

Councils urged to ensure Local Plans are up to date

Minister of State for Housing, Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP has urged councils to update their Local Plans to ensure the country gets on with building the homes it needs and in the right places.

The [Planning for the future white paper consultation](#) published last year set out proposals to deliver a significantly simpler, faster and more predictable planning system. Councils should consider that an up-to-date plan will put them in the best possible position to deliver the homes we need.

Nine in ten local planning authorities have now adopted a Local Plan, but we know many of them are not being kept up-to-date. In March 2020, the government set a deadline of December 2023 for all councils to have up-to-date Local Plans in place.

Minister of State for Housing, Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

Despite the significant challenges caused by the pandemic, I know the majority of councils are doing all they can to build much-needed homes across England.

I would like to thank them for the important work they do to deliver the homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure that make such a difference to their local communities.

However, a number of councils are not keeping plans up to date and I urge them to avoid any unnecessary delays and maintain progress on plan making.

Local Plans not only unlock land for development and ensure the right number of new homes are being built in the right places, they also provide local communities with an opportunity to have their say on how their local areas will change.

It is critical work should continue to advance Local Plans through to adoption by the end of 2023 to help ensure that the economy can rebound strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This [written ministerial statement](#) only covers England.

Nine in ten local planning authorities have now adopted a Local Plan. MHCLG are committed to working with the remaining 10% to get a plan in place as soon as possible, and across the board it is essential that plans are kept up to date.

In March 2020, the government set a deadline of December 2023 for all

authorities to have up-to-date Local Plans in place. It is critical that work should continue to progress Local Plans through to adoption by the end of 2023 to help ensure that the economy can rebound strongly from the COVID-19 emergency.

To support this, MHLGC rolled forward temporary changes that we made over the summer to ensure the planning system continues to operate effectively during the pandemic. In addition, we recently announced changes to the methodology for assessing Local Housing Need and published the 2020 Housing Delivery Test measurement. This should provide plan-makers with greater certainty over the homes they should plan for and whether they need to take additional measures to encourage delivery in their area.

The Housing Delivery Test measurement shows that the majority of local planning authorities continue to deliver the number of homes needed in their communities. However, 55 authorities delivered less than three-quarters of their housing need, and are therefore subject to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Of these, 40 have a Local Plan that is more than 5 years old. This clearly demonstrates the importance of having an up to date Local Plan in place.

MHCLG also want to see Neighbourhood Plans continue to progress with the support of local planning authorities, to give more communities a greater role in shaping the development and growth of their local areas.

Supply chain workers crucial to vaccination programme to receive jabs

- Move aims to protect continuity of the supply chain to help ensure flow of COVID vaccines for most vulnerable
- Crucial workers in roles such as manufacturing, fill and finish and batch testing will be offered vaccines

Up to 2,000 people working in roles crucial to the continuity of the COVID-19 vaccine supply chain will be offered jabs to help ensure the UK gets the doses it needs to protect the most vulnerable, the government has announced.

Highly trained workers who have been identified by the government as being irreplaceable and crucial to the delivery of vaccine supplies will be offered vaccines.

This will reduce the risk of an outbreak that would disrupt the immediate supply chain, which could have a significant impact on the largest

vaccination programme in British history.

Those eligible include staff working for Pfizer and AstraZeneca involved in specialist UK roles, such as those making the vaccine substance, working on fill and finish and batch testing, as well as those involved in end-to-end coordination who are responsible for getting doses to the right place at the right time.

While each supplier follows strict COVID-secure guidelines, the nature of the job and the close proximity of staff means infections cannot be ruled out.

Each supplier has contingency plans to ensure continuity of production in the event of an outbreak, however the government is taking further action to minimise the risk of disruption.

Some workers at sites such as Oxford Biomedica which manufactures and tests the bulk of the UK's AstraZeneca supply will be eligible, and some staff at Wockhardt involved in fill and finish will also be included.

Eligible workers will be identified by their employer against clear government criteria and the most appropriate location for vaccination would be agreed between the NHS, local providers and employer.

This has been agreed by all 4 nations and will be implemented across the UK.

People with similar key roles working in the supply chain for the seasonal flu vaccine are already among the first to be offered the flu jab – to protect continuity of their critical contribution in the vaccination programme.

Rigorous new targets for green building revolution

- All new buildings to be constructed to be highly energy efficient
- Building work in existing buildings must meet new standards
- Measures to tackle overheating in existing homes and drive down costly bills for families

All homes and businesses will have to meet rigorous new energy efficiency standards to lower energy consumption and bills, helping to protect the environment, the Housing Minister Chris Pincher has announced today (19 January 2021).

Responding to a consultation on the Future Homes Standard, the government has set out plans to radically improve the energy performance of new homes, with all homes to be highly energy efficient, with low carbon heating and be zero

carbon ready by 2025.

These homes are expected to produce 75-80% lower carbon emissions compared to current levels. To ensure industry is ready to meet the new standards by 2025, new homes will be expected to produce 31% lower carbon emissions from 2021.

Existing homes will also be subject to higher standards – with a significant improvement on the standard for extensions, making homes warmer and reducing bills. The requirement for replacement, repairs and parts to be more energy efficient. This includes the replacement of windows and building services such as heat pumps, cooling systems, or fixed lighting.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

Improving the energy performance of buildings is vital to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and protecting the environment for future generations to come.

The radical new standards announced today will not only improve energy efficiency of existing homes and other buildings, but will also ensure our new homes are fit for the future, by reducing emissions from new homes by at least 75%.

This will help deliver greener homes and buildings, as well as reducing energy bills for hard-working families and businesses.

The government plans also include measures to tackle;

- Ventilation – a new requirement for additional ventilation and indoor air quality monitoring in high-risk non-domestic buildings such as offices and gyms, reducing the risk of any potential infections being spread indoors.
- Overheating in residential buildings – a new overheating mitigation requirement in the Building Regulations.

There will be stringent transitional arrangements in place to provide all developers with certainty about the standards they are building. These will last for one year and apply to individual homes, rather than an entire development.

The government has also announced a consultation on higher performance targets for non-domestic buildings which will mean they will be zero carbon ready by 2025.

Taken together these measures will help to lower the cost of energy bills for families, while helping to tackle our climate change goals.

The government is committed to reaching net-zero and is taking considerable action to address the emissions from buildings – with heating and powering buildings currently accounting for 40% of the UK's total energy usage.

There has already been considerable progress made on emissions from homes, with overall total emissions reduced by about a fifth since 1990 despite there being approximately a quarter more homes.

In 2019 the government introduced a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 – making the UK the first major economy in the world to legislate a zero net emissions target. The measures announced today recognise the important role that the energy efficiency of buildings can play in achieving this goal.

The government has published its [response to the Future Homes Standard consultation](#), which sought views on how best to improve the energy performance of new homes.

This was first part of a 2-part consultation on Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations.

Additionally, new plans to make all other buildings, including existing homes, more energy efficient have been published today as part of the Future Buildings Standard consultation.

This is the second of the two-part consultation on Part L and Part F and proposes new energy and ventilation standards for new and existing non-domestic buildings and existing domestic buildings, as well as addressing overheating in residential buildings.

[Transforming the global energy sector through ambition, collaboration and investment in green recoveries](#)

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen. It is an absolute pleasure to join you today.

And I would like to thank Mr Francesco La Camera for the fantastic work IRENA is doing under his leadership.

Friends, we all know that we must act now on climate change.

If we do not, the consequences will be almost unimaginable:

With crops failing.

Nature devastated.

And hundreds of millions threatened by rising seas.

To avoid this, it is vital to decarbonise the energy sector, which accounts for around two-thirds of global emissions.

And so I am asking governments around the world to do three key things to achieve it.

First, raise ambition and action at home.

Second, invest in clean recoveries in response to the COVID pandemic.

And, third, work together to make progress on our climate ambitions.

I am urging all countries to come forward with new Nationally Determined Contributions, and long-term strategies.

And to put clear policies in place to achieve them.

Policies like improving product efficiency standards.

Phasing out coal power.

Encouraging decarbonisation in those sectors where it is a challenge.

And creating the policy environment to attract private finance.

Getting finance flowing, both public and private, is one of my key COP26 priorities.

Including urging developed countries to honour the commitment they have made to raise \$100 billion a year in international climate finance.

I am grateful to IRENA for its work on NDCs and long-term planning. And its support for countries on the clean energy transition.

And I am pleased to say that here in the UK, we are acting.

We announced a new NDC, consistent with our target to reach net zero by 2050.

And last year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced our ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution.

A plan to mobilise £12 billion of government investment.

That spurs three times as much from the private sector.

A plan to power every home in the country from offshore wind within a decade.

And invest in nuclear, hydrogen technologies and Carbon Capture Usage and Storage.

A plan which will support and create a quarter of a million jobs.

This shows how investment in clean technology can drive our recovery from COVID-19.

Which I know has been a focus of IRENA's work.

By aligning our recovery packages with the Paris Agreement, we can help to build clean growth into the heart of our economies.

And of course many countries are doing fantastic work to invest in green recoveries. And now we need all leaders to follow suit.

We are confident in this approach because we have seen that clean growth is absolutely possible.

Over the past thirty years in the UK, we have seen our economy grow by 75 per cent while reducing our emissions by 43 per cent.

We have also seen how, by working together, we can make progress faster.

By increasing incentives for investment.

Creating economies of scale.

And accelerating innovation.

Solar and wind power costs have fallen by 28% and 15% respectively, each time global deployment has doubled.

But we only realise these benefits if we tailor our response to each challenge and sector.

That is why international collaboration is one of the key goals of my COP Presidency.

Our COP26 campaigns are bringing government, industry, investors, development banks, and civil society together, around five critical areas:

Finance, nature, adaptation and resilience, clean transport, and, of course, clean energy.

And we have created new forums for collaboration, like the Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council, and the Energy Transition Council.

And I would like to thank everyone involved with this work. Including IRENA, as a member of the COP26 Energy Transition Council.

The work of this council includes improving the international support to developing countries to move away from coal.

Friends, together, through ambition, collaboration, and investment in green recoveries, we can transform the global energy sector.

So let's take action now, to put the world on track for a clean and prosperous future.

New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Paisley

The UK Government has today [Tuesday 19 January] opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at Bridge Street Car Park in Paisley (PA1 1XN). The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of six drive through sites, 26 walk-through sites, 21 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all Covid testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book at test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

New walk-in sites like this one makes it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

Walk-through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing continues to play an important role how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines, helping to identify local outbreaks, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities. I would like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing and come forward to be tested when they display symptoms.

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, with this new walk-through centre in Paisley just the latest in our extensive network. We have also secured and paid for millions of doses of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines for all parts of the UK.

Hope is on the horizon, but we can't let up on our efforts to contain the virus.

Dr Linda De Caestecker, Director for Public Health at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, said:

We welcome the additional testing facility in Paisley which will make it easier for more people to access testing during this crucial period.

Testing and working alongside other control measures will be key to helping control and minimise the spread of the virus in our communities.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Paisley, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.