



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

PLANNING NEWSLETTER

By Email Only

Message from Chief Planner

3 June 2025

The Chief Planner 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. This edition contains information on a package of MHCLG announcements made last week regarding market incentives and tools for local planning authorities to encourage faster build out, easing burdens on smaller sites, and support for SME builders. The Housing Minister made a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) on these announcements on 2 June.

Government recently announced funding for the third cohort of the Pathways to Planning graduate programme, a practical, cost-effective way to build long-term capacity in your planning team. There are also a limited number of bursaries to part-fund a graduate planner over two years. Details of how to secure graduate planners through the programme are enclosed and I would encourage you to consider applying.

Details are also enclosed on a Statutory Instrument bringing forward amendments to permitted development rights concerning electric vehicle charging points and domestic air source heat pumps to support delivery of low-carbon technology, and on the Regional Place Advocates Networks that MHCLG has established in partnership with the Planning Advisory Service.

I hope you find this monthly newsletter useful. Please do forward it on to local authority colleagues and subscribe at chiefplannernewsletter@communities.gov.uk.

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

Speeding Up Build Out

On Sunday 25 May, MHCLG announced a package of measures to ensure that the right incentives exist in the housing market, and local planning authorities have the tools they need, to encourage homes to be built out more quickly.

A new [working paper](#) invites views on further action the government could take to speed up homes being built. This is supported by a [technical consultation on transparency measures](#). Key government proposals include:

- **Transparency and Accountability Measures:** taking forward measures provided for in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 to introduce a build-out reporting framework and a related power for LPAs to decline to determine planning applications from relevant persons who fail to build out quickly. This includes the introduction of commencement notices and annual progress reports which must be submitted to local planning authorities for all new relevant residential development.
- **Mixed Tenure Thresholds:** considering a range of options to set a threshold where mixed tenure development would be required to help increase build out rates and support broader market diversification.
- **Completion Notices:** committing reforms to the operation of completion notices introduced under section 112 of the LURA, replacing the need for the Secretary of State's consent for a notice with an appeals mechanism.
- **Compulsory Purchase Orders:** to support the use of CPOs on stalled sites, the government intends to implement a reform introduced by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 to allow the conditional confirmation of CPOs. This will allow the compelling case for use of CPOs to be established earlier in the land assembly process on sites where alternative proposals have been put forward by landowners.
- **Delayed Homes Penalty:** exploring the possibility of introducing a new penalty tool for local authorities. The penalty would effectively be a last resort measure, which the government hopes not to have to implement, but which may be needed if industry does not sufficiently adapt and fulfil their commitment to deliver homes more quickly.



You are invited to submit views on the working paper and technical consultation before 7 July.

Backing SME Builders

On Wednesday 28 May, the government announced plans to ease burdens on smaller sites by streamlining planning rules and providing wider support for small and medium-sized builders.

The government is seeking responses on the following proposals:

- **Making the planning system fairer:** MHCLG has issued a [working paper](#) to explore how different site sizes should be treated within the planning system. This includes taking a graduated approach to the system as a whole – removing and streamlining disproportionate requirements on small and medium sites, while maintaining and strengthening requirements on major development.
- **Speeding up decisions for smaller sites:** Defra is [consulting on options for how Biodiversity Net Gain \(BNG\) should be applied across small and medium sites](#), making sure new and improved natural habitats can be delivered faster without holding up new development. It is also [consulting on the implementation of BNG for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects \(NSIPs\)](#) from May 2026. Alongside this, Defra will provide a further £10 million for local planning authorities to recruit and expand their ecologist teams to help speed up assessments and kickstart smaller construction projects.
- **Modernised Planning Committees:** MHCLG has launched a [consultation on the modernisation of planning committees](#), which is being legislated for through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. This includes detail on the proposed national scheme of delegation which would direct the majority of minor and technical applications to planning officers, freeing up committees to consider the most complex and controversial cases. The proposal is to categorise applications into those that must be delegated to officer (Tier A) and those where there is a presumption of delegation but the committee can still scrutinise if the chair of the planning committee and the chief planner agree (Tier B).



MHCLG also announced measures to improve land and financing options for SMEs, with Homes England selling more land to SMEs and allocating £100m from the Home Building Fund for SME Accelerator Loans, a Small Sites Aggregator pilot to deliver Social Rent homes on sites that would not have otherwise been developed.

Update to NSIPs regime

On 23 April the Minister of State for Housing and Planning made a [written ministerial statement](#) about further reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime. This highlighted that the government intends to take action on the significant elongation of pre-application periods resulting from the way in which statutory procedures are now being applied.

The government has laid amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to remove the statutory requirement to consult as part of the pre-application stage for NSIP applications. In his statement the Minister was clear that removing these statutory requirements does not signify that pre-submission consultation and high-quality engagement is no longer important, stating:

“We still want the NSIP regime to function on the basis of a front-loaded approach in which development proposals are thoroughly scoped and refined prior to being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. And we still expect high-quality early, meaningful and constructive engagement and consultation to take place with those affected as part of that process, thereby enabling positive changes to be made to proposals without causing undue delays.”

The government intends to publish statutory guidance setting out strong expectations that developers undertake consultation and engagement prior to submitting an application, and will issue a consultation in the summer. The Planning Advisory Service works closely with local authorities engaging in the NSIP regime, including leading a Local Authority NSIP Network. For further information see [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects | Local Government Association](#)

Compulsory Purchase Orders: Register of Decisions

Since March 2024, MHCLG has published a register of decisions on all compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) in England. The register, which is updated quarterly, includes all decisions submitted for confirmation since 2019. MHCLG publishes the register to improve transparency around how decisions are made, and to increase understanding and awareness of the purposes for which compulsory purchase powers may be used. The register can be found [here](#).

Updates to Nutrient Neutrality Calculators

In January 2025 the Environment Agency published the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). Improvements planned under WINEP have resulted in changes to 2030 concentration limits for 11 nutrient neutrality calculators:

- Chesil and Fleet SAC
- Derwent Bassenthwaite Lake SAC
- Esthwaite Ramsar
- Peak District Dales SAC
- Poole Harbour SPA Ramsar
- River Avon SAC
- River Axe SAC
- River Camel SAC
- River Lugg and Wye SAC
- Somerset Levels and Moor Ramsar
- Stodmarsh SAC Ramsar

Three further calculators include concentration permit changes but also include earlier date changes for select wastewater treatment work permit upgrades within the catchments:

- River Eden SAC
- River Mease SAC
- The Broads and Wensum SACs (includes formerly separate River Wensum calculator)

The updated calculators were published on 27 May 2025, and can be found at [Using the nutrient neutrality calculators - GOV.UK](#).



The updated nutrient neutrality calculators only include upgrades which are secured by a regulatory deadline, ensuring they are sufficiently certain for the purposes of Habitats Regulations Assessment. Any planned upgrades or timescales which are not backed up by a regulatory obligation with a deadline are less certain and have not been included in Natural England's calculators. Where upgrades are delivered earlier than the regulatory deadline, once these have been confirmed and signed off as operational and delivered, they can be taken into account and the calculators will be further updated.

Update: Permitted Development Rights for Electric Vehicle Charge Points and Domestic Air Source Heat Pumps

In February 2024, MHCLG consulted on *Changes to various permitted development rights* concerning the installation of electric vehicle charging points and domestic air source heat pumps.

Following the analysis of consultation responses, a Statutory Instrument was laid on 8 May 2025 which brought forward amendments to these rights. The changes provide more flexibility for households and businesses installing off-street charge points, and for households installing air source heat pumps. The changes will include:

- Permitting off-street outlets and upstands for recharging electrical vehicles to be installed within 2 metres of a highway.
- Allowing off-street electrical upstands up to a height of 2.7 metres where not within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse or block of flats.
- Allowing for the installation of equipment and a unit of equipment storage necessary for the operation of electrical upstands within the ground level of a non-domestic area used for off-street parking.
- Allowing air source heat pumps to be installed within 1 metre of the property boundary.
- Increasing the size limit of an air source heat pump for dwellinghouses from 0.6 metre cubed to 1.5 metre cubed.



- Doubling the number of heat pumps permitted for a detached dwellinghouse from one to two.
- Allowing air source heat pumps to also be used for cooling (providing it is not solely used for cooling) to permit the installation of air-to-air heat pumps.

The amendments came into force on **29 May 2025**. Further details on the changes can be found at: [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2025](#)

Research, Learning, Opportunities and Events

Pathways to Planning: last chance for councils to join for September 2025

Councils can now express an interest in securing talented graduate planners for a September 2025 start date through the Pathways to Planning Programme. Pathways to Planning is a highly effective recruitment and retention tool funded by MHCLG and built for the public sector, to support Government's commitment to bring 300 new planners into local authority planning teams. In its first year, Pathways recruited 89 graduates to work in almost 60 local authorities.

More than 2,150 candidates have applied for this recruitment round. Only the top 10% will be invited to interview with local councils. Due to the size of the candidate pool, a second round of interviews will run in July 2025 to match graduates with council planning teams. There is no fee to take part in the programme, saving councils the cost of standard recruitment processes.

For each graduate hired through the scheme, councils will also receive an educational bursary to support RTPI-accredited study. Councils can select a £5,000 bursary to accompany the Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship, or a £10,000 bursary to accompany an RTPI-accredited part-time master's degree. There are also a limited number of £40,000 salary bursaries to part-fund a graduate planner over two years. Councils will need to cover any remaining costs associated with the qualification, and to pay graduates a minimum salary of £24,000 (excluding London weighting, if applicable). Those

in a spending freeze can appeal for additional support to cover all course fees.

Councils who are interested in taking part can express their interest here. The deadline is 18 June 2025 at 5.00pm. More information about the scheme, guidance for councils, and upcoming workshop dates can be found on the Local Government Association website.

PropTech Innovation Fund Launches new Challenge

MHCLG launched the ProTech Innovation Fund in August 2021 to support the development and adoption of innovative technologies that drive efficiencies within built environment processes. The Digital Planning team at MHCLG are now working in collaboration with Geovation, an Ordnance Survey initiative, to launch a new [PropTech Innovation Challenge](#).

The Challenge aims to find new digital and scalable solutions to help accelerate the delivery of 1.5 million homes. It will focus on up to five priority problem statements, which are currently in development, and will provide up to 12 ProTech projects with a share of £1.2 million in funding.

Local government will play a key role in testing the solutions as they are developed. Please share this opportunity with your technology partners and colleagues and encourage them to register their interest [here](#). MHCLG will share further information about the successful pilots and opportunities for involvement in due course.

Learning from New Neighbourhoods in Cambridge

For more than 20 years Cambridge has been developing and delivering a strategic, spatial plan for growth that not only delivers large number of homes, but creates thriving, successful neighbourhoods where individuals, families and communities can flourish.

Land is used efficiently by deploying logical layouts and innovative housing types. Parks, green spaces, SuDs, community facilities and active travel systems have all been designed in and delivered from the start, and densities are significantly higher than those typically seen on greenfield sites.



Cambridge has unique land and housing values, but approaches that have worked there can be adapted and applied in other areas. With support from MHCLG and PAS, Urban Design Learning and Design for Homes have created a set of short videos that help to explain how and why these new neighbourhoods work so well.

Learning about the new Cambridge neighbourhoods will be particularly useful for those looking at allocating or developing proposals for grey belt sites. You can watch the videos here:

<https://www.urbandesignlearning.com/learning-from-cambridge>

Join the Regional Place Advocate Network

In December, MHCLG and the Planning Advisory Service announced plans to support placemaking best practice in LPAs through a new Regional Place Advocate programme. Since then, nine regional LPA Place Advocate Networks have been established across England, with LPA urban designers and planners acting as 'Place Advocates' in their region. Advocates are local authority urban designers, architects, and planners with an active interest in design and placemaking. The aim is for all local and combined authorities in each region to be engaged in their region's network – so far, more than 170 LPAs have signed up. The aim of the networks is to:

- Engage with local planning authorities across the country
- Support the implementation of good design practice
- Offer peer-to-peer learning, sharing evidence and insights into what communities value
- Advise on how MHCLG and PAS can best support local authorities

LPAs can register their interest to be part of their regional network via a [short survey](#). The survey gives LPAs the opportunity to share information on the design work being undertaken in their authority and skills they have available. The network meetings will be free to attend. You do not need to be a design officer to attend: networking meetings are open to all officers involved in creating new places. See below for a list of upcoming regional meetings.



- West Midlands – 4 June 14:00 (online)
- East Midlands - 16 June 10:00 (online)
- North West – 2 July 14:00 (online)
- South East – 24 June 09:30 (online)
- Yorkshire & Humber – 26 June 13:00 (in person - Bradford)
- London – 26 June 16:00 (online)
- North East – 26 June (in person – location and time TBC)
- East of England – 3 July 10:00 (in person – location TBC)
- South West – 11 July 10:00 (online)

Historic England: Training Opportunities for LPAs

Historic England provides a range of training for heritage teams, including self-guided e-learning and webinars. This month, Historic England ran two webinars on heat pumps—click the links below to watch the recordings.

- [Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings: Addressing Myths and Misconceptions](#)
- [Heat Pumps and the Path to Decarbonisation](#)

Find more courses [here](#) and sign up for the Historic England training mailing list [here](#).