



**The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP**  
House of Commons  
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**Patron** HRH The Prince of Wales

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By email: [elizabeth.truss.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:elizabeth.truss.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Elizabeth Truss MP,

I am writing to congratulate you on your election and to introduce the Royal Town Planning Institute, the UK's largest professional institute for the planning profession with 27,000 members in the public and private sectors across all four nations and in England's regions.

Throughout the leadership contest it has been clear that our planning system's performance is a prominent concern for members of your party and that many believe deregulation is necessary. In contrast, our profession believe strongly that planning rules are an enabler - rather than a barrier - to economic development, quality housebuilding and community life.

Where we can agree is that our planning system is imperfect, complex and faces significant challenges. In light of your campaign statements, we evidently also agree that our country's success depends on addressing the need for housing, resolving nutrient neutrality issues and continuing government's reforms as quickly as possible to avoid delaying plans and investment.

For these reasons I urge you to make planning reform a top priority and deliver for communities where your predecessors have consistently failed.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill offers important opportunities to strengthen our plan-led system, support digital transformation in planning and develop ambitious policy, regulation and standards, but the RTPI also feel that improvements are needed to help communities access high quality planning services and realise the full potential of public and private investment.

I would encourage your government to:

- Give communities a greater say – by making national development management policies contingent on public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny; stimulating growth and policy innovation by allowing devolved areas to retain alternative development management policies; and, promoting strategic cooperation between councils
- Reduce bureaucracy – by ensuring the new Infrastructure Levy is simple and cost effective to implement and restoring permission for virtual planning committees to resume
- Balance our housing, environmental and other needs – by publishing more detail about processes introduced in the Bill; aligning the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with our climate commitments; and, assessing the wider health, social and economic impacts of development in new Environment Outcomes Reports.

However, I would also echo the points raised by housebuilders, the National Audit Office and select committees in both houses of parliament: that planners cannot be expected to do more with less in

perpetuity. Particularly in a time of high inflation, we need a timely, responsive planning service but this can only be achieved if it is appropriately resourced.

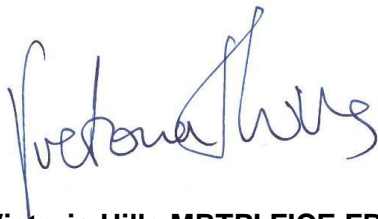
RTPI research published today shows that total expenditure on planning fell by 43% since 2009/10, impacting every English region and dropping most in the North East (62%) and Yorkshire and The Humber (49%). As a result, public sector planning services find it more difficult to recruit and retain skilled staff and in 2021 they decided less than half of applications within statutory time limits – continuing a downward trend since 2010. Our analysis also shows that proposed fee increases, though welcome, are vulnerable to inflation and would be lost in real terms if introduced in 2024 without necessary adjustments

Residents and businesses will struggle to access the housing, education, transport, energy and broadband they need to spark a new industrial revolution if their planning teams lack the necessary resources, skills and capacity to deliver them.

The RTPI aim always to be a helpful, expert source of solutions. I am an active contributor to Government's review of planning skills and capacity and have made several proposals to improve planning services through [Planning Agencies](#), drive performance and leadership through the introduction of [Chief Planning Officers](#) – which are already proving successful in Scotland – and to enhance strategic outcomes and cooperation through [Green Growth Boards](#) and [Local Environment Improvement Plans](#).

My team and I would be happy to discuss with Ministers, advisers and officials of your government. In the meantime, I hope you will agree that a combination of the RTPI's proposals, planning reforms and sufficient funding could itself be revolutionary, enabling the innovation and enterprise we need to cement our place in the world economy.

Yours sincerely,



**Victoria Hills MRTPI FICE FRSA**  
Chief Executive  
Royal Town Planning Institute

CC: Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
Marcus Jones MP, Minister of State for Housing