# PLANNING AND MONEY

*Posted on October 28, 2021*

And so it is budget week again, although most of the key elements were announced in the weeks leading up to the budget itself.

I have long championed the need for greater investment in the planning system rather than just kicking it for not delivering. Sadly, the budget revealed there wasn't much in the form of direct investment into the system. Perhaps Mr Gove is working his way through what reform he can get past the Conservative back benchers.

'***There was some funding for planning in the form of £64m towards the digitisation agenda. This is welcomed by the RTPI and exceeds their asks, although there was nothing towards the additional £500m that the Institute reports as being needed over the next four years to fund the system to deliver the levelling up agenda and tackle the climate crisis.***'

Big ticket items included:

• £1.8bn for the remediation and development of brownfield land sites.

• £1.7bn for local councils in deprived areas to spend on improving local infrastructure.

• £11.5bn for an Affordable Homes Programmes.

- £300m for a locally-led grant awarded to combined mayoral authorities.
- £6.9bn for investment into transport infrastructure.
- £5bn to remove unsafe cladding from buildings.
- £5bn for a London-style transport system in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West Yorkshire.
- £5m for the delivery of new small green spaces across the country.

The planning system requires investment to deliver the significant housing, infrastructure and sustainable growth that the country needs. More money for brownfield development is not surprising and is seen as a way of appeasing the Conservative members who are worried about building on greenfield land.

Large ‘commitments’ aside, I would love to see a return to a funding system of incentivisation, where planning departments are rewarded for delivery. This can be linked to approval rates, decision timescales, housing numbers, number of EV points - anything. The current threats of the presumption are not always enough. Funding in the pocket of council departments would work.

'***A short term buffer of funds to improve planning services would in my view have been transformative. Another missed opportunity to invest. It wouldn’t even need to be that long. Once departments are in a better place to deliver, the state can row back its incentives and let the development industry pay through higher application fees. Refunds for poor or delayed decisions can keep the system in check.***'

For me, this is another year where the budget fails to excite from the perspective of a planner. Perhaps we will have to wait for Mr Gove to define the levelling up agenda and what (if any) planning reform will take place.