

Speech: Sajid Javid's speech at the National Planning Policy Framework conference

Everyone remembers their childhood home.

Mine was the flat above the family shop.

With my parents – who had come to Britain from Pakistan with almost nothing – and my 4 brothers.

Nothing fancy, but an important rung on the ladder for our family.

I won't lie.

It was a struggle at times, with the 7 of us sharing 2 bedrooms.

And my mum and dad – like so many immigrants before and since – working all hours to make our money go further.

But it was nonetheless a stable, loving home that gave us all a great start..

...a start that's undoubtedly the reason that I'm standing here today.

And I never forget that.

We didn't have many luxuries, but I could count on having a safe, warm place to play – and fight! – with my brothers.

Do my homework. Enjoy family meals and fun times together.

I know how lucky I am.

And how, today, there are many families and other people who are not so fortunate.

Who are growing up without that strong foundation because, over the years, we've simply failed to build enough homes.

The result – soaring house prices and rents – has effectively locked a generation out of the housing market.

Which is why – as the Prime Minister has just said – this government is taking urgent action on all fronts to turn this situation around.

Work that is starting to pay off.

Since 2010, we have delivered more than a million homes.

And thanks to your efforts, we've seen 217,350 homes added to our housing

stock last year.

The highest level of net additions in all but one of the last 30 years.

We've also helped hundreds of thousands of people on to the housing ladder through Help to Buy.

We're cracking down on rogue landlords, abuse of leaseholds, taking steps to make renting fairer and tackle homelessness through earlier intervention.

We're working to encourage landlords to offer longer, family friendly tenancies.

We've launched a new, more assertive national housing agency, Homes England.

And we are putting billions into affordable housing and delivering essential infrastructure through the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

But there's still a long way to go to deliver 300,000 homes a year in England by the middle of the next decade.

Your role as planners and developers is absolutely vital in helping us get there.

I often say that local government is the frontline of our democracy.

If that's true, then you, as planners, are in many ways the frontline of our housing challenge.

Informing crucial decisions that give the go ahead for new homes.

Ensuring that these are supported by the right infrastructure.

Doing the best for your local areas and creating, quite simply, great places to live.

Places that will still be here in a hundred years' time as well-established and much-loved parts of the community.

So the part that you play in helping us turn the consultations we're launching today...

... on the [revised National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and the [reform of developer contributions](#)...

...into more homes and stronger communities could not be more important.

These measures implement the planning policy reforms in:

And set out a bold, comprehensive approach for building more homes, more quickly, in the places people want to live.

Homes that embody quality and good design.

That people are happy to live in – and happy to live next door to.

Knowing that there's the infrastructure to support them.

As we all know, this point about getting communities on board is vital if we're to deliver homes at the scale and pace that's needed.

So how are the proposed changes going to help us achieve this?

And what are they going to mean for you in practical terms?

I know that many of you have been keenly anticipating the answers to these questions.

And have wanted greater clarity and certainty, so that you can make a real difference in your communities.

And that's exactly what our reforms deliver.

A simpler, more robust system that sets much clearer expectations – for local authorities and developers alike...

...about meeting your commitments – unlocking land, fulfilling planning permissions and providing essential infrastructure.

And a system that, frankly, tolerates fewer excuses for failures to deliver.

Starting first with the revision of the National Planning Policy Framework...

This implements around 80 reforms announced last year.

There's still quite a lot in there that you'll recognize, with a continued emphasis on development that's sustainable and led locally.

But the changes it does propose are significant.

Offering councils flexibility to build more.

But also greater responsibility for really delivering for their communities.

Which means, firstly, working with your communities to get plans in place as quickly as possible...

...so that development is dictated by what local people want and not by speculative applications.

In many ways, these proposals will make this process of putting together a plan much easier.

For the first time, all local authorities will be expected to assess housing need using the same methodology...

...a big improvement on the current situation where different councils calculate housing need in different ways...

...with expensive, or time wasting consulting and opaque methodology.

I know that this issue – of how we establish what numbers of homes we need and where – has become muddled at times.

Ultimately, we must be guided by where people want to live.

And a standardized approach will help us do this – by establishing a level playing field and giving us a much clearer...

...more transparent understanding of where the need for housing is most acute.

Areas will also be able to agree a 5-year land supply position for a year...

...reducing the need for costly planning appeals involving speculative applications.

But perhaps one of the biggest shifts is a change in culture.

Towards outcomes achieved – the number of homes delivered– rather than on processes like planning permissions

And as it becomes easier to make plans more streamlined and strategic...

...this culture change will also encourage authorities to work together to meet their communities' needs.

I know that many of you will already be doing this – and you are to be commended for it.

It's now time for others to follow your example.

The standardised formula is a guide to planning the minimum number of homes that are needed.

But ambitious councils, who have clear and robust plans for growth, may want to plan for more.

Indeed, this kind of ambition is key to unlocking housing deals that support growth at a strategic level so that they're not just delivering new homes but creating communities.

And it's because we want to champion this ambition that we're going further.

Councils will have much more scope to make the most of existing land, thanks to extra reform beyond those previously consulted on.

These include an even stronger drive for increasing density -particularly in areas where housing need is high...

...and supporting authorities to build upwards.

But not, I must stress, at the expense of quality – with high design standards that communities are happy to embrace remaining a priority.

You only have to look at mews street developments such as The Echoes in Thurrock and Goldsmith Street in Norwich...

...or urban mansion blocks and traditional terraces to see that well-designed homes with high densities come in all shapes and sizes.

These reforms also include more flexibility to develop brownfield land in the Green Belt...

...to meet affordable housing need where there is no substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Now I know that even the mention of the words "Green Belt" may cause some concern in some quarters.

This is about building homes on sites that have been previously developed – not about, in any way, undermining the Green Belt.

Our green spaces are precious and deserve our protection.

Which is why for example the government is delivering on its manifesto commitment to give stronger protection to ancient woodland.

Safeguarding assets that cannot be replaced for generations to come.

And ensuring that planning policies promote net gains for biodiversity, including strengthening networks of habitats.

So there are unprecedented opportunities here – to not only improve the environment, but to deliver the homes we need.

With ambitious planners and local authorities leading the way.

And with developers also stepping up – to help close the gap between planning permissions granted and homes built.

Knowing what contributions they're expected to make towards affordable housing and essential infrastructure...

...and, vitally, knowing that local authorities can hold them to account.

Unfortunately, we all know of instances where developers make these promises and later claim they can't afford them.

This is totally unacceptable.

It cheats communities of much-needed housing and infrastructure and gives new development a bad name.

Which is why we're addressing this issue head on in our consultations, with proposals for reforms to the system.

These include a new approach to developer contributions – so that everyone is clear about what affordable housing and infrastructure will underpin new

development.

More standardised viability assessments and greater transparency.

Leaving developers in no doubt of what's expected to them

In no doubt that councils will hold them to their commitments.

And leaving communities in no doubt that that their needs will be met.

We will also be looking at what more we can do to support build out informed by Sir Oliver Letwin's independent review...

...into the gap between planning permissions granted and homes built – which is due to report by this year's Autumn Budget

And there's the potential, over the long term, for more, significant reform of developer contributions.

And there are also other areas in which we're ready to go further to take the delivery of housing up a gear.

Including a new permitted development right for building upwards to provide new homes.

Finding more effective ways of bringing agricultural land forward for housing.

And ensuring that swift and fair decisions are made at appeal.

That's why I will shortly announce an end-to end review of the planning inquiries process.

This review will have one objective: to determine what it would take to halve the time for an inquiry on housing supply to be determined...

...ensuring swift and fair decisions are made

So with a strong focus, throughout, we're leaving no stone unturned to meet everyone's housing needs.

Be that:

- implementing an exception site policy to help more people onto the housing ladder
- promoting Build to Rent
- giving older people a better choice of accommodation
- encouraging local policies for affordable homes catering for essential

workers, such as nurses and police

So with all these tools at your disposal, there's no time to lose in getting your plans in place and really delivering for your communities.

You'll have heard me express my frustration about some local planning authorities that are still lagging behind on this score.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: these plans are absolutely key to helping us build the right homes in the right places.

So it's vital that you get them in place quickly and keep them up to date to ensure that permissions turn into homes.

The alternative – speculative development and neighbourhoods that are poorly planned, lacking strong communities – is something that none of us want to see.

The truth is that, for too long, we've failed to plan for the future.

To really get to grips with the number of homes we need.

Whether we're building them in the places where people want to live.

Whether they're of the right type – and serving the families, young people, older generations...

And whether they're of the right quality and in keeping with the local area.

We need to think big about the kind of communities we want to live in, not just now, but for years to come.

That changes today with the reforms we're proposing to the NPPF and developer contributions.

Measures that raise the game in every regard to get Britain building as never before.

Starting this summer, when we'll begin implementing the new Framework.

Help us build a better system.

A system that ensures that everyone – councils, developers, local communities – knows where they stand.

Knows what's expected of them.

And knows what they need to do to deliver the great homes and the stronger communities that the people of this country need and deserve.

Thank you.

Press release: Law change could lead to a smarter generation of motorway users

Highways England is predicting a smarter generation of motorway road users following a law change allowing learner drivers about to take their driving test to get their first taste of motorway driving.

In the past learner drivers' first experience of driving at higher speeds had been limited to using dual carriageways and only when they had passed their driving test could they get their first experiences of driving on a motorway.

For some newly passed and inexperienced drivers this could prove to be a daunting and often frightening experience.

Now under a change to the law from June 2018, learners will be allowed to drive on motorways with an approved driving instructor (ADI) using a dual controlled car displaying L plates.

Highways England, the body responsible for Britain's motorways and strategic A roads, says this law change will help develop a smarter generation of motorway road users.

It will allow approved driving instructors (ADI) to teach learners about the specific set of skills associated with using the motorways safely in a practical situation.

Head of Road Safety at Highways England, Richard Leonard, said:

Safety is our number one priority and we welcome today's change which will help equip learner drivers to drive safely on motorways when they have passed their tests.

We look forward to supporting the motorway drivers of tomorrow as they develop these new driving skills and get invaluable practical knowledge and experience of using motorways.

The changes will allow learner drivers to:

- get broader driving experience before taking their driving test
- get training on how to join and leave the motorway, overtake and use lanes correctly
- practise driving at higher speeds
- put their theoretical knowledge into practice

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

By allowing learners to have lessons on motorways, we are modernising driver training and making sure learners get the skills and experience they need to drive on fast, busy roads.

The Department for Transport consulted on these changes in December 2016. They received wide support from learner drivers, the driver training industry and road safety organisations and the general public. These changes apply to England, Wales and Scotland only.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Heritage experts welcomed to Stonehenge World Heritage Site](#)

Highways England has today (5 March 2018) welcomed international heritage experts to show their updated plans to build a road tunnel near Stonehenge developed to minimise the impact on the World Heritage Site.

A delegation from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) are on a three-day fact-finding mission to see how the designs of the proposed 1.9-mile long road tunnel will bring together the World Heritage Site landscape currently split by the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down.

Derek Parody, Highways England Project Director, said:

As well as removing the traffic bottleneck at Stonehenge and addressing the rat-running issue through villages, our proposed scheme will remove the sight and sound of traffic from the iconic monument and reduce intrusion in the wider world heritage site.

We've been working closely with heritage groups to best develop the route to minimise the impact on Stonehenge and the surrounding landscape.

These groups have been key, along with environmental, archaeological and geophysical surveys, to our building our knowledge and understanding of this unique landscape and helped us develop the design of our preferred route.

Since the tunnel route plan was announced in September, Highways England has continued to work with heritage groups including the National Trust, Historic England, English Heritage, and experts in the field, including the Stonehenge Scientific Committee – a body of leading independent archaeologists – to ensure a new route is built sensitively to the World Heritage Site.

The route was carefully chosen to avoid monuments and barrow groups, and Highways England's modified plans also included moving the position of one of the entrances to the tunnel to avoid conflicting with the Winter Solstice alignment.

A public consultation is being held until 6 April and outlines for the first time initial designs for the tunnel.

It will show how the £1.6bn scheme will restore the tranquil environment and setting of the Stonehenge monument and surrounding landscape by removing the sight and sound of the busy road.

This major investment will support economic growth and tourism in an area where congestion and slow journeys have long had a negative impact on the region's economy.

The scheme is part of a £15 billion road investment programme. The Government is committed to upgrading all remaining single carriageway sections of the A303/A358 between the M3 and M5 to dual carriageway standard, starting with three schemes: the A303 at Stonehenge, the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester; and the A358 between the M5 Taunton and the Southfields Roundabout on the A303.

In the meantime, anyone wanting further information on the scheme and the current consultation can visit the [scheme website](#).

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News story: Slovakian Air Force Firefighters train in the UK

Six Slovakian Air Force firefighters have undergone training in the UK to learn vital skills needed to tackle major aircraft fires.

Held at the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre in Manston, Kent, the week-long course for one of our key NATO partners included learning incident command techniques and aircraft firefighting tactics.

A mixture of British military fire safety personnel and MOD civilian experts provided the training, which is needed because the UK and its NATO partners often land aircraft in Slovakia.

Staff Sergeant Michal Fusi, of the Slovakian Air Force firefighting service, said:

In Slovakia we don't have the these kind of facilities, so when the opportunity came up to come to the UK we took it. This is a big experience for us and a chance to improve our skills, it is very beneficial for us. We will be able to pass on the skills we have picked up here to our colleagues back home.

The training included classroom and live firefighting exercises which featured a variety of retired RAF aircraft donated to the facility including a Nimrod, Tornado, Harrier Jump Jet, Jaguar, Sea King and Lynx helicopters.

Six Slovakian Air Force firefighters have undergone training in the UK to learn vital skills needed to tackle major aircraft fires.

The training area also featured fire simulators such as a "fire wall" and one that is shaped like a large aircraft with seats inside, which can be used to mimic aircraft such as a C-17 Globemaster.

The Defence Fire Risk Management facility at Manston is used for training firefighters across all three services, with more than 3,000 people passing through its doors every year.

Area Manager Ken Cross, the brigade training manager at Manston, said:

We are delighted to have them here. With many British C-17 aircraft landing in Slovakia as part of NATO, the offer of training was extended. Our facilities replicate realistic fire conditions.

The Slovaks loved every minute of what has been a busy and interesting week. They have learnt quickly and are very energetic. They are very, very good firefighters.

It is hoped that this course, the first time that the Slovaks have done this training in the UK, will lead to further opportunities for fire safety personnel from their country to come to Manston.

Six Slovak Air Force firefighters have undergone training in the UK to learn vital skills needed to tackle major aircraft fires.

The UK and Slovakia have longstanding ties, as evidenced most recently in February, when Air Vice Marshal Edward Stringer represented the UK at the funeral service of Major-General Ivan Otto Schwarz, the last surviving veteran of the Second World War Czechoslovak Squadron.

And in September 2017, the Chief of Defence Staff Sir Stuart Peach visited Slovakia to reaffirm the strong bilateral defence and security relationship that our two countries share.

News story: Met Office Chief Executive stands down

Nick Jobling, currently Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, is now interim Chief Executive with immediate effect, pending the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive in due course.

This will ensure continued leadership of our world-class national meteorological service.

Met Office operations and services are wholly unaffected by this decision.