

Housing planning news



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Headline news

Party Conference round-up on planning

With the conference season now over - and both Houses returning on 9 October - it is easy to summarise how the planning focus of the three main parties continues to be on how they would go about providing more new homes, if remaining/ when in power.

Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn set out what the Party would do, when it moves from being 'in the political mainstream' and 'on the threshold of power' to being elected. A Labour Government would use its proposed £250bn National Transformation Fund to coordinate and provide infrastructure and homes. The 'use it or lose it' principle would be introduced on undeveloped land held by developers. Alongside benefitting (and protecting the interests of) existing residents in estate regeneration projects, a review of social housing would be undertaken.

In response and for the Conservatives, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid and the Prime Minister could not have been clearer in accepting that the Party's 'failure on housing' was putting Jeremy Corbyn within reach of Downing Street. Theresa May added how the Government has listened and learned from the election result - recognising the need to do more on housing. Her key announcement was on how councils and housing associations would be encouraged

to bid for £2bn additional investment in affordable housing that would allow homes to be built for social rent where 'need is greatest'. She also intends to dedicate her premiership to fixing the problem of people not getting onto the

housing ladder, including 'reigniting' home ownership.

The tone of the Housing White Paper could also be detected in Mrs May's speech; she said how the Government would ensure that land is available for homes and in return, housebuilders must 'build the homes our country needs'.

The Communities Secretary spoke less of planning and home ownership, and more of measures that are to be brought forward for the private rented sector, mainly to protect tenants. He made only passing reference to progress that has been made on boosting housing supply (higher numbers of completions and residential planning permissions) and how the Government has been 'getting on with major reform' (via the Housing White Paper, the consultation on a local housing need standard methodology and the proposed Social Housing Green Paper).

Lastly, Sir Vince Cable said that the Liberal Democrats would double the annual housing supply, councils would be allowed to build affordable homes, and new garden cities and villages would 'spring up' where housing demand exceeds supply.

For a limited period only: light industrial to residential changes of use are permitted development

Between 1 October this year and 30 September 2020, planning permission does not have to be applied for to change the use of light industrial premises (Use Class B1(c)) to residential - a prior approval determination is still however required and the temporary permitted development right (PDR) is subject to a long list of limitations and a series of conditions that have to be met. Whilst the PDR is temporary, the planning permission would not be.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) ►►

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



The Housing White Paper contains proposals to improve the quality and character of new development. We want to strengthen the NPPF to introduce an expectation that local and neighbourhood plans in development plan documents should set out clear design expectations. That will provide greater certainty for applicants about what types of designs are acceptable in a local area.

Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma speaking on the quality of design in new homes during a Westminster Hall debate on 5 September

THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

Councils determining applications as to whether prior approval is required to change light industrial premises to new homes may often conclude that the industrial use of the building itself should be retained - and that any new homes will have an unacceptable adverse impact on the sustainability of industrial and warehousing left in the building, or in its vicinity.

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(Amendment) Order 2016 making this temporary change came into force on 6 April last year, giving local planning authorities (LPAs) well over a year to make any Article 4 directions to prevent such changes of use being permitted development in their areas.

New planning approach to speed up delivering homes

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has launched a consultation on the details of a new methodology to calculate local housing need, which would (on current figures) lead to an overall housing target of 266,000 homes per year in England.

The new suggested approach in 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' was first referred to earlier this year in the Housing White Paper, 'Fixing our broken housing market'. The aim is that it will help give a realistic picture of how many homes each local area needs now and in future years.

The consultation document also covers other Housing White Paper measures, including the latest on the expected 20% increase in planning fees (the necessary amendment regulations are to be brought forward 'at the earliest opportunity'). DCLG is also seeking views on the potential further 20% fee increase. The consultation mentions the fact that a draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be published in 'early 2018', with the aim being to finalise it by the end of March, next year.

Lichfields has produced an 'Insight Focus' on the consultation; it provides a summary and commentary on the consultation document.

The consultation will close on 9 November 2017.

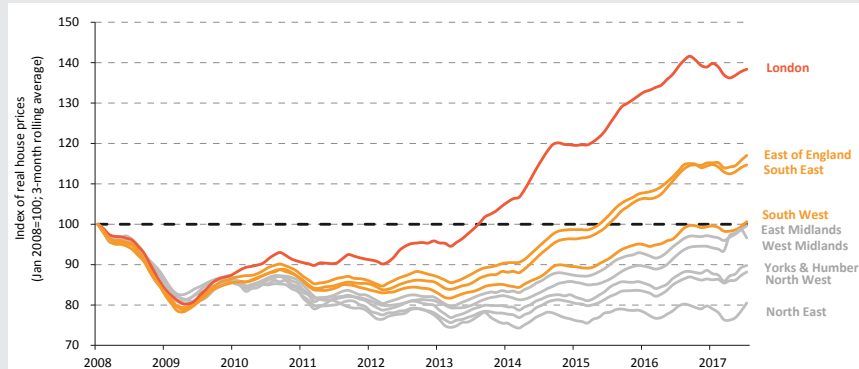
Referring to the new consultation in a Parliamentary written answer (given in advance and on 12 September), on when the written response to the Housing White Paper consultation will be published, Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma said:

'We are analysing responses to our consultation on the Housing White Paper and hope to publish our response shortly.

We will consult soon on a new standardised approach to assessing local housing need. We recognise

that this consultation will need to be read alongside our other White Paper proposals and do not expect to publish our response to the Housing White Paper consultation until the completion of this further consultation.'

Figure 1 : When did real house prices surpass the pre-crash peak?



Source: ONS, Lichfields analysis

Crossing the line

Real house prices are now above their pre-crash peak in London, the South East, the East and the South West of England (see graph above).

Twitter

Improving the design of housing

The importance the Government places on housing design quality was emphasised by the Housing and Planning Minister at two events in September.

During a Westminster Hall debate on 5 September, Alok Sharma said the following, on the quality of design in new homes:

'We want to strengthen the National Planning Policy Framework to introduce an expectation that local and neighbourhood plans in development plan documents should set out clear design expectations. [...]

We also want to use national planning policy to strengthen the importance of early, pre-application discussions, as a means to encourage more valued discussion of the design of new homes between communities, developers and local authorities.'

Tony Lloyd MP asked the Minister whether the review of space standards (committed to in the Housing White Paper) will reduce the standards, rather than enforce them. Alok Sharma replied:

'...we are not talking about a race to the bottom. We want new development to be well designed, but that does not mean that current space standards are sacrosanct.'

The Housing and Planning Minister also commented on design quality at the RESI conference in Wales. Having said that the Government and the industry need to build more homes, and faster, he added that (amongst other things) 'we' need to:

'[...] improve the quality and design of those homes. We need to change the public mind set towards new development. [...] And, we need to encourage innovation and choice, and make sure that the skilled workforce that we need is in place to build homes at the rate that we want.' ■