

Comments on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill

11 March 2025

Commenting on the government's introduction of the [Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#) to Parliament today (11 March), [Ben Standing](#), Partner in planning and environment at UK and Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson, said: "Putting the planning system front and centre of its economic growth mission is a wise call by the government, which is taking a refreshingly bold and speedy approach to clearing the road for future developments.

"But Westminster should be aware that none of these changes will offer a quick fix and reorganising the system at large isn't going to solve the issues it wants to tackle on their own given there are other structural challenges.

"The new requirements for spatial development strategies within the Planning and Infrastructure Bill should help facilitate a joined-up approach across multiple local authorities to identify the most sustainable places to build, while considering associated infrastructure needs.

"However, consideration must be given to how strategic planning accommodates fair and proportionate housing delivery for each area in correlation with national targets determined under the National Planning Policy Framework.

"At the moment, the discourse is around which areas carry the 'burden' of new housing but this points to a broader reputational challenge for development, which is in desperate need of a makeover to be regarded more positively by the public.

"To turn this perception around, there must be a concerted effort by central and local government, in partnership with the construction industry, to meaningfully engage communities hosting new public infrastructure – whether this is housing developments, renewable energy schemes or transport projects – and identify how local people can benefit.

"It's heartening to see the government has come up with a proactive solution for electricity transmission infrastructure by promising to cut £250 a year from energy bills, but it must also consider how communities can be compensated for disruption caused by new housing.

"In our report with the think tank New Local, '[Constructing Consensus: The case for community-powered development and regeneration](#)', we called for the establishment of citizen assemblies to ensure developments respond to community priorities, such as lack of GP and school capacity, inadequate roads and railways, or underinvestment in leisure facilities.

"Creating a more positive picture of development could also help to tackle another key challenge that planning reform alone won't address, which is the acute skills gaps in construction. While a more efficient planning system will help to grease the wheels for developers, the cost of new housing will not come down without an influx of new talent in bricklaying, carpentry and emerging technologies such as heat pump installation.

"If we don't also address a national shortage of planning officers, local authorities will continue to be bottlenecks for planning applications.

"Therefore, the government must follow up this Bill with a strategy to engage communities, develop relevant skills and ultimately improve the public perception of development so it's regarded as a force for good rather than as a nuisance to people's lives."

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