



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# PLANNING NEWSLETTER

By Email Only

## **Message from Chief Planner**

**4 June 2026**

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

This newsletter outlines details of the significant updates on plan-making and wider planning reforms. These include the introduction of new data standards regulations for local plans, marking an important step towards a more open and data-driven planning system, as well as continued rollout of the new plan-making framework and engagement with authorities on indicative plan timetables.

The newsletter also highlights updates on compulsory purchase, and forthcoming regulations from the Department for Transport to enable cost recovery for certain services. There is also an update on the expanding role of Active Travel England in plan-making, alongside new guidance and support being developed.

In addition, we are sharing new guidance and resources, including a Good Practice Guide on archaeology and solar farms from Historic England, and the transfer of neighbourhood planning toolkits onto GOV.UK.

Finally, this edition also covers recent research on demolition and retrofit decisions, as well as opportunities for authorities to strengthen planning capacity through the Public Practice programme.

With kind regards,

**Joanna Averley**

**Chief Planner**

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



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## Policy and Guidance Updates

### New Plan-Making System Update

#### **New data standards regulations for plan-making**

For the first time, communities, developers, and planners will be able to see clearly, in one place, how plan-making is progressing and how many homes each area is planning for. Regulations introducing mandatory data standards for local plans came into force on 7 May 2026 - a significant step towards a more open, data-driven and efficient planning system, and the first use of the planning data powers in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

LPA's bringing forward plans under the [Create or update a local plan using the new system - GOV.UK](#) are now required to publish their plan timetables and housing requirements in a standardised format. Guidance is available on the '[publish your plan data](#)' page on the Planning Data platform, which also includes a '[check and provide](#)' service to help you check your data meets the standard.

This consistent, openly published data will build a clear national picture of plan-making progress and housing ambitions across England. It will make it easier for citizens and organisations to find and use planning information, and create opportunities for new tools and services that make planning more accessible for everyone.

LPA's bringing forward a plan under the new system should follow the guidance, publish data to the approved standard and can share their experience by emailing [digitalland@communities.gov.uk](mailto:digitalland@communities.gov.uk). For more details read the MHCLG Digital blog post: [Data standards: Laying the groundwork for an open, faster, data-driven planning system](#).

#### **Request for indicative plan timetables**

There are a range of interfaces between MHCLG and LPA's depending on where they are in the process of preparing a local plan, as follows:



- MHCLG has written to authorities who will **soon be preparing a plan in the new plan-making system** requesting an indication of key milestone dates for plan preparation. The information is being requested to enable MHCLG and PINS to understand when plans are anticipated to help manage resources. Thank you to those LPAs that have already provided the information.
- If an LPA has **not been contacted by MHCLG and will be preparing a plan early in the new system** please complete [this form](#) as soon as possible.
- LPAs who are due to be **commencing preparation of a plan in the near future** are encouraged to contact [newsystemplans@communities.gov.uk](mailto:newsystemplans@communities.gov.uk) to **request a meeting with MHCLG** to provide an update on progress and opportunity to ask MHCLG questions about preparing a plan in the new system.
- In addition, thank you to those local authorities who have published their plan timetable and issued their notice to commence plan-making. MHCLG are reaching out to these **early starters to offer an informal meeting with MHCLG**. If LPAs are yet to receive an offer of a meeting, please contact [newsystemplans@communities.gov.uk](mailto:newsystemplans@communities.gov.uk).

## Strategic Environmental Assessment in the new system

The requirement to carry out sustainability appraisal (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 19(5)) was removed for new system local plans by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The requirement for local plans to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment remains. The [30-month local plan process: an overview - GOV.UK](#) guidance says:

“SEA is a process for the environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. Your plan will need to carry out SEA if it meets certain criteria set out in [regulation 5 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#) . We expect that all local plans will need to carry out SEA.”

MHCLG will shortly be publishing guidance on SEA for new system plans, as set out in the roadmap: [New local plan-making system roadmap - GOV.UK](#)

**Get emails about updates to local plans guidance on GOV.UK**



Choose from a range of email updates, depending on the scope of interest. To get email updates for additions and changes to:

- the CULP guidance collection, select 'Get emails about this page' on the [Create or update a local plan using the new system](#) page
- individual pages within the CULP guidance collection, select 'Get emails about this page' on the relevant page
- everything published on GOV.UK about local plans (including guidance, services, news stories and research), select 'Get emails for this topic' on the [Local Plans topic](#) page

[Unsubscribe or make changes to your email subscriptions](#) at any time.

## Compulsory Purchase

Since March 2024, the MHCLG has published a register of decisions on all compulsory purchase orders in England submitted to the Department for confirmation since 2019. The intention behind publishing the register is to increase transparency around how decisions are taken, and to improve knowledge and awareness of the purposes for which compulsory purchase powers may be used. The register is updated quarterly and the latest version, which was published on 28 April, can be found [here](#).

## National Scheme of Delegation for Planning Decisions

MHCLG have laid draft regulations in Parliament on **1<sup>st</sup> June** that will, subject to Parliamentary approval, introduce a national scheme of delegation for planning decisions across England. They place planning applications into two categories:

- Schedule 1: those which must always be delegated to planning officers for a decision; and
- Schedule 2: those which are presumed to be delegated to officers but which, in certain defined circumstances (known as the gateway test), can be considered by planning committees.



The types of applications in Schedule 1 which must be determined by an officer include applications for minor residential and commercial development, householder development, discharge of condition applications and reserved matters applications for proposals, where the outline is below 500 dwellings.

The types of applications in Schedule 2 which are presumed delegated but could go to committee subject to the gateway test include larger applications for planning permission not sent out in Schedule 1, reserved matters applications where the outline is above 500 dwellings, and applications for listed building consent.

The Gateway Test to take Schedule 2 applications to committee requires the nominated officer (usually the chief planner or equivalent) and the nominated member (usually the chair of the committee) to agree that the application meets one of the following criteria:

- A. where the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area
- B. where the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations

There are separate provisions allowing the committee to consider applications linked to the local planning authority for propriety reasons where they do not need to meet the Gateway Test.

The Regulations also set a maximum cap on the size of planning committees of 13 members. The draft Regulations must first be considered by Parliament. Following that, if approved the final version will be laid and they will come into effect on **31 October 2026**.

## **Department for Transport: forthcoming cost recovery regulations**

The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 has received Royal Assent, giving local authorities new powers to recover costs for services they provide on casework under the Highways Act 1980 and the Transport and Works Act 1992. The Department for Transport (DfT) is developing regulations and guidance to implement these new powers through secondary legislation. This will give effect to:



- **Section 31** of the Act, covering services provided under the **Highways Act 1980**
- **Section 42** of the Act, covering services provided under the **Transport and Works Act**

Taken together, these measures will allow specified public bodies – including local authorities – to charge fees for relevant services provided to applicants. This will help ensure that costs can be recovered appropriately, bringing these regimes more closely into line with other infrastructure consenting processes. Local authorities will be included as prescribed bodies under these new regulations, maintaining their statutory role while enabling cost recovery where appropriate.

DfT is working at pace to progress this legislation and is keen to discuss the proposed approach with local authorities. If there are any questions at this stage or a wish to discuss the proposals in more detail, please do contact the Infrastructure Planning Reform team at DfT: [InfrasPlanningRefo@dft.gov.uk](mailto:InfrasPlanningRefo@dft.gov.uk)

## **Active Travel England: new statutory role in local plans and supplementary plans**

Active Travel England is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Transport, whose aim is to increase the number of local journeys being walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. ATE has been a statutory consultee for planning applications above certain thresholds since June 2023.

With effect from 25 March 2026, ATE also has a new statutory role as a specific consultation body for new style local plans and supplementary plans prepared under the *Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026*. Where local authorities consider that ATE may have an interest in the preparation of a development plan, they must invite ATE to make representations at the relevant stages of plan making.

In response to this new role, ATE is developing a Spatial Plan Service to support local authorities preparing local plans, accompanied by new guidance. The service is



being shaped in close collaboration with a group of local authorities and will evolve over time as planning reforms progress and as ATE's role develops. ATE aims to work with local planning authorities to ensure that active travel is considered early in the plan making process, including within the evidence base, site allocations and policies.

Supplementary plans are a new type of plan, and ATE are currently considering how its role in relation to these plans should develop in practice. ATE would welcome feedback and ideas as this part of the system emerges.

Please send formal notifications and consultations on plans prepared under the Local Planning Regulations 2026 to: [Planning-Consultations@activetravelengland.gov.uk](mailto:Planning-Consultations@activetravelengland.gov.uk).

ATE is also hosting 'Making Active Places 2026' in Manchester this September. This two-day conference brings together industry professionals, local authority officers and community leaders for lectures, workshops and guided tours led by local and international experts in town planning, placemaking and highway design. Further information is available at: <https://activetravelengland.gov.uk/conference-2026>

## **Update from Historic England on Good Practice Guide on archaeology and solar farms**

A Good Practice Guide has been published on archaeology and solar farms, helping solar developers to integrate archaeological considerations from early in the project planning processes through to final design.

Funded by the UK Government and Historic England the guide has been produced collaboratively with representatives from the archaeology and solar sectors and is jointly badged by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers (FAME), Historic England and Solar Energy UK (SEUK).



It is structured in two parts: Part 1 outlines principles for good practice, underscoring the importance of collaborative working practices, which balance the need for efficient and timely project delivery with the requirement to uphold policies that protect the historic environment; Part 2 provides practical tools and useful information on the context for solar farm development, defining the main elements of the development, key roles, the timing of specific actions and the range of techniques available. Also, Part 2 includes a model checklist of potential impacts for the applicant to complete and provide to the archaeological adviser, and advice on developing appropriate planning conditions / DCO requirements.

The Guide provides a framework for assessing and evaluating impact and design mitigation for the effects of solar farm development on the archaeological resource, promoting consistent approaches to the process and timing of archaeological work. It does not cover the setting of heritage assets or impacts on historic landscapes; nor is it intended to apply to small-scale installation of ground-mounted solar panels.

Written for developers, archaeological advisers, planning case officers, archaeological consultants and contractors, the Guide will be formally launched in late Spring. Meanwhile, it is available for immediate use and can be downloaded from the ClfA website: [Professional Practice Papers | ClfA](#)

## **Neighbourhood Planning Guidance and Toolkits**

Following the end to government funded support for neighbourhood planning the neighbourhood planning website, operated on MHCLG's behalf by Locality, has closed. To preserve the guidance and toolkits previously hosted on that website, the Department is in the process of transferring them to [GOV.UK](#). Each toolkit sets out the processes and activities required to produce a neighbourhood plan and includes practical guidance and best practice throughout.

Some toolkits are already available, and more are being added gradually. All will be available in due course. Separately, all of the toolkits will be updated to reflect changes to planning policy. This is expected to be complete by April 2027. MHCLG



is also aware that the existing [planning practice guidance](#) updating and that work will be progressed to a similar timeframe to ensure consistency.

## Funding Opportunities, Research and Events

### Demolition or retrofit? What we have learned from recent research

Decisions on whether to demolish and redevelop an existing building or retrofit and reuse it are often made early in the planning process and have significant implications for carbon, viability and local character. Research commissioned by MHCLG, and carried out by Verian, examined how national planning policy and guidance supports decision making on demolition and retrofit, how it is interpreted, and how it is applied in practice. The study draws on interviews and survey responses from nearly 1000 professionals across the built environment.

The findings show that planning policies are not providing clear or consistent direction. Demolition is commonly driven by viability, delivery and tax considerations, while retrofit is motivated by sustainability and reuse. Uptake of whole life carbon assessment remains low, with respondents supporting several measures that could bring greater clarity and consistency to decision making, including a 'retrofit first' approach, better aligned financial incentives for both new build and retrofit, and the introduction of standardised whole life carbon guidance to help the sector move towards net zero goals.

Read the full report here: [Demolition and redevelopment or retrofit: research report - GOV.UK](#)

### NSIP Innovation and Capacity Fund

MHCLG is launching a third round of the Innovation and Capacity (I&C) Fund to support host local authorities involved in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). This is part of the Government's wider programme of reform to make the NSIP consenting system more streamlined, effective and responsive. From 8 June 2026, new regulations will also enable host local authorities to recover costs for



relevant services provided to applicants and proposed applicants throughout the Development Consent Order process, where they have published a statement setting out their fee charging schedule.

Round 3 of the I&C Fund is designed to help authorities get ready for these changes by building the systems, processes and capability needed to implement statutory cost recovery and strengthen their role in the DCO process. Local authorities are central to the effective operation of the NSIP regime, and MHCLG hope this funding will support practical, locally led approaches that build resilience, improve readiness and support effective engagement in the reformed system. Further information, including how to apply via the Microsoft Form, is available in the [NSIP Innovation and Capacity Fund \(Round 3\) Application](#)

Applications can be submitted from **midday Monday 8 June until midday 29 June 2026**.

## Update on Planning recruitment

### Public Practice salary support programme

MHCLG's partnership with Public Practice provides a targeted, proven route to bring experienced, mid-career built environment professionals into local planning authorities. Through the Associate Programme, Public Practice recruits, assesses, and matches high-quality candidates from disciplines such as architecture, urban design, infrastructure and environmental services into planning roles where capacity pressures are most acute.

This offer is designed to address the most persistent workforce challenge facing the sector: attracting and retaining experienced professionals. Public Practice enables career transitions from the private sector into public service, bringing multidisciplinary skills and fresh perspectives that complement existing planning teams and strengthen delivery capability. Find out more about our Spring 2026 cohort [here](#).

MHCLG are supporting this through a flexible funding offer to authorities. Salary support helps to reduce the financial barriers to recruiting experienced staff, alongside coverage of recruitment and development costs. Find out more [here](#).



Alongside this, Public Practice are launching “Planning Teams for the Future”, a new report that explores how planning services can evolve to become more resilient, digitally enabled, and strategically focused over the coming decade. Find out more [here](#).

## **Pathways to Planning second intake**

As you may know, the Pathways to Planning programme is a key part of MHCLG's offer to build capacity in local planning authorities. While the deadline to secure graduate trainees for an autumn 2026 deadline has now passed, there is remaining funding available for the **new second intake** of the programme, to provide councils with trainees to hire in Early 2027. Applications are open for graduates until **29 June**, so councils who sign up early can help promote the scheme in their local areas and help bring in the most relevant talent pools.

This second intake is designed to support local planning authorities to recruit more flexibly whilst still accessing top graduates who have passed the rigorous Pathways to Planning assessment process. Educational bursaries are available for every place on the programme, and a limited number of salary bursaries will be available for authorities with high housing and local plan need. This is available to local and strategic planning authorities.

To find out more or secure funding contact: [pathways.planning@local.gov.uk](mailto:pathways.planning@local.gov.uk) or [sign up directly on the programme website for employers](#).

## **MHCLG Planning Skills and Capacity Survey**

The Planning Skills and Capacity Survey has now closed, and MHCLG would like to thank the local planning authorities who took the time to participate.