



# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP**

*Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for  
Housing, Communities & Local Government*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

**To:** All local authority Leaders and Metro Mayors in  
England

**Cc:** All local authority Chief Executives and combined  
authority Chief Executives in England

12 March 2025

Dear colleague,

## **PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BILL: INTRODUCTION**

At the end of last year, I wrote to all of you to mark the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework, putting in place radical reforms to the planning system. We have moved fast to implement these reforms precisely because the scale of the challenge we face is so great. As I have said before, we all share not just a professional responsibility but a moral obligation to see more homes built, underpinned by the infrastructure that supports modern life. And we will only succeed in this mission if we work together.

In the weeks since we published the National Planning Policy Framework, I have been encouraged to see local authorities up and down the country embracing the new rules and starting to approve more applications for more homes. Policy matters – but it is incumbent on all of us to use it positively to meet the needs of the people we serve.

The introduction of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill marks another major milestone in our reform programme. The Bill will speed up and streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure, helping us to meet our goals of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in England and reaching 150 planning decisions on major economic infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament, as well as accelerating our transition to clean energy.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill includes reforms across five principal areas.

- 1. Delivering a faster and more certain consenting process for critical infrastructure.** A failure to build enough critical infrastructure, in particular Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), is constraining economic growth and undermining our energy security. Upgrading the country's major economic infrastructure – including our electricity networks and clean energy sources, roads, public transport links and water supplies – is essential to delivering basic services and growing the economy. The Bill will make it quicker and easier to deliver critical infrastructure projects including through streamlining consultation requirements, ensuring National Policy Statements are kept up to date, and preventing excessive judicial reviews. These changes will support the government's Clean Power Action

Plan by accelerating the planning process for energy infrastructure and ensuring local communities benefit through the creation of a bill discount scheme for people living closest to new electricity transmission infrastructure.

2. **Introducing a more strategic approach to nature recovery:** when it comes to development and the environment, we know we can do better than the status quo, which too often sees both sustainable housebuilding and nature recovery stall. Instead of environmental protections being seen as a barrier to growth, we want to unlock a win-win for the economy and for nature. The Bill will introduce a new Nature Restoration Fund that will unlock and accelerate development while going beyond simply offsetting harm to unlock the positive impact development can have in driving nature recovery.

And of particular interest to local government will be:

3. **Improving certainty and decision-making in the planning system.** Decisions about what to build and where should be shaped by local communities and reflect the views of local residents. However, in exercising local democratic oversight, it is vital that planning committees operate as effectively as possible. The Bill will enable the setting of a national scheme of delegation, which we want to use to target planning committees at the most significant schemes – allowing experienced planning officers to deal with issues like reserved matters, as well as smaller proposals from SME developers that we want to see getting through the system faster. Following extensive engagement on the back of the working paper we published on these proposals last year, including with councillors and officers as well as the wider sector, we will consult on a final proposed model in parallel with the Bill's passage so that the scheme can be in place next year. The Bill also contains powers to set a maximum size for planning committees, and for the mandatory training of committee members. And in putting more trust and confidence in planning officers, it is of course vital that planning departments are properly resourced, which is why the Bill gives local authorities the ability to set their own planning fees for the first time at a cost recovery level, and requires those fees by law to be spent on planning application services.
4. **Unlocking land and securing public value for large scale investment.** The government is determined to enable more effective land assembly by public sector bodies, speed up site delivery, and deliver housing, infrastructure, amenity, and transport benefits in the public interest. To unlock more sites for development, the Bill will ensure that the process for acquiring land with a direction is more efficient and the administrative costs are reduced. We are also expanding the power to parish and town councils and removing the requirement for Directions to be signed off by the Secretary of State. We want to see these powers used and I look forward to working closely with local authorities to ensure that you have the support to take advantage of these reforms.
5. **Introducing effective new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning.** While planning is principally a local activity, we know that some issues demand planning for growth on a larger than local scale. The Bill will implement strategic planning at a sub-regional level through the production of Spatial Development Strategies to facilitate effective cross-boundary working to address development and infrastructure needs. As set out in the *English Devolution White Paper*, this includes an obligation to apportion an assessment of the housing need of the area across its constituent members. The Bill will also ensure that an

SDS can be approved by a simple majority; and in mayoral authorities, Mayors will have the casting vote in the event of a tie. There will also be a backstop power that ensures the Secretary of State can approve, take over and amend an SDS where necessary.

Local government will be a critical partner in delivering all of these reforms and getting Britain building. I know the majority of the Bill will be of significant interest to you and your communities, and you can find further details on all of the Bill's measures in our Guide to the Bill and a number of factsheets at: [The Planning and Infrastructure Bill - GOV.UK](#).

## **Reform of the statutory consultee system**

Alongside the Bill, the government has also taken action this week to reform the statutory consultee system. Statutory consultees play an important role, providing expert advice and information on significant environmental, transport, safety, and heritage issues to ensure good planning decision-making. However, their involvement introduces additional requirements into the process of securing permission for some developments, and wide-ranging concerns have been raised by local planning authorities, developers and others across the sector.

The government is therefore determined to return the statutory consultee system to meeting its goal of supporting high-quality development through the swift provision of expert relevant advice to inform decision-making. It is essential that statutory consultees look to provide practical, pragmatic advice and expertise which is focussed on what is necessary to make development acceptable.

To that end, a Written Ministerial Statement on Monday confirmed five actions: putting support for growth at the heart of the system; limiting the scope of statutory consultees to where advice is strictly necessary; reminding local planning authorities that they are able to proceed with a decision where advice is not provided on time if they have sufficient information to do so; establishing a new performance framework with greater ministerial scrutiny of the actions of statutory consultees; and ensuring the system has the right funding with the right incentives.

I would urge you to read the Written Ministerial Statement in full ([Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)), but in particular I wanted to draw your attention to the position it sets out with respect to local authorities. The government is clear that consultation of statutory consultees should be limited only to those instances where it is necessary to do so. Where there is relevant and up to date standing advice published with respect to the relevant category of development, then consultation is not required. Routine and blanket referrals to statutory consultees outside the statutory requirements should not take place, as this creates unnecessary administrative burdens for both local planning authorities and the statutory consultee. Decisions should not be delayed in order to secure advice from a statutory consultee beyond the 21 (or 18) day statutory deadlines unless there is insufficient information to make the decision or more detailed advice may enable an approval rather than refusal. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth, and timely decision making is in line with this objective.

As with our changes to wider planning policy, we will achieve more on behalf of the people we serve if we are pulling together at the national and local level. I therefore trust that you will ensure your

authorities are acting in line with the Written Ministerial Statement, and taking responsibility for reaching decisions on vital development as quickly as possible.

I am hugely grateful for the cross-sector input and support these proposals have already received, and for your contributions during the development of the Bill. You play a crucial role in delivering our Plan for Change and I look forward to continuing our engagement with you as we deliver for our country.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Rayner', with a horizontal line under the name.

**RT HON ANGELA RAYNER MP**

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government