

# **Local Government Association response to the DCLG consultation ‘Planning for the right homes in the right places’**

9 November 2017

## **About the Local Government Association (LGA)**

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party organisation which works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

The LGA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this [consultation](#).

## **Response to specific questions in the consultation**

### **Question 1:**

**a) do you agree with the proposed standard approach to assessing local housing need? If not, what alternative approach or other factors should be considered?**

Councils recognise the value that standardised assessment models can bring in reducing uncertainty and increasing data transparency. Whilst we have welcomed the principle of a standardised, simplified methodology for calculating the housing need of local areas, we have stressed that any model needs to be responsive to local housing need and allow councils to reflect the complexities of different housing markets. We are concerned that the proposed model in its current form does not effectively do this.

Ultimately assessing housing need is more of an art than science. As the data table accompanying the consultation shows, and the consultation itself recognises, the single national formula produces a wide divergence of housing need, compared to existing assessment across the country. It also does not take into account a number of other factors including: ambitions for growth; the complexities driving housing need; resident earnings and local constraints for example, environmental or infrastructure capacity (existing and new requirements). There are also inherent limitations in projecting household formulations from previous growth, which is often a result of previous delivery rather than future ambition.

So, whilst the model might provide a helpful baseline for many authorities, and we recognise that there will be a degree of flexibility to alter the baseline in order to take into account growth ambitions and constraints, our view is that it is too simplistic to recognise the nuances of the different ways in which people live and

work in different areas across the country.

As an example, the standard method calculation of the affordability of an area relates to the use of work-place based earning rather than resident earnings. In some areas, work-place earnings could be higher than resident earnings because of a high in and out commuting flow, for example if a local authority is a net importer of higher paid workers who are resident in neighbouring authorities. However, local residents might be less well paid on average, and may still struggle to afford to access appropriate housing. Using the proposed methodology based on work-placed earnings would in this case distort the actual need.

Therefore many places face a new housing need number that is dramatically above their currently planned need, and may often seem undeliverable. Conversely other places with new numbers that are lower than were being planned for locally will have to contend with disrupted local partnerships that could put at risk plans for economic growth and renewal.

On that basis, **we consider that the proposed model should be optional to use for local planning authorities where it is considered to be appropriate for the housing market area that they operate within**. There should also be a clear option for local planning authorities to use their own clear and justified methodology, regardless of whether that results in a local housing need above or below that given by any proposed national approach that is introduced.

### **b) how can information on local housing need be made more transparent?**

We would encourage local authorities to publish on their websites the methodology that has been used to determine local housing need.

### **Question 2: Do you agree with the proposal that an assessment of local housing need should be able to be relied upon for a period of two years from the date a plan is submitted?**

The need to ‘fix’ a locally agreed housing figure is welcome. However, we consider that the assessment of local housing need should be able to be relied upon from the date a draft submission Local Plan is published for consultation (Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012), until a specified period after the adoption of the approved Local Plan. It is suggested that this should be a minimum of 3 years.

This is because the time between publication of the draft submission and submission for Examination by the Planning Inspectorate is an unknown, as it is in part dependent on the level of objections received on the draft submission. In addition, the time from submission to Examination to subsequent adoption by a local planning authority also has no certainty. Given that the house price to earnings ratio are published annually in March and the household projections are published every two years in July, there is a risk that new data could be published between publication and during examination. This could lead to further challenge and delays through the publication stage having to be repeated, or changes having to be agreed through the examination process, which may also require additional consultation. Amending the proposal as we suggest would minimise the risk of this occurring.

### **Question 3**

**Do you agree that we should amend national planning policy so that a sound plan should identify local housing need using a clear and justified**

## **method?**

The LGA would support this approach which should allow for local planning authorities to use their own clear and justified methodology, regardless of whether that results in a local housing need above or below that given by any proposed national approach that is introduced.

## **Question 4**

**Do you agree with our approach in circumstances when plan makers deviate from the proposed method, including the level of scrutiny we expect from Planning Inspectors?**

No. All Local Plans should be subject to the same level of scrutiny to ensure a fair, transparent and level-playing field for all local planning authorities.

## **Question 5:**

**a) do you agree that the Secretary of State should have discretion to defer the period for using the baseline for some local planning authorities? If so, how best could this be achieved, what minimum requirements should be in place before the Secretary of State may exercise this discretion, and for how long should such deferral be permitted?**

The LGA does not support the principle of using a baseline at all.

The consultation restates the housing White Paper proposal, that in the absence of an up-to-date local or strategic plan, that after 31 March 2018, the new method for calculating the local housing need would apply as baseline for assessing five year housing land supply.

The implication of this is that local planning authorities without an up-to-date local plan or spatial development strategy cannot factor land constraints into the baseline. This undermines the premise of local planning and risks the wrong type of development coming forward in the wrong places, without due consideration of infrastructure requirements.

**b) do you consider that authorities that have an adopted joint local plan, or which are covered by an adopted spatial development strategy, should be able to assess their five year land supply and/or be measured for the purposes of the Housing Delivery Test, across the area as a whole?**

The LGA supports the proposal to allow this option but this should not be a requirement. This should be agreed locally and be at the discretion of the individual Local Planning Authorities.

**c) do you consider that authorities that are not able to use the new method for calculating local housing need should be able to use an existing or an emerging local plan figure for housing need for the purposes of calculating five year land supply and to be measured for the purposes of the Housing Delivery Test?**

Yes, this should be at the discretion of the relevant local planning authority.

**Question 6: do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements for introducing the standard approach for calculating local housing need?**

The LGA welcomes the government's recognition that transitional arrangements will be essential if a new standard approach for calculating housing need is introduced. However, there should be appropriate transition arrangements in

place taking into account every local authorities' individual circumstances, given that all councils are at different stages of plan preparation or plan review. Putting in place a Local Plan takes considerable time and resources. There is a risk that by introducing transitional cut off points which don't take into account these individual circumstances, that some councils may have to put on hold, or abort, work currently underway, which would waste considerable time and money.

Any transitional arrangements should also reflect the time that will be needed for local planning authorities to ensure that their local housing need number is an accurate representation of the local housing market in their area.

Furthermore, local planning authorities will also need to be given sufficient notice and lead-in time for any new transitional arrangements are going to be introduced. This should be at least 12 months.

### **Statement of Common Ground**

#### **Question 7**

- a) Do you agree with the proposed administrative arrangements for preparing the statement of common ground?**
- b) How do you consider a statement of common ground should be implemented in areas where there is a Mayor with strategic plan-making powers?**
- c) Do you consider there to be a role for directly elected Mayors without strategic plan-making powers, in the production of a statement of common ground?**

The LGA supports the principle of preparing a Statement of Common Ground. However, it is concerned about the potential complexity of the process, which will simply add another administrative burden on local authorities, without fundamentally addressing some of the challenges of strategic planning across boundaries.

As the consultation itself recognises, many local planning authorities across England are co-operating effectively to plan for the strategic needs of the wider area. Rather than the introduction of a mandatory Statement of Common Ground that applies universally, consideration should be given to further good practice guidance of how councils can demonstrate the efforts it has made to cooperate and any outcomes achieved. As an example, many councils put in place a Memorandum of Understanding<sup>1</sup>, which set out a framework for joint working between local authorities on strategic planning - this provides evidence to show that the Duty to Cooperate has been met.

In those instances where strategic planning across boundaries breaks down we have advocated that political and technical support and peer challenge is put in place to unblock barriers and work with authorities to negotiate a way forward. This work is most appropriately led by the local government sector. Sector led support should always be the default first response. As is the case in other service areas, in rare cases of failure across a service(s) the government retains a backstop power to intervene.

In our response to the Local Plans Expert Group<sup>2</sup> we also supported a two-stage local plan process. This would mean that local authorities would first work together on the strategic elements of their plans – this would include housing numbers, strategic infrastructure, major urban extensions or new settlements. This would

---

<sup>1</sup> [Example of Memorandum of Understanding](#)

<sup>2</sup> [LGA submission to Local Plans Expert Group](#)

then be submitted for examination to the Planning Inspectorate and once found sound it could be accorded weight in decision-making at an earlier stage than the current process. This would provide earlier certainty and clarity to councils, communities and developers. The additional work on the detailed policies of a Local Plan could be approved after a lighter touch second stage.

This would work well as it would allow local authorities to ensure valuable work would not be lost if a plan was to be found unsound and reduce frontloading of evidence requirements. In addition, a local authority could have an option to not proceed to the second stage and adopt the strategic plan as its Local Plan, or only do more detailed policies for specific areas within a local authority, defined locally. There should also be the option for local planning authorities to receive additional advice from PINS at an earlier stage in the plan-making process, to ensure the plan was progressing in the right direction.

Local areas should maintain flexibility to establish a locally appropriate area to plan strategically. In areas where there are directly-elected Mayors, regardless of whether they have strategic plan-making powers or not, agreement should be reached amongst the individual local authorities working in partnership across the area on strategic planning issues.

#### **Question 8**

**Do you agree that the proposed content and timescales for publication of the statement of common ground are appropriate and will support more effective co-operation on strategic cross-boundary planning matters?**

As outlined in question 7 we do not consider that the proposals for Statement of Common Ground will address the main challenges around the Duty to Cooperate and risks introducing another administrative bureaucratic requirement on local planning authorities, adding additional pressure on reduced resources.

#### **Question 9**

**a) Do you agree with the proposal to amend the tests of soundness to include that:**

- i) plans should be prepared based on a strategy informed by agreements over the wider area; and,
- ii) plans should be based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities, which are evidenced in the statement of common ground?

**b) Do you agree to the proposed transitional arrangements for amending the tests of soundness to ensure effective co-operation?**

We consider that the test of soundness as already outlined in the NPPF (Paragraph 182) is sufficient and does not need to be amended.

#### **Planning for a mix of housing needs**

##### **Question 10:**

**a) do you have suggestions on how to streamline the process for identifying the housing need for individual groups and what evidence could be used to help plan to meet the needs of particular groups?**

There are clear advantages to planning for the needs of specific groups, such as people with learning difficulties, or older people, not least that population ageing will constitute an increasingly large element of future household growth. There is

a clear role for other public agencies to partner with local planning authorities and share relevant data to help support this process.

However local planning authorities are facing enormous resourcing challenges in an ever-changing policy landscape, and they have limited tools to ensure developers deliver a standard of housing – often needing additional space or specific design standards - that meets the needs of groups, or responds to different markets.

In particular, the government should review how the technical housing standards, specifically relating to accessibility and space are working in practice in enabling local authorities to meet the wider accessibility needs of their communities. The new approach, implemented in October 2015, rationalised a number of different standards, including those for accessibility and space into a new set of national technical standards. Standards for accessibility provide specifications for accessible homes in three categories. This ranges from a base line largely aligned with the previous Part M of the Building Regulations to a category designed to meet the needs of wheelchair users as occupants. Councils are restricted from applying any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new homes. This limits the ability of councils to meet local aspirations to improve the quality of new homes.

To apply the optional higher accessibility standards, and take these into account in decision-making on planning applications, councils need to have evidence of both the need for the higher standards in their area and prove that the imposition of those will not make delivery of development unviable. Now that the new accessibility and space standards have been in place for more than a year, the Government should review how the standards are working in practice in enabling local authorities to meet the wider accessibility needs of their communities.

**b) do you agree that the current definition of older people within the National Planning Policy Framework is still fit-for-purpose?**

The LGA considers the current definition of older people within the NPPF remains fit for purpose. It is very broad ranging and therefore reflects the fact that the needs of this group will be met in a variety of different ways. This gives sufficient flexibility for local planning authorities working with their partners, to decide on the most effective way to meet the needs of older people living in their local area.

**Neighbourhood Planning**

**Question 11:**

**a) should a local plan set out the housing need for designated neighbourhood planning areas and parished areas within the area?**

**b) do you agree with the proposal for a formula-based approach to apportion housing need to neighbourhood plan bodies in circumstances where the local plan cannot be relied on as a basis for calculating housing need?**

It should be up to Local Planning Authorities to decide, working with designated neighbourhood planning areas and parished areas, the housing need for those areas, based on the settlement strategy and housing allocations in the Local Plan.

The LGA does not support the proposal for a formula-based approach to apportion housing need based on the population of the neighbourhood planning area as a percentage of the overall population of the local planning authority area. This would

fail to take into account the specific local circumstance. This includes the ability of different parts of a local authority to accommodate new residential development and also has no regard for what may be the most appropriate distribution of housing within a local authority area.

### **Proposed approach to viability assessment**

#### **Question 12**

**Do you agree that local plans should identify the infrastructure and affordable housing needed, how these will be funded and the contributions developers will be expected to make?**

The National Planning Policy Framework introduced a requirement to assess the viability of the delivery of the Local Plan and the impact on development of policies contained within it. Viability testing is therefore an important part of the Local Plan making process.

Councils have repeatedly raised concerns that the plan-led system is being undermined by the use of viability arguments from developers to avoid the need to meet local plan policy requirements including the provision of affordable housing and providing infrastructure contributions. The government should work with local government to establish a clear, robust and transparent viability procedure that helps to manage down the escalation of land values and ensure the delivery of affordable housing and infrastructure that communities need to back development.

In particular, the publication of viability appraisals would help to improve public understanding and attitudes towards development, and provide reassurance that new developments have wider public benefits to their local area.

Local Plan Viability Assessments are designed to demonstrate that the Plan can be delivered at a strategic level and will be set at a particular point in time. A typical site in the local authority area should be able to bear whatever infrastructure or affordable housing contribution requirement is set, and the local planning authority should be able to show, with a reasonable degree of confidence that the Local Plan is deliverable. This does not however mean that every site that comes forward for development in a local authority area should be able to deliver whatever planning policy requirements are set in the Local Plan.

In the case of major capital investment requirements, the ability to implement the necessary infrastructure to get development off the ground might be beyond the scope of the local authority and a developer. The role of other agencies and utility companies should also be factored into the ability to deliver infrastructure.

A large number of councils already undertake infrastructure studies and produce infrastructure delivery plans (IDPs) to identify the infrastructure requirements including social, physical and green infrastructure. These for example, set out what is needed, where it is needed and when it is needed. This provides a crucial piece of evidence to support the Local Plan process. For example, Croydon Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan<sup>3</sup> is updated on an annual basis. Each infrastructure type is accompanied by a delivery schedule providing further detail on delivery, funding sources, costs and identifies any funding gaps.

Furthermore, councils also already undertake housing needs assessments as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan process, which includes quantifying the type and level of affordable housing needs across a local planning authority area.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Croydon Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan](#)

The government should also work with local authorities to test and develop models for forward funding infrastructure by capturing greater proportions of land values resulting from granting planning permission. Our LGA Housing Commission report<sup>4</sup> explores how this could be achieved in further detail.

#### **Question 13**

**In reviewing guidance on testing plans and policies for viability, what amendments could be made to improve current practice?**

For the avoidance of doubt, the government should consider how it could make a firmer statement that in all cases land or site value should reflect local policy and planning obligation requirements. This means that overpaying for land will not be taken into account in testing plans and policies for viability. This could, for example, include a requirement for a developer to demonstrate that it has taken into account a local planning authority's Local Plan policies (for example affordable housing requirements), when bidding for and purchasing a site.

#### **Question 14**

**Do you agree that where policy requirements have been tested for their viability, the issue should not usually need to be tested again at the planning application stage?**

We support the principle of the government setting out an expectation at a national level that viability should not usually need to be tested again for individual planning applications.

However, in many councils areas across the country there will always exist specific sites which are not viable when taking all policy requirements into account. Similarly some sites will be able to provide considerably more than the policy requirements. This is because as outlined in question 12, Local Plan Viability Assessments are designed to demonstrate that the Plan can be delivered at a strategic level, will be set at a particular point in time and deal with generic sites and standardised assumptions.

As an example if policy requirements were set at a level whereby every site in an area were viable – including making a significant allowance for the most challenging of sites, this would require a very conservative approach to be taken. Policies based on this level of viability would result in many sites contributing far less to affordable housing and infrastructure than they would actually be capable of. This would result in a reduced public benefit, increasing the burden on the public purse, and ultimately local taxpayers. The converse would also apply where if viability assessments were designed to maximise the potential contribution from sites, this would result in a higher number of sites being unviable, resulting in higher numbers of requests to be exempted from the local plan policy requirements.

Therefore, local planning authorities need to retain flexibility to undertake viability negotiations with developers at the planning application stage where there are exceptional reasons for doing so.

In cases where an applicant has exceptional reasons to argue the particular circumstances which relate to their site, they should have to demonstrate why the Local Plan viability assessment should not take priority.

The delivery of policy requirements and infrastructure should be seen as a cost by applicants, not a negotiable extra, in appraisals alongside all the other costs which

---

<sup>4</sup> [LGA Housing Commission report](#)

a developer needs to consider in taking forward a site for development. Build costs, fees, financing and land costs are all negotiable and there should be no reason why the costs of policy requirements should be seen as the easiest option for negotiating down. No allowance should be made for developers paying more for land than the standard existing use value plus a modest uplift, and where they have, this should absolutely not be at the expense of local plan policy requirements or quality of new homes.

It would also be helpful for the government to make clear that in cases where there are exceptional circumstances where policy requirements cannot be met - for example contributions to affordable housing - that developers will ordinarily, where required by a local planning authority, be subject to review mechanisms, for example within Section 106 agreements. This will enable a re-assessment of viability during development to determine whether additional affordable housing and other planning obligations can be provided or 'clawed-back' as a development is built out. This will enable local authorities to derive maximum public benefit from new developments in their area.

These changes, potentially introduced through guidance could help to minimise the frequency that viability challenges occur at planning application stage.

#### **Question 15**

**How can Government ensure that infrastructure providers, including housing associations, are engaged throughout the process, including in circumstances where a viability assessment may be required?**

A key priority for councils in developing a Local Plan is ensuring that local infrastructure and services can cope with the growth ambitions outlined within it. This means taking into account the capacity and quality of existing infrastructure and the new infrastructure that may be needed to support new development. The range of infrastructure needed to support communities and enable local communities to thrive is vast and includes (but is not limited) to: transportation, education facilities, utilities, community facilities, health care, emergency services, green spaces and communication systems.

However, infrastructure planning and funding is often complex with various agencies responsible for the provision and operation of infrastructure. For example: Highways England are responsible for motorways and major A roads; Network Rail own and operate the rail network; utility companies are responsible for public energy, water and telecommunication supplies and the NHS are responsible for health services including hospitals and GP surgeries.

Councils already seek to work with the relevant infrastructure providers through the Local Plan process and when assessing individual applications. However, there is no duty for all infrastructure providers to engage with the Local Plan process. Local planning authorities, and other public bodies (as prescribed in the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)), are subject to the duty to cooperate, in order to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. However, the majority of infrastructure providers are not.

The government should consider whether a duty to cooperate for all relevant infrastructure providers, would support local planning authority councillors and officers in their responsibilities for leading discussion, negotiation and action to ensure effective planning for strategic infrastructure matters in Local Plans.

### **Question 16**

**What factors should we take into account in updating guidance to encourage viability assessments to be simpler, quicker and more transparent, for example through a standardised report or summary format?**

The LGA welcomes the intention to explore opportunities to increase the transparency of the process of determining the viability of a proposed development. Greater transparency of information is essential to improve public understanding and attitudes towards development.

There is a concern from across and outside the local government sector that the current system for assessing the viability of a site for development is weighted in favour of the applicant, leading to high land prices being paid at the expense of infrastructure, affordable housing and design quality. This creates uncertainty for all parties, and can undermine public confidence in the planning system.

We would urge the government to explicitly state that all information submitted as part of, and in support of a viability assessment process, should be made public. It would be helpful if information could be presented in a format that could easily be understood by all those who have an interest in new development, including local planning authorities.

### **Question 17**

- a) do you agree that local planning authorities should set out in plans how they will monitor and report on planning agreements to help ensure that communities can easily understand what infrastructure and affordable housing has been secured and delivered through developer contributions?**
- b) what factors should we take into account in preparing guidance on a standard approach to monitoring and reporting planning obligations?**
- c) how can local planning authorities and applicants work together to better publicise infrastructure and affordable housing secured through new development once development has commenced, or at other stages of the process?**

Rather than setting out in plans how local planning authorities will monitor and report on planning agreements, this information could be included in the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) that local planning authorities produce. However, this would place yet another obligation on local planning authorities, and so it should be left to the discretion of local planning authorities to publish the relevant data in their AMR.

There are many different routes including social media, direct mailings, display boardings on development sites or local press releases, that local planning authorities and applicants could use to publicise infrastructure and affordable housing secured through new development. The most effective mechanism(s) is best decided locally. Local and central government could work together to share existing best practice.

### **Planning fees**

#### **Question 18**

- a) Do you agree that a further 20 per cent fee increase should be applied to those local planning authorities who are delivering the homes their communities need? What should be the criteria to measure this?**
- b) Do you think there are more appropriate circumstances when a local planning authority should be able to charge the further 20 per cent? If so, do you have views on how these circumstances could work in practice?**

**c) Should any additional fee increase be applied nationally once all local planning authorities meet the required criteria, or only to individual authorities who meet them?**

The LGA has long argued that local planning authority resourcing is a huge issue, impacting on the ability to deliver the tasks being expected of the planning system. Given the strong focus in the Housing White Paper on further changes to the planning system in efforts to increase supply, it is more crucial than ever that measures to fund local planning authorities sustainably and support capacity building are put in place.

LGA analysis earlier this year, showed that taxpayers are subsidising the cost of processing planning applications at a rate of around £200 million a year, and will reach £1 billion by 2022<sup>5</sup>.

As outlined in the LGA's Autumn 2017 budget submission<sup>6</sup>, the government should rapidly progress the commitment in the Housing White Paper to allow councils to increase planning fees by 20 per cent. It is positive that the draft regulations to allow this change have now been laid in Parliament, and these should be debated as a priority and implemented as soon as possible.

In specific answer to the consultation question above, a further 20 per cent increase should be allowed *universally* for all local planning authorities, and not be dependent on meeting nationally set performance criteria which risk creating perverse incentives and unintended consequences. Alongside this, government should test a fair and transparent scheme of local fee setting, giving councils flexibility to set appropriate fees to reflect local circumstances.

In addition, a proactive well-resourced planning system could do far more in pursuing new opportunities to deliver *additional* homes, and to deliver them in ways that meet wider – health, environment, transport, growth, employment - objectives.

**d) Are there any other issues we should consider in developing a framework for this additional fee increase?**

There is evidence that suggests that the recruitment and retention of trained planning officers is a challenge in local planning authorities. The LGA's Local Government Workforce Survey 2015/16<sup>7</sup> (published March 2017) showed:

- In district councils planning officers posts suffer the most recruitment difficulties (55 per cent of respondents)
- In single and upper tier councils planning officers came in the top four posts in terms of recruitment difficulties (36 per cent of respondents)
- In terms of retention difficulties in district councils, planning officers came top (31 per cent) and in single and upper tier councils, planning officers came in the top four posts (23 per cent of respondents)

To address some of these issues DCLG should work with councils, national and local partners to attract and retain the next generation of planners and place-makers. A collective effort would increase the capacity of planning services to deliver housing growth. Planning is an exciting and meaningful profession with a range of career development opportunities that should be better promoted to young people. Assistance in raising the profile of local authority planners as a desirable career and promoting the opportunities that exist for driving forward best

---

<sup>5</sup> [LGA press release August 2017](#)

<sup>6</sup> [LGA budget submission Autumn 2017](#)

<sup>7</sup> [LGA Local Government Workforce Survey 2015/16](#)

practice and innovation, could bring significant benefits in addressing recruitment and retention issues. Initiatives could include capturing and building on the learning from approaches adopted by TeachFirst<sup>[1]</sup> or FrontLine<sup>[2]</sup>, or the Come back to social work<sup>[3]</sup> programme run jointly by the LGA, Department of Health and Department for Education.

### **Other issues**

#### **Question 19**

**Having regard to the measures we have already identified in the housing White Paper, are there any other actions that could increase build out rates?**

It is essential that local planning authorities have genuine tools to engage and incentivise developers to build out sites where communities have agreed to development. It is also important that central government help to foster positive relationships between developers and councils, and promote the continuing importance of working in partnership. This is an important part of the jigsaw in delivering a joint ambition for more of the right types of homes in the right places

Councils also need flexibility and powers to source capital funding for new homes, free from external restriction, so that they can invest in housing to meet local need.

Land assembly is also crucial to unlocking new housing growth and local planning authorities can play a leading role in enabling this using their own land, with other public agencies, and with private landowners.

To support local government to deliver new homes we call on the government to:

- Enable faster land assembly through streamlined compulsory purchase orders (CPOs), or granting powers similar to those available to housing corporations
- Give councils powers to resolve issues around rights of way and third party rights which can cause major delays to development. This could include a streamlined process to speed up development, for example through a change to appropriation rights, giving councils temporary powers to act for other landowners, rather than having to acquire a site through compulsory purchase powers. Alternatively, local planning authorities should be given streamlined CPO powers to reasonably require owners of land, which are key to unlocking strategic major development sites, to sell the land or allow access across it
- Encourage the use of “build now, pay later” models of deferred receipts for land payments would also help to speed up development and allow a more flexible approach to funding infrastructure.
- Give councils enhanced compulsory purchase powers to acquire land that is not being built out at an agreed rate, or where planning permission has been expired. This would act as an incentive to developers to build out sites more quickly.
- Re-establish self-financing from 2020 (recent announcements on rent policy post 2020 are a step in the right direction), lifting the borrowing cap, and providing a sustainable long term financial framework for councils to invest in new homes, of all tenures, through Housing Revenue Accounts and other ventures.
- Devolve housing and infrastructure funds to enable councils to join up investments that more effectively target unmet demand, and at a minimum

---

[1] [TeachFirst](#)

[2] [Frontline](#)

[3] [Come back to social work](#)

- allowing all councils or any combination of councils to access all elements of the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- Give councils financial tools to ensure that sites with planning permission get built within a reasonable time frame, such as charging developers council tax on unbuilt homes after a set period.
- Commit to no further increases in the new homes bonus (NHB) threshold for any council. The potential for future unexpected increases in the threshold is a concern for councils and potentially removes NHB payments from more councils. A commitment to no further increases for any council would provide much-needed certainty. In the longer term, the overall level of resourcing for council investment in housing and infrastructure, including the new homes bonus, should be reviewed to ensure an appropriate balance of funding and incentive in all areas.
- Explore options for redefining affordable housing as that costing 30 per cent of household income or less and building a new wave of different affordable housing options linked to this new definition.