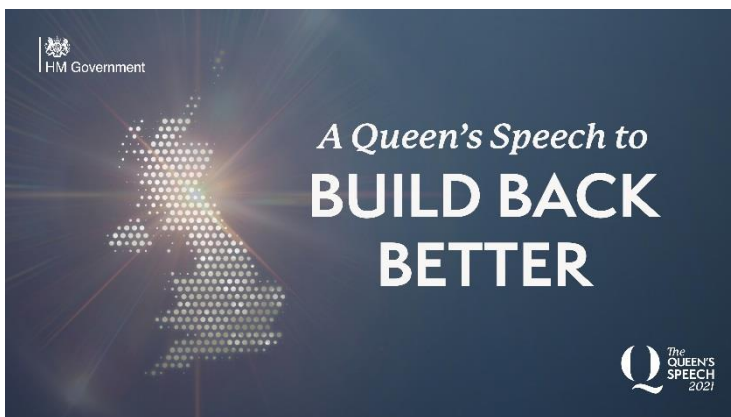


Planning Update

May 2021

Queen's Speech May 2021

The State Opening of Parliament took place on 11 May 2021, with the Queen's Speech outlining many different proposed policies and legislation for the new parliamentary session. After much speculation following the Planning for the Future White Paper published in August 2020, the Queen's Speech referred to new planning laws to 'help more people to own their own home'.



HM Government, 2021



Planning Reform Bill

The Queen's Speech confirmed that a Planning Reform Bill will be being brought forward to 'create a simpler, faster and more modern planning system'. The published background briefing note confirms that this will include:

- Digitalising the system to a map-based service to allow more meaningful engagement from local people
- Quicker, simpler frameworks for funding infrastructure and assessing environmental impacts and opportunities
- More certainty for communities and developers about what is permitted where
- Stronger rules on design
- Simpler, faster procedures for producing local plans, approving major schemes, assessing environmental impacts and negotiating affordable housing and infrastructure contributions
- Establishing a framework which focuses on positive outcomes
- Replacing s106 and CIL with a 'new more predictable and more transparent levy'
- Reform for locally led development corporations to ensure access to appropriate delivery vehicles for local areas to support growth and regeneration

From the information published it appears that many of the ideas in the White Paper are being taken forward, including:

- Zoning-based system
- Transformation of Local Plans to digital maps
- The Infrastructure Levy
- Reduction in time to determine major applications – anticipated to be reduced to 10 weeks
- Greater reliance on Design Codes
- Some automatic/quicker granting of planning permission where Design Codes and so on are complied with
- Potential shorter timeframes for Local Plan preparation to adoption

"Laws to modernise the planning system so that more homes can be built will be brought forward"
Queen's Speech 2021

However, there is still a lot of detail to be set out. For example, it has been widely speculated in the press that the zoning-based system will include designating areas for growth or protection, with the proposed regeneration category still being discussed, but there is no reference to these in documents published today.

The Bill is unlikely to be published until the Autumn, which is consistent with comments previously made by Joanne Averley, Chief Planner. Some speculation remains over whether the proposals can be worked up in sufficient detail to be published then given that the White Paper contained high level ideas and not much detail.



HM Government, 2021

Overall the Queen's Speech confirms that the Government is seeking to press ahead with significant planning reform. The Government again highlighted the lack of public engagement in the current planning system, the majority of Local Authorities lacking an up-to-date local plan, the lengthy local plan process, small number of current SMEs and the ambition to build 300,000 homes a year. It confirms that planning is seen as one of the problems, but we wait to see the detail as to how these matters will be resolved.

Environment Bill

The long awaited Environment Bill is still making its way through Parliament and was not completed during the previous Parliament session. As such, it was previously agreed to carry-over the Bill into the next session, as confirmed in the Queen's Speech. It is speculated that it will gain Royal Assent in the Autumn.

National Infrastructure Plan

Measures will be introduced to strengthen economic ties across the union, investing in and improving national infrastructure through a National Infrastructure Plan. This will include measures to transform connectivity around rail and bus and the previously announced UK Infrastructure Bank to provide financing support to public and private sector infrastructure projects.

Much of the discussion around the National Infrastructure Levy is about infrastructure being 'greener' and more environmentally friendly, being part of the measures in tackling climate change. The Government is also seeking to speed up the process of delivering infrastructure.

Other Bills

- Law to be established for a new Building Safety regulator
- Confirmed the previously announced 8 new Freeports and a National Insurance Contributions Bill to provide National Insurance contributions relief for employers in Freeports
- Proposals will be brought forward to invest in new green industries to create jobs whilst protecting the environment. UK committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050

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