



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# PLANNING NEWSLETTER

By Email Only

**Message from Chief Planner**

**20 March 2025**

This newsletter provides updates on the latest announcements from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and other government departments and agencies relating to planning policy and practice. Please see overleaf for the list of contents.

On Tuesday 11 March 2025, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill was introduced to Parliament. It will streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure, supporting delivery of the government's Plan for Change milestones and other key objectives. Further details are enclosed.

This week, MHCLG announced which authorities will receive funding to support local plan delivery at the Regulation 18 and 19 stages.

This follows the Planning Advisory Conference in Birmingham on 27 February, when the Minister for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook, launched the response to the previous government's consultation on implementing reforms to the plan-making system, revised Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belt, local nature recovery and heritage, funding to support local authorities undertaking Green Belt Reviews, and new salary bursaries for Pathways to Planning. The announcements reaffirm the government's commitment to speed up and simplify the planning process, with further changes to come.

With kind regards,

**Joanna Averley**  
**Chief Planner**

All previous Chief Planner Letters and Newsletters are available on GOV.UK [here](#).



## Newsletter Contents

Policy and Guidance Updates.....	3
Local Authorities Awarded Local Plan and Green Belt Funding .....	3
Planning and Infrastructure Bill introduced to Parliament .....	3
MHCLG Issues its Response to Plan Making System Consultation .....	4
Planning Practice Guidance Updates to Green Belt, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Heritage .....	5
Pathways to Planning Bursaries Now Available .....	5
Research, Training and Events.....	6
The Environment Agency and the Town and Country Planning Association Launch Training Resources.....	6



## Policy and Guidance Updates

### Local Authorities Awarded Local Plan and Green Belt Funding

On 19 March MHCLG announced that two local authorities at Regulation 19 stage will be awarded a share of £500,000 and 80 local authorities at Regulation 18 stage will be awarded a share of £18,237,000. The purpose of this funding is to ensure that local authorities are well-equipped and supported to implement the changes in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Full details of the funding awards can be found [here](#).

Eligible local authorities at Regulation 19 stage were invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) form by 17 January 2025, and eligible local authorities at Regulation 18 stage were invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) by 28 February 2025 to request a share of this funding. All EOIs have been reviewed.

In addition to the local plans funding, MHCLG is providing funding to support local authorities with the costs of Green Belt Reviews. On 27 February, the department announced that 134 local authorities will each receive £70,000 Green Belt Review funding.

MHCLG is considering what further support local authorities may need to ensure they have the necessary skills and capabilities to implement planning reforms. Any further announcements will be made in due course. If you have any questions about these funds, please contact the Capacity and Capability team at [LocalPlansandGreenBeltFunding@communities.gov.uk](mailto:LocalPlansandGreenBeltFunding@communities.gov.uk).

### Planning and Infrastructure Bill introduced to Parliament

On 11 March the Planning and Infrastructure Bill was introduced to Parliament. The Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote a [letter](#) to local authorities, local authority leaders, and combined authority chief executives to mark this next step in the government's programme to reform the planning system.

The Bill will speed up and streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure, supporting delivery of the government's Plan for Change



milestones of building 1.5 million homes and fast-tracking 150 planning decisions on major economic infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament. It will also support delivery of the government's Clean Power 2030 target by ensuring that key clean energy projects are built as quickly as possible. To do this, the Bill has five overarching objectives:

1. Delivering a faster and more certain consenting process for infrastructure, including clean energy and transport projects.
2. Introducing a more strategic approach to nature recovery, unlocking a win-win for the economy and nature.
3. Improving certainty and decision-making in the planning system, giving local authorities the resources they need to deliver an efficient service.
4. Unlocking land and securing public value for large scale investment, through enabling more effective land assembly by public sector bodies and ensuring development corporations can operate effectively.
5. Introducing effective new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning.

Further information on all of the Bill's measures can be found in the [Guide to the Bill](#) and in a series of [factsheets](#) on gov.uk, as well as in the [explanatory notes](#).

## **MHCLG Issues its Response to Plan Making System Consultation**

On 27 February, MHCLG published a response to the previous government's consultation on the new plan making system, which came out of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The intention is to proceed as set out in that consultation, subject to some changes identified in the response, with necessary regulations, policy and guidance to be finalised later this year. The consultation and response documents are available [here](#).

This publication was announced by the Housing and Planning Minister in his speech at an event celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Planning Advisory Service](#). It can be read in full [here](#). The associated press release can be read [here](#).

In his speech, Minister Pennycook also announced the launch of a new dedicated [home for plan-making resources on GOV.UK](#). Planning authorities have told MHCLG that they need clearer guidance and more practical tools to speed up plan-making. The launch of the [create or update a local plan](#)



[page](#) responds to this by bringing together all the essential tools and guidance local authorities need to develop a local plan, underpinned by quality data. Over the coming months, the site will be continually updated with practical resources to help planners at all stages of the plan-making process.

## **Planning Practice Guidance Updates to Green Belt, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Heritage**

MHCLG has published new guidance to help ensure that local authorities can assess Green Belt land consistently and implement Green Belt reforms effectively. This will support the production of local development plans and ensure that planning applications and development on suitable grey belt land can proceed in the short term in areas where up-to-date plans are not in place.

The department has revised the guidance on making effective use of land by setting out how to apply new paragraph 125c of the NPPF, particularly when taking other relevant policies into consideration, including those relating to the protection of heritage assets.

The updates to the Natural Environment and Plan-making Planning Practice Guidance also include new [guidance](#) on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). LNRS are new strategies being prepared across England to agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in the locations where they will have the greatest impact for nature.

LNRS will also provide valuable evidence for plan making and may contain information to support decisions on planning applications. The updated guidance provides clarity on how Local Planning Authorities can have regard to LNRS in both the plan making and decision-making process. One of the 48 LNRS has already been published (West of England Combined Authority); the other 47 are expected to follow during 2025.

## **Pathways to Planning Bursaries Now Available**

The Pathways to Planning programme provides local planning authorities with a pipeline of talented graduates, adding value to local authority planning teams and contributing to the sustainability of the planning profession. Almost



90 graduate planners started work through the programme last year, and the current recruitment process has seen more than 2,000 graduates apply.

MHCLG is allocating £4.5 million for the Local Government Association's latest Pathways to Planning initiative to fund salary bursaries for new planning roles in councils. The programme has ambitious targets to exceed the Government's 300-planner target by the end of 2026. Local planning authorities can indicate their interest in a salary-funded role on [the programme's expression of interest form](#).

## Research, Training and Events

### The Environment Agency and the Town and Country Planning Association Launch Training Resources

The Environment Agency (EA) and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have been working together to support planners and flood risk professionals in the public sector. On 11 February 2025, the EA and TCPA ran a development planning-focused webinar to help local planning authorities (LPAs) prepare ahead of [new flood risk data being published on 25 March 2025](#). You can watch the [webinar recording here](#).

The TCPA and the EA have also developed new online training resources for planners and flood risk professionals working in the public sector. The courses are designed to develop knowledge and understanding of the key principles underpinning planning for flood risk, and the application of national policy and guidance in England. New modules added to the online training hub include:

- Applying the sequential and exception tests for plan preparation,
- Strategic flood risk assessments and flood risk evidence for plan making
- A series of video tutorials to address technical flood risk aspects of development management, e.g. functional floodplain.

These complement existing resources like:

- An introduction to planning for flood risk in England,
- Applying the sequential and exception tests to decision making, and
- Flood risk assessments for planning applications.



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# PLANNING NEWSLETTER

The courses are interactive, free of charge, and can be completed at your own pace. Time spent on these courses can be used to contribute towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements for professional memberships. A CPD certificate will be issued on completion. You can register to access the courses here: <https://learning.tcpa.org.uk>