



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



Easy  
Read

# Changing our planning rules

What people told us and what  
we will do



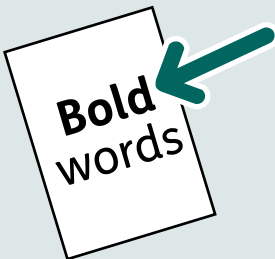
# Easy Read



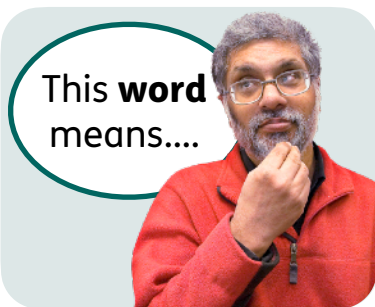
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

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# About this booklet



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is a part of the government.



We want to make it easier to build new buildings in the UK.

To do this, we are changing the rules for building new buildings.



In 2024, we asked people what they thought of our ideas for change.



This booklet explains:

- What people told us.
- What we are going to do.



# Planning



**Planning** is when people decide whether new buildings should be built.



Local councils are in charge of planning.



When a local council agrees that a new building can be built on some land, this is called **planning permission**.



But local councils do not always agree that enough new buildings can be built in their area.

If not enough new buildings are built, this can mean:



- There are not enough places for people to live.



- There are not enough jobs for people.



Last year, the last government wrote rules to change planning.



But these rules made it even harder to build new buildings.



We need to change the rules quickly, so we can build lots of new homes.

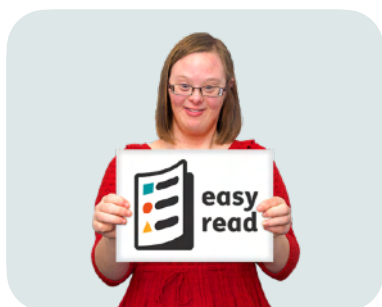
# What people told us



10,981 people told us what they thought of our ideas.



You can read the questions here:  
[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system)



That Easy Read document includes information about the changes we are thinking of making.



In this document, we will tell you some of the things people said when they answered our questions.

# Working out how many homes we need



The first 14 questions were about working out how many homes councils should build.

People told us many different things. Some of the things people told us included:



- Changing the rules would make things easier to understand.



- Local councils should make their own choices about planning.



- Big cities need new houses.

Some of the things people told us also included:



- It would be bad to build in places with lots of nature.



- The rules give councils a way to say no to new buildings, for no good reason.



- Building more homes could be bad for some areas.



- It would be best to focus on building in areas that will make a big difference.



Some of the things people told us also included:



- They liked that there were new rules talked about:
  - What homes look like.
  - Where they are built.
  - Whether people will be able to afford them.



- Our changes would help to make sure councils have enough places to build on.



- Our changes might give too much work to councils, and cause problems with planning.



Some of the things people told us also included:



- Some changes might make it harder to build houses in some local areas.



- Councils should have to build even more homes.



- Councils might build more homes than they need.



- People will have more choice over where to live if there is more land where homes can be built.



- It should be easier to build big things, like bridges or railways.

Some of the things people told us also included:



- There should be strict tests to check if plans for big things are right.



- We should give people more clear information.

We will:



- Think about making new rules about how to see whether housing is needed.



- Change the rules to make it easier to build in towns and smaller cities.

We will also:



- Get rid of an old rule, where councils have to check if new buildings fit in with a local area.



- Not change the rules to do with the **presumption**.

The **presumption** says that councils should let builders build new buildings unless there is a good reason not to.



- Write new rules so that councils must have a plan for where homes can be built for the next 5 years.



- Make planning rules easier to understand.

We will also:



- Make councils have extra land, called a **buffer**, where more houses can be built.



- Get rid of a rule that lets councils say they have enough land for building homes.



- Change the rules to help mayors and different councils to work together on planning.



- Not change how we test whether plans for big new building projects should go ahead.

# The standard method



We want to make a new way to work out how many homes are needed in different areas.

The way that we work this out is called the **standard method**.



It says that 300,000 homes are needed across the country each year.



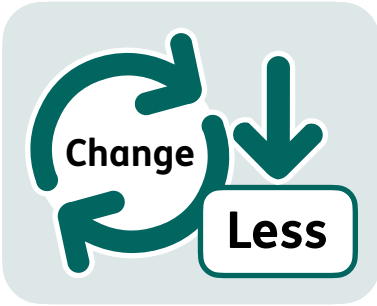
But for each area, it looks at how many people will live in an area in the future.



But this changes a lot.



This makes it hard for local planners to plan for homes for the next 10 or 15 years.



We want to change the standard method so that these numbers do not change so often.



This will help to build more homes.



People told us many different things. Some of the things people told us included:



- When we decide how many houses are needed in an area, we should start by looking at how many houses are there already.



Other people said we should look at how many new families will need houses instead.



- Changing the rules might mean councils have to build too many new houses.



- Councils should have better information to decide what to do.

Some of the things people told us also included:



- Building more homes will not always lower prices.



- The builders who make homes might not build cheaper homes.



- We should try to make sure that homes are built in places where it is hard to afford a home.



- We should think about whether people can afford to rent a home.

Other people said that this might make things more confusing.

We will:



- Use a new way to find out where we need new houses.



- Use the number of houses we already have to start with.



- If this new way does not work in some areas, then we can use a different way.



- Check if some councils need more help to plan for new houses.



We will also change how we look at whether people can afford new homes.

This change will mean more areas are called 'affordable'.



This will mean that we will need more homes in some areas, and less in others.



We will not think about rent when we decide how many houses to build.



This is because we do not always have good information about how much rent costs.

# Brownfield, grey belt and the Green Belt



**Brownfield land** is an area of land that has been used before and is now empty.



The **Green Belt** is an area of land around cities that cannot be built on.



The Green Belt is important to stop cities from getting too big. But it is not a special place for the environment.



Parts of it are not good quality. We call these parts 'the grey belt'.



People told us many different things about this topic. Some of the things people told us included:



- It is important to use brownfield land instead of new land.



- It should be easier to build on brownfield land.



- We should not cause big problems for the greenbelt.



- It is important to build on greenbelt land, to help companies grow and give people places to live.



- Our plan is not clear enough.



People also told us:



- Our plan might make it easier to build on land that should not be built on.



- Councils should think about history and noise when choosing whether to build on the greenbelt.



- There might not be enough homes that people can afford.



- We could build on parts of the Green Belt that used to have farming buildings on them.

But there must still be enough places to grow food.

People also told us:



- People might build bad buildings on grey belt land.



- We are not being clear enough about what the grey belt is.



- We are not giving councils enough help to work out what parts of the greenbelt could be built on.



- Building on the greenbelt may be bad for wildlife.



- Some land that has been built on before might not be in good places.

We should make sure homes are built in the right areas.

People also told us:



- They are worried about us building on greenbelt land without a clear plan.



- There should be strict rules about what can be built on greenbelt land.



- Half of all new houses should be **affordable** - this means that they are not too expensive for local people.



- We should think about how important green spaces like parks are.



- Our plans for deciding how much land is worth might mean that people might not want to sell their land.

People also told us:



- We should check on the value of land and the building costs after the building's plan has been agreed.



- We should have different rules for different types of buildings, like shops.



- Our plans could make it quicker to build new homes.



- Local people and local councils should be involved in decisions about buildings.

We will:



- Build on brownfield land unless it would cause a lot of harm.



- Think about making it easier to build on brownfield land.



- Make sure that there are enough homes that people can afford.



- Keep rules to protect important places in the greenbelt.



- Not build homes in the countryside, unless there is a good reason.



We will also:



- Allow councils to build on land that used to have farming buildings on it.



- Be clearer about what the grey belt is.



- Help local councils to follow the new plan.



- Be clearer about what land is important for the environment.

This will help make sure that we do not make good land worse by building on it.



- Give councils more help to work out what land is not very important in greenbelt areas.



We will also:



- Add more information about protecting animals.



- Only allow buildings on greenbelt land when they are needed.



- Think about **Gypsies and Travellers** when we write rules for finding land to build on.

**Gypsies and Travellers** are people who travel around from place to place and may also have a history of travelling or living in caravans.



- Allow local councils to decide how many affordable houses are built.

We will also:



- Write a rule that says that building projects on the greenbelt must have extra affordable homes.



- Have rules that say that new building projects should include green spaces like parks.



- Think more about how to decide how much land should be worth.



- Allow builders to build more affordable housing if they want to.



- Not change the rules for building projects that are only for shops.

# Building affordable homes



We are going to build more **social housing** and **affordable homes** than ever before.



Remember, **affordable homes** are not too expensive for people to buy.



**Social housing** is housing for a lower rent, provided by either:

- Your local council
- A housing association, or
- A charity.

People told us many different things about this topic. Some of the things people told us included:



- We should build more affordable homes and social homes.



- We should get rid of a rule that says 1 in 10 new homes must be affordable to buy. Local councils should be able to set their own rules instead.



- We should get rid of a rule that says that 1 in 4 affordable homes should be **First Homes**.

**First Homes** are a type of affordable home for people who have never owned a home before.



- Local councils should decide how many First Homes to build.



People also told us:



- First Homes are not always a good idea. There is sometimes more need for other affordable housing.

Other people said that First Homes can be useful. They can sometimes help young people who are struggling to buy a home.



- There should be a mix of different types of homes in new housing projects.



- The government needs to help with building social homes.



- The government should do more to support affordable homes in the countryside.

People also told us:



- Our plans to help children in care to have the right homes are good.

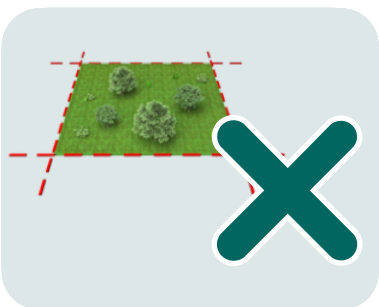


- Our plans to support **community-led housing** are good.

**Community-led housing** is when a group of people in the community work together to find homes for people who need them.



- Local councils should support community-led housing groups.



- The way of finding small sites where buildings can be built is not working well.



People also told us:



- The government should find ways to support smaller building companies.



- We are right to stop using the words 'beauty' and 'beautiful' in our plan, when we talk about buildings.



- We are right to help people add another floor at the top of their house.



- We need to agree on what we mean by affordable homes.



- We need to give enough money to people who build homes, and local councils.

We will:



- Let councils decide how many affordable homes and First Homes to build.



- Help local councils to support housing projects with a mix of different types of homes.



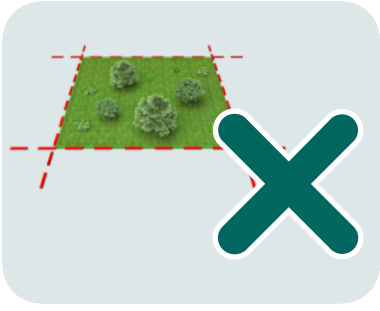
- Think about what we can do to support councils to build affordable homes and social homes.



- Think about how we can help people to find an affordable home in the countryside.



- Look at how to make our rules clearer.



We will not have a size limit for community-led housing.

# Helping companies to grow



As well as building new homes, we need to help companies to grow.



This will help people get good new jobs, and make the UK strong in the future.



Many growing companies want to build new buildings, like:

- **Labs** - these are where scientists work.



- **Gigafactories** - these are places that make batteries for cars that run on electricity.



- **Data centres** - these are big buildings full of computers that store information.



We want to make it easier to build these kinds of buildings.

People told us many different things about this topic. Some of the things people told us included:



- We are right to support companies to build these buildings.



- It is good to focus on things like data centres.



- Data centres use a lot of electricity.



- These buildings should not be built on greenbelt land.



People also told us:



- We should build things like wind turbines to make electricity.



- Councils should have plans to support companies.



- Big projects should be planned better.



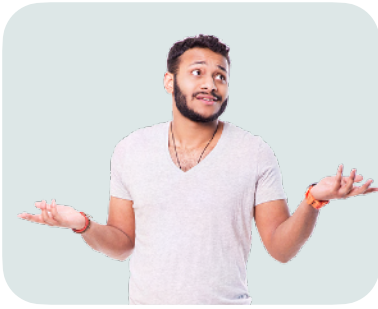
- The government should be able to say where these buildings are built.

Other people said local people should be able to say where these buildings are built.



- These buildings are important for the UK.

People also told us:



- These buildings might not make many new jobs in the local area.



- These buildings should not be too big.



- The government should think about how these buildings will affect the environment.

We will:



- Write rules for building these types of buildings. This includes bigger projects under our **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects** scheme.



- Think about how these buildings will affect the environment.



- Write reports about how these buildings affect their local area.

# Giving communities what they need



Local communities need more than just homes and jobs.

We want:



- Prisons to be less crowded.



- More cheap childcare.



- People to travel more by foot, bike and public transport.



- Children to be healthier.



We want to change the rules for planning new buildings like hospitals and prisons.



We think it is very important to provide more public services when we build a lot of new homes.



Most people agreed with this.



People told us many different things about this topic. Some of the things people told us included:

- They want new, better public services.



- Too much change might be bad for local areas.



People also told us:



- Councils will need money and support to make these changes.



- It might be hard to make sure that areas get all the public services they need.



- Local groups should be involved in planning public services.

- They agreed with our plans to support:



- Places in colleges and sixth forms for young people aged over 16.



- Childcare places.

People also told us:

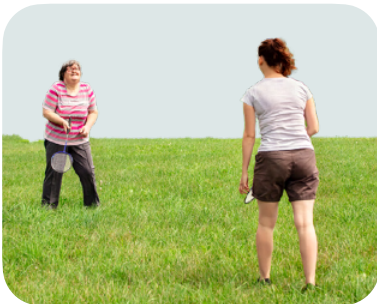


- They did not always understand our plans for **transport**.

**Transport** is different ways of getting around, like buses, trains, cars and bikes.



- They wanted better ways for people to get around, like places to walk.



- They wanted more parks and places to play sports.



- Councils should think about health when they plan new building projects.



- They want roads and sewers to be looked after.

We will make some changes to our plans. We will:



- Include more health services.



- Give people more information about our plans for transport.



- Give councils clearer rules to help them make communities healthy.



- Make sure there are less new takeaways near schools.



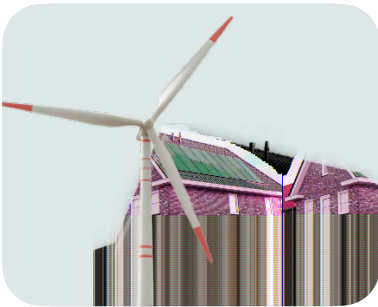
- Write rules to help keep children safe near dangers like open water and railways.

# Green energy and the environment



We also need to change planning rules to make it easier to make **green energy**.

**Green energy** is energy that causes less harm to the natural environment.



To make green energy, we need to build things like **wind turbines** and **solar panels**.



**Wind turbines** use the power of the wind to make electricity.



**Solar panels** use the power of the sun to make electricity.



Making more **green energy** will help to reduce **climate change**.

**Climate change** is all about big changes in the weather. For example, storms getting worse than they used to be. Or having less rain in some places.

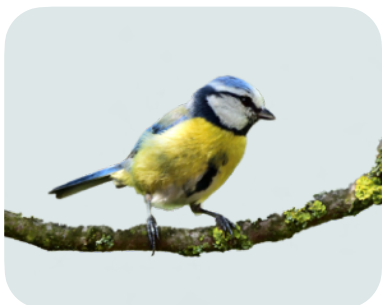


We also need to make changes so we have enough water to meet our needs.

People told us many different things about this topic. Some of the things people told us included:



- They agreed with our plans to use more green energy.



- It is important to protect the homes of animals and plants, and the natural environment.



People also told us:



- Local councils should still have power over what gets built in their local area.



- They wanted to know more about things like power lines and places to store energy.



- There should be extra rules to protect places that are important for the environment.



- The ways that we can find out if buildings may make climate change worse are not always good enough.

People also told us:



- They agreed with our plans to change the rules for groups of wind turbines, called **wind farms**.

They said these changes could make it quicker and cheaper to build new wind farms.



- They agreed that our changes would mean that more solar panels would be built.

But others thought that the rules for solar panels are fine now.



- Our plans to reduce climate change should be stronger.



- We should make sure that new buildings do not get too hot.

People also told us:



- We should change the rules to protect people from floods.



- We need better systems to get water away from where people live and stop floods.



- Farmers' land should be looked after.



- They agreed that there should be better rules about water.

People also told us:



- We need more big water projects, like reservoirs.



- We should do more to stop leaks.



- Water companies should pay more if they do not follow the rules.



- The rules about water are not strict enough.



- Our plans do not talk enough about water waste.

We will:



- Guide councils to find areas for new green energy



- Keep listening to local communities.



- Write guidance to help councils and builders find out how bad a building, or group of buildings, may be for climate change.



- Make it clear how to apply tests to build away from places that will flood.



We will also:



- Write a new plan for how we use land in England.



- Look at how water companies work.



- Build new water projects quickly.



- Encourage buildings to help animals where there are not many left in the wild.

# Getting involved in local plans



We want to make sure councils have up-to-date **local plans**.

The **local plan** says what can be built in the local area.



If a council does not have a local plan, we can step in.



We want to be able to do this quickly and fairly.



We might need to change the rules to do this.



We have different ways of getting involved, like:

- Telling the council what to do, or
- Making a plan with local people and putting it into action.



We would think about the local area's needs and how the plan is going.



We would also let the councils explain if there are any special reasons why we should not get involved.



People told us they wanted the rules to be simpler.

We have changed some of the rules to make them easier to understand.

# The costs of planning



We want to know if we should charge people more when they ask for **planning permission**.



**Planning permission** is when the council agrees that someone can build something.



Local councils need to have enough money to give a good service and make quick decisions.



The money they get from charging people helps them to do this.

**I want to build...**



But the money is not enough to cover the council's costs of looking at **planning applications**.

**Planning applications** are when people ask for planning permission.



We want to make sure the money covers all the costs.



This would mean that councils have more money to pay for other services.



**£258**

Right now, councils charge £258 for planning applications to make changes to a house.



**Double**

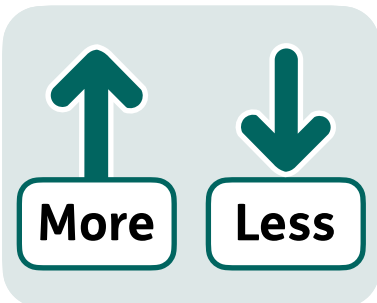
But it costs them double that to make a decision on the application.



People told us many different things about this topic. Some of the things people told us included:



- They agreed with our plan to charge people more for planning applications.



- Some types of work should cost more, and other types cost less.



- The cost should go up more slowly than what we said.



- We were right to say that the cost of a planning application to make changes to a house should be £528.

People also told us:



- There are other types of planning applications where councils should also charge more.



- There are some planning applications that are free now, but should cost money.



- It would help councils to let them choose how much to pay for planning applications.

But others said that it would be better to have 1 rule for the whole country.



- Large projects should also pay more for planning applications.

We will:



- Charge people £528 to make a home bigger, better or different.



- Charge more for some other planning applications so that the money covers more of the council's costs.



- Not make some people, like disabled people, pay.



- Give local councils the power to choose how much to charge for planning applications.



We will also allow local councils to recover their costs when involved in really large **infrastructure** projects.

**Infrastructure** includes things like roads, airports, supplying water and making energy.

# Making our changes happen



We are going to help local councils to follow the new rules and make plans.



We might give extra help to councils that need to change their plans quickly.



Some plans can continue and will be checked under the old rules.



Some plans need to be changed to include more housing. These will be checked against the new rules.





If a council already has a plan for the local area that is less than 5 years old, they can still use that plan.



People told us:

- They agreed with our ideas.



- That we should look at plans more often.



- That the rules about plans should be more fair.



We will help local councils make sure they follow the new rules.

# Being fair to everyone

People told us:



- Our plans might be unfair to people who live in the countryside.



- Our plans might make it harder for some people to use roads and public transport.



- The new law might be bad for local councils and communities.



- The new rules might be bad for Travellers.

People also told us:



- The new law should make it easier for older and disabled people to get around.



- It should be easier for people to take part in planning.

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