

New government, new planning world: What's on the horizon for planning?



The new Chancellor Rachel Reeves has delivered her first speech and it seems clear that the new government has planning reform firmly in its sights. So, what should you be looking out for in the next few weeks and months?

NPPF consultation

The government are proposing another consultation on the NPPF by the end of July and this will include bringing back mandatory housing targets. More details will follow once the consultation has been published so this is definitely something to keep an eye out for.

Stalled housing taskforce

A new taskforce is being created to look at housing sites which the government thinks are stalling with their focus initially on sites in Liverpool Central Docks, Worcester Parkway, Northstowe and Langley Sutton Coldfield. It isn't clear what will happen after the new taskforce has dealt with these areas but it does seem certain that the government wants to tackle what it calls "...stalled housing sites in our country...". We haven't been given a timeframe for when this taskforce will be able to report on its progress so we will have to wait and see how successful this new taskforce will be and whether their solutions can then be replicated across the country.



Additional planning officers

Perhaps one way to deal with “stalled housing sites” is the government’s commitment to “support local authorities with 300 additional planning officers across the country” . No details were provided on how and when these officers would be provided and with 337 local planning authorities in England, it isn’t clear whether this number of planning officers will have any real immediate impact but it is an important start.

Planning applications and appeals

It seems that the new Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner is prepared to be more involved in the planning process by calling in planning applications and appeals “...where the potential gain for the regional and national economies warrant it” – indeed the Chancellor explained in her speech that the Deputy Prime Minister has already called in 2 planning appeals for data centres in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. The Deputy Prime Minister will also be writing to local planning authorities requesting that they prioritise brownfield and “greybelt” land to meet housing targets as well as reviewing the greenbelt boundaries. This is something which the Labour Party campaigned for during the elections and it is notable that it appears a lot of the constituencies in the south east of England with green belt land did not elect a Labour MP. The greenbelt has always been a bit of “hot potato” topic so any reform to the greenbelt boundaries will not be without controversy. It will be interesting to watch how many and which types of applications and appeals the Deputy Prime Minister calls in going forward and whether this involvement has the desired affect to achieve the government’s aims of “a new growth-focused approach to the planning system...” .

Planning rules on energy infrastructure and other critical infrastructure

The government will also be looking at the planning rules on energy infrastructure and other critical infrastructure across the country. They intend in the coming months to set out their new policies for critical infrastructure before they update relevant National Policy Statements (these updates are expected to happen within the year). They also want to include onshore wind farms in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime and the Secretaries of State for Transport and Energy Security and Net Zero are going to be asked “...to prioritise decisions on infrastructure projects that have been sitting unresolved for far too long” . Onshore wind farms is a tricky subject with many people concerned about the impact that such farms have on the local areas they are proposed to be built in. Taking the decision-making to a national level may side step some of these local concerns meaning we could see more onshore wind farms in the future.

Altogether, it looks like it will be an interesting few months in the planning world (who ever said planning was dull!).



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