

**process of local plans**, helping to speed up the process of implementing or amending a plan. The government will also bring forward proposals to improve cooperation between local authorities. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that local authorities should look to meet their housing need, as far as is possible within constraints. Where they cannot meet their need in full, they should cooperate with other local authorities to do so. **The government will strengthen guidance to improve the operation of the duty to cooperate on key housing and planning issues**, to ensure that housing and infrastructure needs are identified and planned for.

**9.12** Areas around commuter transport hubs offer significant potential for new homes. The government will work with mayors in London and across the country to use new powers in the Devolution Bill to use development corporations to deliver higher-density development in designated areas. **The government will consider how policy can support higher density housing around key commuter hubs. The government will also consider how national policy and guidance can ensure that unneeded commercial land can be released for housing.**

## **A zonal system for brownfield land**

**9.13** The government is committed to an urban planning revolution on brownfield sites, including funding to provide infrastructure, strong local leadership to shape development and assemble sites, and the removal of unnecessary planning obstacles.

**9.14** Previous studies have found that the country's planning system – where development proposals require individual planning permission and are subject to detailed and discretionary scrutiny – can create the sort of “slow, expensive and uncertain process” that reduces the appetite to build.<sup>10</sup> The government is clear on the need to promote use of brownfield land, and will remove all unnecessary obstacles to its re-development, including these sorts of planning obstacles.

**9.15** The government has already committed to legislating for statutory registers of brownfield land suitable for housing in England. The government will go further by **legislating to grant automatic permission in principle on brownfield sites identified on those registers**, subject to the approval of a limited number of technical details. On brownfield sites, this will give England a ‘zonal’ system, like those seen in many other countries, reducing unnecessary delay and uncertainty for brownfield development.

**9.16** In the spring, the government consulted on reforms to bring forward more brownfield land for development by making the compulsory purchase regime clearer, faster and fairer for all parties. This first round of reforms will be introduced through legislation in this session of Parliament. A number of additional proposals have been received from that consultation; the government is considering the case for these **additional compulsory purchase reforms to further modernise the system, and will bring forward proposals in the autumn**. These will allow local authorities and others to drive forward and shape brownfield development, and will not alter the principle of Secretary of State sign-off on compulsory purchase orders.

## **Improving the planning process - ensuring planning decisions are made on time**

**9.17** Evidence suggests that delays in processing planning applications may be a significant factor preventing housing supply from responding to upturns in the market.<sup>11</sup> Significant progress has been made, with the proportion of major applications dealt with on time rising

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<sup>10</sup> *Planning Delay and Responsiveness of English Housing Supply*, Michael Ball, 2011

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from 58% in 2012-13 to 77% in 2014-15.<sup>12</sup> The government wants to see further progress, with all planning decisions made on time. This is particularly important for SMEs. The government will therefore:

- **legislate to allow major infrastructure projects with an element of housing to apply through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Regime (NSIP)**
- **tighten the planning performance regime**, so that local authorities making 50% or fewer of decisions on time are at risk of designation
- **legislate to extend the performance regime to minor applications**, so that local authorities processing those applications too slowly are at risk of designation
- **introduce a fast-track certificate process** for establishing the principle of development for minor development proposals, **and significantly tighten the 'planning guarantee' for minor applications**
- **repeat its successful target from the previous Parliament to reduce net regulation on housebuilders**. The government does not intend to proceed with the zero carbon Allowable Solutions carbon offsetting scheme, or the proposed 2016 increase in on-site energy efficiency standards, but will keep energy efficiency standards under review, recognising that existing measures to increase energy efficiency of new buildings should be allowed time to become established
- **introduce a dispute resolution mechanism for section 106 agreements**, to speed up negotiations and allow housing starts to proceed more quickly

## More devolved planning powers

**9.18** Housing is a national priority, and the government will work with mayors and Combined Authorities to provide the tools they need.

**9.19** In London, the Mayor's 2020 Vision has set out the scale of the challenge, with at least 42,000 homes needed a year over the next 20 years. The government has already taken significant steps, including the Chancellor and Mayor jointly announcing £400 million investment to support 20 Housing Zones on brownfield sites. Housing starts in London have risen by 24% since 2012-13.<sup>13</sup>

**9.20** Building on this investment, the Chancellor set out in the Long Term Economic Plan for London that the government would enter into discussions for the devolution of major new planning powers to the Mayor of London, beginning with powers over wharves and sightlines, to be used in consultation with Londoners. The government confirms its intention to proceed with devolution of wharves and sightlines, and will also look to bring forward proposals **to allow the Mayor to call in planning applications of 50 homes or more**, allowing him to support more planning applications that will help to meet London's needs.

**9.21** As the Mayor's housing strategy set out, any increase in housing supply in London will be overwhelmingly brownfield development, and is likely to involve increasing densities.<sup>14</sup> Helping London to 'build up' in this way will reduce the need to 'build out', helping to provide homes for Londoners while protecting the countryside. Planning processes can create unnecessary burdens for proposals seeking to increase density on brownfield land. The government is keen to

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<sup>12</sup> *Planning applications received and decided by district planning authorities by speed of decision*, Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2015

<sup>13</sup> *Housebuilding: permanent dwellings started and completed, by tenure and LEP*, Department for Communities and Local Government, May 2015

<sup>14</sup> *Homes for London*, the London Housing Strategy