

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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Last week, the Government set out their approach for planning, in the form a ministerial statement. For some time now the Government has been suggesting foretold dramatic changes, in order to ‘bring the planning system into the 21st Century’.

The mission is clear; deliver those homes that we are really lacking!

But, does this the show that the Government will seek to achieve it, by any means necessary?

An Infrastructure First approach has been adopted by the Government, with substantial investments planned for opening up the country to the delivery of homes. We believe this would certainly indicate the right start to the process. However, we also feel that it is essential to remain mindful of other important key factors, such as...

Supporting communities to deliver more homes for local people.

The focus on Brownfield Land has been renewed once again, this means a raft of new ways to do things, in order to deliver the magic 300,000 homes per year. This includes revisiting most of the data collection methods, whilst giving deadlines on new local plans. Without doubt, this will result in local plans being delayed and an increase in ministerial action.

New permitted development rights for existing building to go upwards, with an emphasis on bigger homes. Is this compared to some of the office-to-residential conversions that have become popular in the media? This certainly seems like a juxtaposition with the Beautiful Homes mantra. The New Homes Bonus, sounds on the money, but how will this interact with local political agendas?

Perhaps the main concern of every applicant is timescales. Particularly on smaller sites where issues can be more acute, and in turn, dragged out. A new fee structure is welcomed, as the old adage goes – meaning; you get what you pay for. Automatic rebates on planning fees when successful at appeal; perhaps this is the Government's method in ensuring that the New Homes Bonus can be implemented effectively.

Helping first time buyers onto the housing ladder.

It becomes more complex when broaching the subject of long-term, low rate mortgages – as this falls outside of town planning reforms. Perhaps this is acknowledging that planning reforms alone cannot initiate delivery, and wider market changes are required.

Shared ownership is a tried and tested model, and we know this is a concern for Registered Providers given that a huge amount of their income is derived from this aspect of their operations.

Creating beautiful, sustainable places.

As a planning practice ourselves, we champion high quality design as a necessity, and a critical tool in unlocking sites – the NPPF mark 3 promises to put this at the heart of national policy. The use of the National Model Design Code should give confidence to the public that the right design for our places is achieved. Championing sustainable design is a necessity, clearly a Future Homes Standard is the right direction. We shall all have to wait, to see what teeth this has for ensuring development is built out to the highest standards.

Ensuring affordable, safe and secure housing for all.

The Government is pledging significant money into affordable housing, in turn this should attract further investment from public and private sources. Dramatic action is required to address affordability, but it is great to see bold action from the Government, coupled with a head on approach.

Laying the foundations for affordable, green and beautiful homes for everyone.

“The planning system works for them, why not me” – or words to that affect are often banded about – particularly after a major new Greenfield Housing site was granted permission on appeal.

As strong advocates of the value that SMEs bring to the table, we look forward to seeing how it plays out with the Government reforms. Put simply, a level playing field is necessary to deliver those hundreds of thousands of homes.