

What we and Civic Voice are saying in response:

These are our principle conclusions:

1. We welcome the opportunity for earlier and more meaningful engagement, but not at the expense of reducing the right for communities to make representations at a later stage.
2. Best in class engagement means allowing sufficient time and providing adequate resources to facilitate a meaningful role for the community to engage.
3. Let's develop the digital but not to replace the physical.

What is Proposed

1. A new role for Local Plans.

There is a focus on Local Plans in the new system, but plans will have a new simplified role in identifying land for development and protection and setting clear parameters about what development can take place in those areas. Plans will be required to identify three types of land only:

- **Growth areas** will be suitable for 'substantial development' and will receive automatic outline planning permission on adoption of the Local Plan. This could include new settlements, urban extensions, urban regeneration sites.
- **Renewal areas** will be suitable for 'development' and there will be a statutory presumption in favour of development for the uses specified in the plan. This would cover existing built up areas and rural areas that are not allocated as Growth or Protected areas, where smaller scale development is appropriate.
- **Protected areas** will be sites and areas that due to their environmental/cultural characteristics justify more stringent development controls e.g. Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Conservation Areas, Local Wildlife Sites, areas of significant flood risk and important areas of green space.

2. Plans are to be stripped back to essential elements consisting of a web-based interactive map, key and accompanying text which specifies suitable development uses and parameters e.g. height, scale, density limits. Design codes and guides should be produced alongside the Local Plan to guide the form and appearance of development. The existing 'tests of soundness' for Local Plans will be scrapped and replaced with a single 'sustainability test'.

3. Government Imposed top-down housing figures. A new standard method for calculating housing figures for each Local Authority is proposed which would ensure enough land is released where affordability is worst but also factoring in land constraints e.g. Green Belt, flood risk etc. The new method would distribute the national housebuilding target of 300,000 new homes annually and housing figures would be binding on Local Authorities removing any lengthy debates over the numbers at Local Plan examinations.

Given the proposed new Government set housing figures, the current 'Duty to Cooperate' test for local authorities would be abolished. An interim measure for amending the current method of calculating housing figures.

4. High quality design and a 'fast track for beauty' A National Model Design Code and revised Manual for Streets are due to be published later this year. These will build on the current National Design Guide, turning the broad principles of successful places into more specific standards.

5. Section 106 and CIL to be replaced by a national 'Infrastructure Levy' The existing system of developer contributions is to end. Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be replaced with a nationally-set 'Infrastructure Levy' charged on the final development value. The levy will be paid at the point of occupation, leaving councils to pay for and deliver any infrastructure needed up front. Councils will be allowed to borrow against future levy receipts to fund this. It also proposed to extend the Infrastructure Levy to capture some permitted development rights

6. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The White Paper acknowledges that the statutory protections of listed building consent and conservation area status have worked well. Despite this, it proposes to 'review and update the planning framework for listed buildings and conservation areas to ensure their significance is conserved while allowing, where appropriate, sympathetic changes to support their continued use and address climate change'. Little detail on the new framework is provided but the focus appears to be on making it quicker and easier to adapt historic buildings for new uses and ensure they have the right energy efficiency measures to support the Government's zero carbon objectives. The Government will explore whether there are 'new and better ways of securing consent for routine works' with the potential for 'suitably experienced architectural specialists to have earned autonomy' from routine consents.

John Walker