 to 27 months to reduce the number of offshore wind farms requiring exemptions when applying for licences to connect to onshore cables and substations.
- Allowing forestry authorities in England and Wales, including the Forestry Commission, to bring forward development proposals, on the land they manage, relating to the generation of electricity from renewable sources– and to sell resulting electricity.

The Bill builds on work the government has already carried out to get Britain building including overhauling the National Planning Policy Framework, including new and higher mandatory housebuilding targets for councils, a comprehensive modernisation of the Green Belt, and far greater support for growth-supporting development such as labs and datacentres.

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