



NEWS

South West planning news, March 2018

01 Mar 2018

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Headline news

£141 million from Housing Infrastructure Fund secured for the South West

The projects receiving support as part of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) have been announced, with £141 million secured for the South West; this represents 16% of the total funding. The funding is intended to support the delivery of new housing, by unlocking new infrastructure projects and improving the viability of potential schemes.

Projects receiving funding in the South West include: £12.5 million for Bath's Riverside area, to release the potential for 3,500 new homes; £8.5 million to help deliver Ilfracombe's Southern Extension and Barnstaple's Westacott Urban Extension in North Devon, helping to unlock 1,700 new homes; and £9.6 million for housing delivery in the Southmead and Lockleaze areas of Bristol.

The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area received over £62 million in funding, the third highest allocation to any LEP area. This will support 11 projects across Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay.

[HM Government, £866 million investment to help unlock potential 200,000 new homes](#)

[Bath and North East Somerset, Council welcomes £12.5million Housing Infrastructure Fund award](#)

[North Devon Council, Massive £8.5 million funding boost for housing projects in North Devon](#)

[Bristol City Council, Bristol receives £9.6 million infrastructure investment boost to support housing delivery](#)

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Quote of the month



This fund finances vital infrastructure such as roads, schools and bridges, which will kick-start housing development in some of Britain's highest-demand areas. This support will help us meet our ambitious plan of building 300,000 new homes each year and ensure we have enough housing in areas which need it most.

Chancellor Philip Hammond, announcing the first round of Housing Infrastructure Fund investment on 1 February 2018

Bristol Local Plan Review consultation opens

Consultation on the Local Plan Review for Bristol opened on 19 February and will run until 13 April 2018.

The new Local Plan, when adopted, will cover the period until 2036; it will provide detailed policies in line with the West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) and its requirement of 33,500 new and affordable homes to be delivered in Bristol by 2036.

The City Council intends to conduct an additional informal consultation in October to December 2018, before submitting a publication document for formal Regulation 19 consultation in March 2019. It is currently intended that the Plan will then be submitted for examination in September next year.

[Bristol City Council, Local Plan review](#)

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South Gloucestershire Local Plan consultation opens

A consultation on the South Gloucestershire Local Plan opened on 5 February and will run until 30 April 2018.

As for Bristol, this Plan will focus on local housing and employment allocations, providing detailed policies in line with the West of England JSP.

The publication Plan is intended to undergo consultation in October of this year, with submission for examination in December.

[South Gloucestershire Council, Local Plan Consultation Document](#)

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Gloucestershire councils consider 'super-city' connecting Cheltenham and Gloucester

The Gloucestershire 2050 project proposes the connection of the county's two main urban centres with a new 'super-city', aiming to increase the population of the centres to that of a top-10 UK city.

The 'ideas' project is being run by Leadership Gloucestershire and the University of Gloucestershire, to devise innovative solutions to improve the long-term future of the county. The proposal is one of six 'big ideas' put forward and open to ongoing consultation.

The project has also suggested the creation of new regional parks connecting the three urban areas, a new cyber-employment park, and a new airport supporting tourism in the Cotswolds.

The project is being supported by the county's councils and the LEP.

In other Gloucestershire news, the LEP has also publicised that it has awarded almost £10 million of Growth Deal funding to four Gloucestershire projects.

[Gloucester 2050, Super City](#)

[gfirst LEP, Breaking News: Growth Deal funding](#)

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New CIL charging schedule in place for North Somerset

North Somerset Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule came into effect at the end of January, having been approved last summer.

The CIL charge applies primarily to retail and residential developments and the rates vary according to the size, location and type of development. There is a £0 CIL rate for commercial (Class B) uses, and on many other non-residential uses or retail uses.

[North Somerset Council, CIL Charging Schedule](#)

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West of England LEP confirms project investments of £3 million

The West of England LEP Joint Committee has confirmed the investment of £3.175 million into three projects: an improvement to pedestrian links and the public realm in Weston-Super-Mare; £1.6 million for six sections of new bus lane and traffic signal junctions between Bristol city centre and Cribbs Causeway; and £50,000 to support a business plan for the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone.

[West of England LEP, Over £3m investment discussed at Joint Committee](#)

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The South West: ONS house prices and private housing rental indices

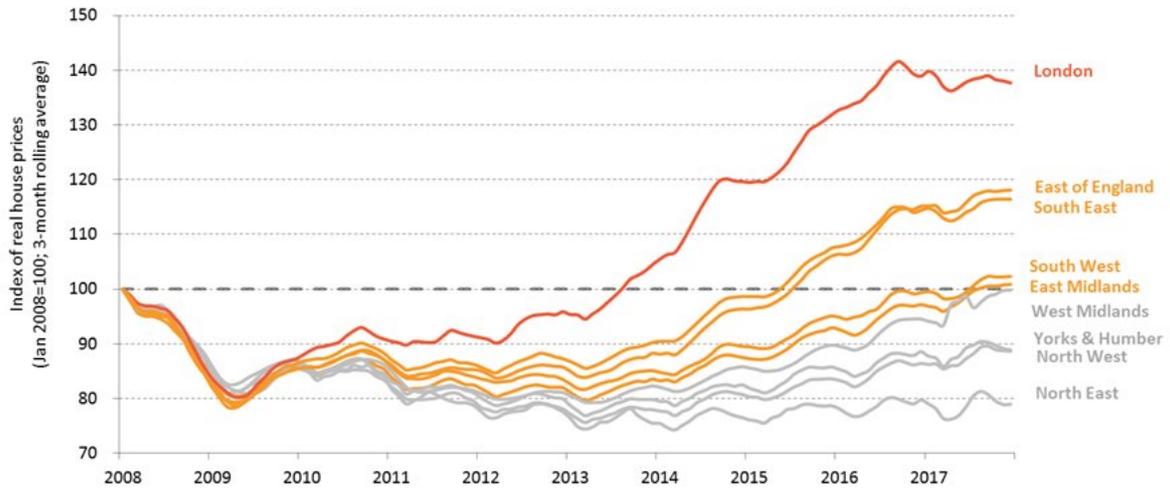
The latest data from the ONS shows that real house prices are now above their pre-crash peak in the South West (and in London, the South East, the East and the East Midlands). The data also shows that private rent levels are increasing faster in England outside London (+1.7% since last year) than in London (+0.2%).

[Lichfields on house prices on Twitter](#)

[Lichfields on housing rental prices on Twitter](#)

Crossing the line

When did real house prices surpass the pre-crash peak?



Source: ONS, Lichfields analysis

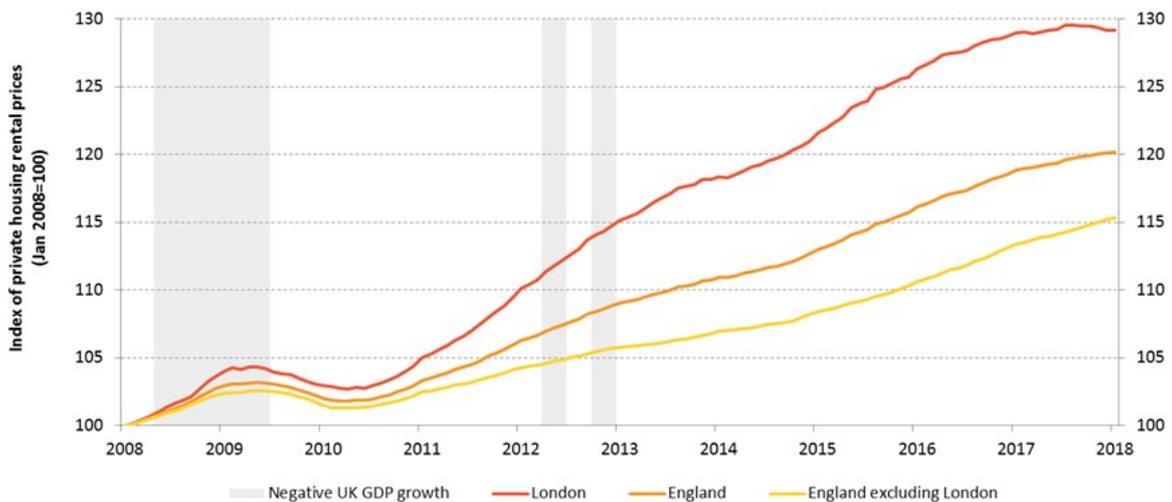
House price data for December 2017 highlights the range of housing markets England has.

Over the year to December, house prices in England have grown by 5.0%, slower than the previous month (5.3%). The South West saw the fastest annual growth (7.5%), followed by the East Midlands and West Midlands (6.3%). London (2.5%) has the slowest annual growth of all regions in England.

The range of markets is best shown when we compare real house prices (prices after accounting for inflation) to the pre-crash peak of 2008. Real house prices have surpassed the pre-crash peak in five regions: London (passing in 2013) is now 38% higher in real terms; East of England and South East (both passing in 2015) are 18% and 16% higher, respectively; and the South West and East Midlands (both passing in 2017) have both just crept over the line.

Private Housing Rental Prices

Private rents increased in 12 months to January 2018



Note: the chart only shows the rate of private rental housing price growth since 2008. It does not reflect the difference in absolute rent levels.

Source: ONS, Lichfields analysis

The latest release of the Index of Private Housing Rental Price from the ONS shows that private rents in London were 29.2% higher in January 2018 than in January 2008, a 0.2% increase from 12 months earlier. Over the same 12-month period the East Midlands, the South West and the East of England experienced the fastest increase in private rent levels across Great Britain (+2.6%, +2.1% and +1.9% respectively).

Rent levels in England (excluding London) are now 15.4% higher than in January 2008.

For the first time since records began in 2006, England's (excluding London) private rent levels (+1.7%) have been rising faster than London's (+0.2%) for 15 consecutive 12-month period releases.

PPG updates - local plans and more

Several paragraphs of the national Planning Practice Guidance have been revised and other new ones have been added.

The updates and new paragraphs primarily reflect changes to legislation and provide points of clarification regarding: permitted development; local and neighbourhood plan-making and modification procedures; CIL reliefs; and planning application fees. They also cover: short term lets outside London; pre-application advice services, fee structures and outputs; application fee categories; when planning permission is required for listed buildings; and enforcement (with reference to procedures and deliberate concealment).

There is also updated guidance on building works associated with change of use from agricultural to residential, and whether or not planning permission is required for certain farm works.

The new CIL guidance is for the most part about self-build and residential extension exemptions.

Local plans' guidance has been revised to reflect Regulation 22(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 being revoked by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 on 15 January 2018. The changes relate to local planning authorities no longer as a matter of law having to submit local plans and accompanying documents both electronically and in paper form but the guidance does acknowledge:

'On an individual basis it may be necessary for local planning authorities to provide the Planning Inspectorate or Inspector both electronic and paper copies of some key documents on request.'

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: I2-021-20180201

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PM chairs inaugural meeting of Housing Implementation Taskforce

On 5 February, Prime Minister Theresa May chaired the inaugural meeting of the Housing Implementation Taskforce.

The Taskforce were reported as having discussed:

'... the steps Government has already taken, including further investment at the Budget, planning reform, releasing land faster, the Housing White Paper and building more affordable housing. They emphasised the key role of Homes England in driving forward change, and also focused on the supply of new housing, public sector land sales, land banking, house-building skills and building the infrastructure needed for new housing developments.'

Prime Minister's Office, No. 10 PM chairs inaugural meeting of the Housing Implementation Taskforce

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MPs debate housing, planning and the Green Belt

On 6 February, during a debate in the House of Commons on housing, planning and the Green Belt, Housing and Planning Minister Dominic Raab implied that the Government is to look at clarifying national planning policy on Green Belt and housing. He commented when concluding the debate:

‘The determination to build ever more houses has led to some councils being persuaded that they need to build on the Green Belt in order to meet what is assumed to be their assessed housing need. That points to a confusion and contradiction in Green Belt policy. The Government’s planning guidance states that the Green Belt should not be developed other than in ‘exceptional circumstances’, yet it fails to describe what constitutes ‘exceptional circumstances’. The housing White Paper goes on to say:

‘Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances when local authorities can demonstrate that they have fully examined all other reasonable options for meeting their identified housing requirements.’

However, crucially for the point I am making, planning guidance also says:

‘Unmet housing need...is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the ‘very special circumstances’ justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.’

Planning guidance is going around in circles, because in effect it says that the Green Belt should not be built on unless nowhere else can be found to build the houses, but that unmet housing need is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt in importance.’

Also in concluding the debate, Minister for Housing Dominic Raab responded to various points about regional variations in demand and affordability made earlier by MPs. He stated:

‘There is a broader point here about home building and the overriding need to carry local communities with us, whether rural, suburban or urban communities. That is why last week the Government announced the first wave of money being allocated from the homes infrastructure fund. Last week alone, we targeted £866 million of investment, or 133 local housing projects, from London to Manchester, Cornwall to County Durham, to unlock building capacity for up to 200,000 new homes. We recognise we need more homes, but we also know that communities worry about new developments [...]: what will it mean for congestion on the roads, and what will it mean for pressures on schools and local NHS services? There is certainly a link with pressures from immigration. Once we have left the EU, we will have greater scope and control over that to get the balance right.’

House of Commons, Housing, Planning and the Green Belt debate, 6 February 2018

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The Lichfields perspective



The Housing Infrastructure Fund will help to support Bristol and the Joint Spatial Plan area, in meeting emerging housing targets up to 2036. However, the relatively small amount of funding directed at the city is unlikely to make a significant contribution to affordability and delivery rates. Ambitious thinking, such as that demonstrated by the Gloucestershire 2050 project, is more what's needed to help solve the housing crisis.

Jenny Mitter, Associate Director

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