

Housing planning news



NOVEMBER 2017

Headline news

Prime Minister's discussion with stakeholders on how to increase housing supply

On 17 October, Prime Minister Theresa May met with a variety of stakeholders in the house building industry, together with representatives of local government, to discuss 'achieving a step change in the delivery of new homes'.

Described afterwards by No.10 as 'a positive and collaborative meeting', the Prime Minister took the same approach as the Housing White Paper – one of explaining the Government's policy line and its range of actions intended to boost supply, and in return, the expectation of housebuilders playing their part and turning these proposals into reality.

Recent Government measures that were discussed included the additional funding for Help to Buy and the further £2 billion for affordable housing, both announced at the time of the Conservative Party Conference and reported in full in last month's Lichfields' Housing News.

20% application fee rise and new fees for PDR prior approvals

After some delay and as referred to in the February 2017 Housing White Paper, draft amendment regulations providing for a 20% increase in planning application fees in England have been laid before Parliament.

The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations

2017 will come into force once approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament; the actual date will be 'on the 28th day after the day on which they are made'. The new rules are expected to be in force before the end of the year.

The amendment Regulations will introduce:

- a fee for applications for permission in principle (£402 for each 0.1 hectare of site area) – the necessary secondary legislation for being able to make such applications has not yet been laid/ made;
- Mayoral development corporations and urban development corporations being able to charge for giving pre-application advice;
- a planning application fee where there is an article 4 direction in force, withdrawing permitted development rights (PDRs) or where PDRs have been withdrawn by a planning permission condition; and
- a fee of £96 for prior approval processes for various PDRs that have been in force since April.

The Housing White Paper (para. 2.15) outlined that this nationally set planning fee increase would be only for those local authorities that committed to investing the additional fee income in their planning departments. DCLG's Simon Gallagher wrote to council chief executives to this effect in February this year, requiring also 'that existing baseline and income assumptions' would 'not be adjusted down as a result during this Parliament'. According to a recently published Government response to a House of Commons DCLG Committee report (on the house building industry's capacity), 'all 366 local planning authorities (LPAs) have agreed to ring fence the additional income' (see page 11 of the Response).

Design and quality of new homes

A House of Commons' adjournment debate on house building on 16 October included ►►

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



What I want to do is make sure that we're using everything that we have available to us to deal with this housing crisis. Where that means, for example, that we can sensibly borrow more to invest in the infrastructure that leads to more housing, take advantage of some of the record low interest rates that we have, I think we should be absolutely considering that.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid, speaking on 22 October 2017

THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

Some may say better late than never, but it is right that the Prime Minister is finally taking up the mantle of leading on how Government is addressing the housing crisis. Importantly, she acknowledges that the solution is multifaceted, with no one stakeholder able to boost the supply of new homes significantly. It's also helpful that there is now an acceptance that borrowing will have to fund the infrastructure necessary to support the scale of house building Government has committed to.

James Fennell, Chief Executive

CONTACT US

Margaret Baddeley
margaret.baddeley@lichfields.uk
T: 020 7837 4477

Jennie Baker
jennie.baker@lichfields.uk
T: 020 7837 4477

Giorgio Wetzl
giorgio.wetzl@lichfields.uk
T: 020 7837 4477

LICHFIELDS

Disclaimer

This publication has been written in general terms and cannot be relied on to cover specific situations. We recommend that you obtain professional advice before acting or refraining from acting on any of the contents of this publication. Lichfields accepts no duty of care or liability for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of any material in this publication. Lichfields is the trading name of Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Limited. Registered in England, no.2778116. Registered office: 14 Regent's Wharf, All Saints Street, London N1 9RL © Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Ltd 2017. All rights reserved.

a comment by Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma that 'just building more new homes is not good enough'.

He concluded the debate with the oft-repeated central Government message:

'[...] we need to improve the design quality of new build homes. The Government recognise that good design is an integral part of ensuring that we are building homes that people want to live in. We have put in place a robust framework that promotes and supports high-quality design. We want to create places, buildings and spaces that work well for everyone.'

Lords debates availability and affordability of housing

On 12 October, the House of Lords debated the impact of Government policies on the availability and affordability of housing.

The debate was proposed by Lord Smith of Leigh (Labour), chairman of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

In his concluding comments, Lord Young of Cookham spoke for the Government, stating:

'We want to see a new generation of council house building and housing association homes. The extra funding and rent certainty we have just announced will further support councils and housing associations in areas of acute affordability pressure, where working families are struggling with the costs of rent and some are at risk of homelessness. We will be looking to the sector to show that it can make the best possible use of its resources and make a substantial contribution to building the homes that all noble Lords want to see built.'

Lord Young also said that he would write subsequently to some of the Lords present; they had raised 'many very valid points'. He ended the debate with the following (also oft-repeated) statement:

'We have so much to do. Successive Governments have failed to provide the homes we need. Progress has been made, but it is not enough. This Government are determined to work with every local authority, organisation and business with a role to play to ensure that we build more of the good-quality homes this country needs, and help more people to achieve their dream of home ownership and help more people into good-quality

rented accommodation at a price they can afford. We are committed to deliver on our promise of 1 million homes by 2020 and a further half a million by 2022, and the action that I have set out in this debate shows how we propose to achieve it.'

Communities Secretary declines to intervene prior to local plan adoption

In a letter dated 2 October, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid declined a backbench Tory MP's request to issue Maidstone Borough Council with a holding direction preventing adoption of its local plan.

In a separate statement issued the next day, the Council said that Javid had confirmed to them too that the local plan would not be issued with a holding direction.

It is of note that in his letter, the Communities Secretary tells the local MP:

'Wherever possible I want to allow local councils to take these important decisions without interference from central Government. Maidstone Borough Council have produced the plan and I believe it is important that they now take the final decision as to whether to adopt the plan or not. It is also right that the Planning Inspector should be responsible for the independent examination of local plans and for considering the representations made on these matters which were covered during the examination.'

I am determined to ensure we support local authorities in bringing forward plan-led development rather than allowing the speculative development which causes communities such concern.'

England's ageing population

The House of Commons CLG Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into housing for older people in England.

The first evidence session was held on 23 October, looking at issues including 'the housing options for older people, older people's housing preferences, and 'downsizing' or 'rightsizing' and the impact of this on the wider housing market'. ■