

Comments on the Prime Minister's 'Plan for Change' speech

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Commenting on the Prime Minister's 'Plan for Change' speech, [Ben Standing](#), Partner specialising in planning and environmental law at UK and Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson, said:

"It's reassuring to hear the Prime Minister double down on his commitment to building 1.5 million homes and developing homegrown clean energy so that 95% of the grid is green by 2030 – but to achieve these ambitious targets, his government must be equally bold in how we get there.

"A razor-sharp focus on the planning system is needed in particular given that the number of units being approved has dropped to a 10-year low, and we eagerly await the results of the consultation into proposed reform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

"Tweaks to the planning system can not only help to deliver much-needed new housing, but also the clean energy infrastructure that's necessary to reaching net zero. Having a decisive weighting in the NPPF towards climate mitigation – such as new wind farms, solar farms, small modular reactors and even the pylons that will carry electricity to populations – ahead of other planning considerations, such as green belt and landscape impacts, will speed up planning approvals.

"However, any changes must be complemented by a dedicated drive to adequately resource planning authorities. Their inability to call upon this resource is bringing the planning system to a gridlock and prevents councils from regularly updating local plans, which is why only a third have a plan that is under five years old.

"Long-term local plans provide certainty to communities and investors over the future roadmap in each area. If these are created after proper consultation with local people, there's a greater chance of bringing communities on board with new housing developments rather than a feeling being fostered that projects have been imposed against local will.

"This is a vital consideration given that in a recent [Net Zero and Local Democracy](#) report published by the Local Government Information Unit and Browne Jacobson, we found that the risk of successful challenge to new environmental measures is greater if local residents feel they haven't been listened to, and the same is true with housing.

"As a country, we need to acknowledge that communities hosting this infrastructure, whether it's new housing developments or renewable energy projects, do suffer a detriment. This should be addressed by working with communities to identify how they can benefit from these projects, such as offering cheaper electricity, investment opportunities or other measures that are designed to help mitigate disruptions to their lives."

Key contact

Ben Standing

Partner

ben.standing@brownejacobson.com

+44 0330 045 2400

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