

Optimis Insight - The Levelling-up Bill and Planning Reform - changes to 5-year supply requirement

The Government's Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill is the latest offering on reforming and streamlining the planning system, with aspects of the former Planning White Paper and its radical zoning policies quietly kicked into the long grass.

No less radical however are many planning streamlining proposals in the new Bill. Particularly so, the shift away from the primacy of local development plans for decision-making and a greater emphasis on National Planning Policy particularly where there is a conflict between the two. A shift of emphasis maybe, but yet another clear call for Local Planning Authorities to speed up their Local Plan reviews.

Aligned with this is the proposal to publish a suite of 'national development management policies' covering matters such as Green Belt and Heritage Protection which won't then be required to be covered in Local Plans, again seeking to streamline the production of up-to-date Local Plans.

Whilst Local Planning Authorities that do not have up to date Local Plans will find their areas subject to greater control by National Policy, the bonus for those that do have up to date plans will be an embargo to challenge them on their 5-year land supply for the first 5 years of the plan period. This proposal could see almost half of all English local authorities receive fewer speculative development applications, they might find their housing supply drop dramatically.

Whilst this move may incentivise more authorities to get plans in place, there is the suggestion that examining inspectors are likely to take a tougher line on the deliverability of proposed housing targets and site allocations. This might lead to pressure to over supply allocated sites to ensure that demand is met.

So much more technical detail is required to accompany this Bill and as ever, the devil will be in the detail. We will be watching its progress with interest.

Update - Increases to Planning Submission Fees

A paper published alongside the Government's recent Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill has confirmed planning fees in England are set to increase by more than a third for major schemes. Specifically, proposed increases will amount to an overall cost increase of 25% for minor applications and 35% for major applications.

The increase has been proposed with a mind to delivering an uplift in resources available within the planning system following concerns of significant pressure and strain on planning departments. The additional funding should improve capacity, enhance performance and provide the services required by applicants and the wider development industry to help meet the new homes targets.

Timescales for the introduction of the increase are yet to be confirmed, however, the application of the proposed approach will be subject to consultation.

Update – 5-year Housing Land Supply Positions

The Local Planning Authorities in the surrounding area that are unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) are summarised below.

LPA	Supply
St Albans City & District Council	2.2 (April 2021)
Buckinghamshire Council (Chiltern area)	2.7 (April 2022)
Buckinghamshire Council (South Bucks area)	3.2 (April 2022)
Dacorum Borough Council	3.2 (Dec 2021)
West Northamptonshire (South Northants area)	3.11 (April 2022)*
North Northamptonshire (Corby area)	5.0 (Sept 2021)

*By appeal

When a 5YHLS cannot be demonstrated, the tilted balance is engaged for the consideration of planning applications. This means that policies are considered out of date and permission should be granted, except where policies pertaining to protected land provide a clear reason for not doing so.

Update – Opportunities for Site Promotion

The below table identifies possible opportunities for the promotion of sites in the local area.

LPA	Notable Dates
Central Bedfordshire Council	Call for sites early 2023
Buckinghamshire Council	Call for sites ends 11 th September 2022
St Albans City & District Council	Draft Plan Nov 2022
North Northamptonshire	Options consultation Nov 2022
West Northamptonshire	Draft Plan Autumn 2022
Bedford Borough Council	Plan for Submission Consultation 15 th -29 th June 2022

Optimis will closely monitor Council websites for the publication of specific dates and keep clients informed. If you have any queries regarding the position of other local plans, please do not hesitate to contact us at enquiries@optimis-consulting.co.uk