

WHERE WE WERE GOING  
&  
WHERE MIGHT WE END UP  
NOW?

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**“When you put it like that, it makes complete sense.”**



# WHERE WE WERE GOING

- Planning White Paper proposed extensive changes, which were aimed at *“levelling the foundations and building, from the ground up, a whole new planning system for England”*
- Making the planning system more accessible to residents and helping more young people get on the property ladder.
- A desire to cut the planning system red tape, due to the current speed of housing development in England.
- Pledge to build 300,000 new homes per year, despite official figures showing that only 244,000 homes were built in 2019-2020.
- Under the current rules, it takes an average of five years for a standard housing development to go through the planning system. The Planning Bill aimed to significantly reduce this time.

# ZONE PLANNING

- A traffic light system of zone planning to classify land for either:
  - Growth
  - Renewal
  - Protection
- Land in growth areas would benefit from automatic permission, while land in urban renewal areas would be granted permission in principle
- The HCLG Select Committee said in June that it was unpersuaded the proposed zonal approach to planning will produce a quicker, cheaper and democratic planning system.
- Mr Gove has referenced “allowing communities to take back control of their futures and creating greener and more beautiful places to live” – meaning traffic light system will not be carried forward?

# DIGITAL PLANNING

- The document-based planning system currently in effect would move to a digital one. This is designed to improve the speed and efficiency of application decisions, and allow residents to be more engaged in the development of their local area.
- At the moment, only 3% of local people engage with consultations on planning applications, according to the government.

# SECTION 106

- New infrastructure levy proposed to replace s.106
- Initially designed to be set nationally, suggestion in July that levy will be set locally - giving local councils more control as well as the ability to determine how and where any levies are spent within their local area
- BUT - HCLG Select Committee says proposal could jeopardise the availability of affordable housing in the UK

# HOUSING TARGETS

- Proposed changes included mandatory housebuilding targets for councils, in an effort to hit the government's target of building 300,000 new homes per year



# BUT...

- Consultation on Planning White Paper held after it was published last summer
- Response had been due this Spring
- In May, warned of ‘considerable disquiet’ by backbenchers
- In June, HCLG Select Committee called for reconsideration of aspects, including zonal approach
- In July, a) housing minister suggested government was still committed to zonal approach; but b) housing secretary said response would not be published until ‘the autumn’ along with planning bill to introduce the changes

# AND THEN...

- The planning reforms were reportedly blamed for the Conservatives' shock defeat in the Chesham and Amersham by-election in June.
- Cross-party MPs, government officials and local authorities had all voiced concerns, and Conservative MP Bob Seely led a debate in July on the forthcoming Bill, which he has described as "flawed and undeliverable".
- Former housing secretary Mr Jenrick had repeatedly met sceptical Tory backbenchers to win them over, and hit back at claims by former prime minister Theresa May that it will create a "developers' charter".
- But the byelection defeat has resulted in pressure to scrap some of the controversial reforms, with some Tory MPs reportedly unhappy that communities could face new housing imposed upon them with no right to object.

# AND THEN SOME MORE...

- September's government reshuffle saw Mr Jenrick leave and Mr Gove became the new housing secretary
- Later confirmed that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will become the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- Before the Planning Bill can be before parliament, the government still needs to respond to the a considerable 44,000 responses issued in a consultation over the reforms, which closed in January.
- This review had been expected in October, while the Bill had been expected to be published sometime before Christmas.
- Now, the delay means that the Bill is unlikely to be published this year.

# WHERE NOW?

- Mr Gove has subsequently:
  - Paused the planning reforms, ahead of meeting Conservative MPs who had criticised the forthcoming Planning Bill
  - Hinted at new policy announcements which could follow, including investment in urban regeneration to put new homes on “neglected” brownfield sites
  - Criticised the use of steel and concrete “favoured by developers” in favour of more traditional materials, saying these materials often had higher embodied carbon.
  - Suggested that he wanted to “make housing companies pay more to local communities to improve amenities in areas where development takes place”.

# WHERE NOW?

1. Planning reforms paused and due to be reviewed
2. Planning bill 'in a state of flux'
3. But will be brought to Parliament in 'relatively near future'
4. A 'full review' of the NPPF will accompany the planning bill
5. Introduction of a new 'nature recovery zone' designation?
6. Greater focus on 'levelling up' (whatever that might mean)?

# WHERE NOW (A SUMMARY)?



# THE BUDGET

## What was missing?

- Notable absence of commitments to the planning system or to building back better
- Is the Planning White Paper now too controversial to touch?
- Government's position on planning is unclear

# THE BUDGET

## What was in there?

1. £65m of funding for English local authorities to create a 'new digital system' to 'improve the planning regime'
2. £1.8bn of funding promised with the aim of unlocking delivery of 160,000 homes on brownfield and 'underused' land across England
3. Infrastructure advisory body commissioned to produce study 'on the effective management of surface water flooding in England'
4. NIC's role revised to reflect government's net zero and biodiversity improvement aims



# THE BUDGET

5. £11.5bn investment through Affordable Homes Programme
6. £4.8BN increase in local government grant funding over 3 years
7. Rate of proposed new residential development tax announced
8. £5.7bn investment package for transport improvements in city regions
9. First local infrastructure projects to be funded by £4.8bn 'levelling up fund' revealed

# THE FUTURE (A SUMMARY)



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