



Report to Planning Committee 7 August 2025

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Planning Reform Update
Purpose of Report	To update Members of the Planning Committee on the latest planning reform consultations
Recommendations	That Members of Planning Committee note the planning reform consultation responses.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members were updated at the 3 July Planning Committee on key planning reform consultations, including speeding up build-out rates, site size thresholds changes, a national scheme of delegation for planning committees and amendments to how biodiversity net gain might be considered in small sites. These consultations have also been reported to Planning Policy Board.

2.0 Response to government on Planning Committee reforms

- 2.1 The Planning Committee discussions on reforms were constructive and useful. Officers have considered Member comments prior to making our response to government.
- 2.2 We have acknowledged the principle of having a two-tier structure for a national scheme of delegation but still think there should be scope for a gateway process for a portion of Tier A scenarios which are important to our local communities. In rural areas like ours, even small-scale housing developments can have a significant impact. We recognise that any gateway arrangements would require clear rules.
- 2.3 We have also suggested that reserved matters applications would benefit from being in Tier B. Even though the principle will have been approved via the outline permission, scale, layout and appearance can be equally contentious to local communities.
- 2.4 In terms of the gateway test between planning chair and chief planner, we accept that this process could work. There is a lack of detail in the working paper on how this would

work, however. How, for example, would ward members be able to raise call-in requests? We believe that it is important to ensure that local community views on contentious proposals have a mechanism for call-in. In addition, even with the Nolan principles of public life there is the potential for tension between lead officers and lead politicians. We have emphasised, therefore, that the cultural environment of the organisation will be important moving forward. There may also be a need with greater unitary geographies associated with Local Government Reform (LGR) to expand gateway decision-making beyond two lead individuals e.g. in a proposed unitary with a number of building block councils.

- 2.5 In terms of Committee size, we have stated that we do not agree that regulations should set a maximum of 11 members. There is a complexity of a) needing to achieve political balance and b) ensuring an appropriate spread of experience, backgrounds and ward representations which necessarily requires greater membership if the geography is significant and, in our case, rural. This issue is compounded by LGR who will be looking across a much wider geography. Sizes should be decided locally based on political balance. It is through matters of training that any poor decision making should be addressed.

3.0 Next steps

- 3.1 It is important to note the other actions the government has already signposted in the planning reform consultations, including:
- A new local plan system
 - National Decision Making Policies and a revised National Planning Policy Framework later this year
 - local planning authorities to set their own planning fees to cover costs of delivering a good planning applications service

4.0 Implications

- 4.1 In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations' officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

4.2 Legal Implications – LEG2526/6221

This report is for noting.

Background Papers and Published Documents

[Reform of planning committees: technical consultation - GOV.UK](#)

[Modernising Planning Committees National Survey 2025 | Local Government Association](#)

[Planning Reform Working Paper: Reforming Site Thresholds - GOV.UK](#)

[Planning Reform Working Paper: Speeding Up Build Out - GOV.UK](#)

[FINAL - 17/07/24 King's Speech 2024 background briefing final GOV.uk.docx](#)

[Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#)

[Biodiversity net gain for nationally significant infrastructure projects - GOV.UK](#)

[Biodiversity net gain for nationally significant infrastructure projects - Defra - Citizen Space](#)

[Improving the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain for minor, medium and brownfield development - Defra - Citizen Space](#)