

Press release: Government action on councils failing to plan new homes

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has today (23 March 2018) [written to 15 local authorities](#) in England to inform them of decisions on intervention following their continued failure to produce a local plan, which are key to setting out how and where they expect to meet residents' needs for new homes, for more than a decade.

In [November 2017](#), the government confirmed it would commence the consideration of intervention in 15 local authorities where there has been a failure to produce a local plan.

Local Plans are a key part of the government's comprehensive programme of planning reform and targeted investment to ensure the homes local communities need are built.

The councils had until 31 January 2018 to explain why they hadn't yet published a plan, providing any exceptional circumstances for why the government shouldn't intervene.

Following their submission, the government is now setting out next steps.

Of the 15 local authorities:

- in Castle Point, Thanet, and Wirral, the government's Chief Planner and a team of experts will be sent in to assess if the government needs to take over the process of producing the local plan
- in Northumberland the government has instructed the council to produce their plan earlier and to make the timetable clearer
- in Basildon, Bolsover, Brentwood, Calderdale, Eastleigh, Mansfield, St Albans, which have all committed to publishing draft plans before the end of September 2018, the government has made clear it will monitor their progress and that any further significant delay to meet this timescale will lead to the case for intervention being reconsidered
- 4 local authorities – Liverpool, North East Derbyshire, Runnymede, York – have since published their plans

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has written to them to welcome this progress, but has made clear that should there be any further significant delays to their timetable to submit the plan, the government will not hesitate to act.

The government has abolished top-down regional planning. But a locally-led

planning system requires elected local representatives to take the lead, listen to local residents and business, and set out a clear framework to build new homes, provide key infrastructure, support the local economy and protect the environment.

Most councils have seized the opportunity that localism presents – however a small minority have not and do not have a local plan in place. This can mean uncertainty for local people, have a negative impact on neighbourhood planning groups, result in piecemeal speculative housing development and communities having no plans in place for crucial local infrastructure and services.

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Whilst most councils rightly recognise their responsibilities and most have worked hard to meet the housing challenge, some have failed.

I expect those authorities we identified in November to continue to make progress. I'm also stepping it up with 3 councils in particular, sending in a team of experts to make a direct assessment, ensuring they plan properly for the future or we'll have to do it for them.

The department has also commenced preparations to take over plan production so that work can begin as soon as possible, subject to decisions taken after the Chief Planner and his experts report back.

A procurement process is currently underway to secure planning consultants and specialists who will swiftly undertake the work on plan production should these councils not comply in the time required.

The department will also make contact with county councils and combined authorities in the areas concerned about the possibility of inviting those authorities to write plans.

See the [letters sent to the relevant local authorities](#).

The [housing white paper](#) set out how the government would prioritise intervention – where:

- the least progress in plan-making has been made
- policies in plans had not been kept up to date
- there was higher housing pressure
- intervention would have the greatest impact in accelerating local plan production

The strategy also made clear that decisions on intervention will also be informed by the wider planning context in each area (specifically, the extent to which authorities are working cooperatively to put strategic plans in place, and the potential impact that not having a plan has on neighbourhood

planning activity).

Planning experts – Castle Point, Thanet, and Wirral

The government's Chief Planner, Steve Quartermain CBE and a team of experts will report back to the Secretary of State who will then take a final decision on formal intervention later this year.

In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will conduct formal discussions with relevant county councils and city regions to see if they could take over plan production on the Secretary of State's behalf.

[News story: Foreign Office Minister condemns criminal actors based in Iran for cyber-attacks against UK universities](#)

Today the US indicted nine employees of the Mabna Institute based in Iran for a global hacking campaign targeting universities, including in the UK.

Foreign Office Minister for Cyber, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

The UK Government judges that the Mabna Institute based in Iran was responsible for a hacking campaign targeting universities around the world.

By stealing intellectual property from universities, these hackers attempted to make money and gain technological advantage at our expense.

We welcome the US indictments. It demonstrates our willingness and ability to respond collectively to cyber-attacks using all levers at our disposal.

The focus on universities is a timely reminder that all organisations are potential targets and need to constantly strive for the best possible cyber security.

Today's action is a further step demonstrating that malicious cyber activity will not go unpunished. Mabna Institute employees can no longer travel freely, curtailing their career prospects outside of Iran.

Notes for editors

The UK's National Cyber Security Centre assesses with high confidence that the Mabna Institute are almost certainly responsible for a multi-year Computer Network Exploitation (CNE) campaign targeting universities in the UK, the US, as well as other Western nations, primarily for the purposes of intellectual property (IP) theft. Today's action comes after US law enforcement indicted other employees of the Mabna Institute in November 2017 for the hack and leak operation against TV company HBO.

Further information

[Speech: Leader of the Commons addresses cross party conference on violence against women in politics](#)

'Deeds, not words'.

That, as you all know, was the motto of the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst.

In 2018, these remain symbolic words for us all, as the UK celebrates 100 years since the first women were able to vote.

A century later, and the topic of this conference is a stark reminder that whilst we have achieved so much, we still have a long way to go in the fight for equality.

I'd like to pay tribute to the work of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, who for over 25 years now, have shared the UK's expertise in those two vital institutions of democracy – political parties and parliaments.

The Foundation has played a vital role in promoting women's rights around the world through the promotion of democracy.

From the Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries Combating Violence Against Women to the Women's Parliament in Uganda and the support for women candidates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Foundation has achieved so much.

And that phrase – deeds, not words – resonate with us all to this day – reminding us that for everything we say, it is ultimately what we do that counts.

So I hope this conference has motivated everyone to go back and take action in their jobs, and in their communities – in whichever way they can –

To ensure we can meet the 21st century challenges to gender equality.

My role as leader

Now, many of the steps we can take as parliamentarians and as parties are closely related to my own work as Leader of the House of Commons in the UK.

The role of the Leader is unique, and I wear two 'hats' on a daily basis.

My first 'hat' is as a representative of the Government in Parliament.

It is my responsibility to oversee the Government's legislative agenda – which, as we prepare to leave the European Union, is a particularly significant and challenging task.

My second 'hat' is as a representative of Parliament in Government.

That means ensuring that Parliament strikes the right balance between giving the opposition, and backbenchers, the chance to conduct robust, effective scrutiny of the executive, whilst also ensuring the Government has the opportunity to deliver its manifesto.

In practice that means encouraging ministers to engage with Parliament in a responsive and consultative fashion.

Steps have been taken over the decades to make Parliament a more accessible place for women and families – including changes to the sitting hours, and even an on-site creche –

But we also owe a great deal to fantastic candidacy campaigns such as Women2Win – a Conservative group which helps identify women to stand as MPs. I know other parties have similar initiatives.

Even now though, as Leader of the Commons in 2018, there are still practical challenges for women in politics such as formal baby leave for new mothers.

A number of cross-party MPs have been looking at how we can make the system of baby leave more effective for all parents in parliament.

And I am pleased that the Procedure Committee are now looking closely at the options and solutions available.

Sexual harassment

In my role, I have taken on an important additional responsibility in recent months, which I would like to tell you about in more detail.

In the late autumn of last year there was widespread shock as allegations emerged of sexual harassment and bullying in Westminster.

Whilst this is clearly a problem that affects many in parliament, a majority of the complainants are women.

A fundamental part of the challenge was that it was felt existing procedures for dealing with problems like this are just not good enough.

That was leading some to feel they had no option but to go to the press.

Others were deterred from escalating their cases precisely because of the risk that they would find themselves on the front pages of national newspapers –

so their solution was to deal with the unhappiness by resigning.

The Prime Minister moved quickly to bring all the political parties in Parliament together to address this problem.

She asked me to chair a cross-party working group across both the House of Commons and the House of Lords which aimed to establish a new independent process in which complainants could place their confidence.

Our proposals have been approved by both Houses – and they include establishing:

- a behaviour code that will cover all those working in or visiting Parliament;
- two separate processes to deal with cases of bullying and of sexual harassment – with the appropriate support provided for each;
- a review of the sanctions available to the the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards – who deals specifically with complaints against Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Lords;
- and the right to confidentiality and representation for all involved.

My ambition throughout this whole process has been to bring about a fundamental change to the culture of Westminster – so that we can make this one of the best parliaments in the world in which to work.

Staff and parliamentarians alike deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

And our work to achieve that will not stop there.

Report on violence against women in politics: global perspectives of a global issue

Harassment in workplaces like Westminster, is of course just one of the contributing factors to a world where women and girls experience violence on daily basis, and it came as no surprise that in a survey of female parliamentarians across 39 different countries, 44% of women have received death threats or threats of rape, assault and of abduction.

And it saddens me that I, and far too many of my colleagues, are included in these statistics.

A woman in politics should not have to pay this price.

From trolling and the echo-chamber of social media – through to the shocking and violent deaths of female politicians, like our own Jo Cox, and just a few

days ago, Brazil's Marielle Franco.

Violence against women, particularly during elections, is not confined to one country or society – it is a global problem.

In recent UK elections, we have seen shocking levels of intimidation and abuse – including swastikas graffitied onto campaign posters, as well as vitriolic homophobia, sexism, and antisemitism.

There was even a coffin delivered to the constituency office of one of my colleagues.

In a speech last month, the Prime Minister stated that 'the ideal of a truly plural and open public sphere, where everyone can take part, is in danger'.

We have introduced steps to tackle this:

- The Government will consult on a new electoral offence of intimidating candidates and campaigners;
- The Conservative Party has published its Respect Pledge covering all candidates who are standing for election – and we have encouraged all parties to do the same;
- We are introducing a new Domestic Abuse bill, which will challenge the acceptability of abuse and address the underlying attitudes and norms that perpetuate it;
- We have established a new, Annual Internet Safety Transparency Report, to provide data on offensive content and the response to it;
- We are doing more to protect candidates by changing the requirement to publish a home address on ballot papers.
- In parliament I am working closely with the security teams to upgrade the security of members in their London and constituency homes.

The threats faced by prospective candidates, for either local or national office, are driving potentially brilliant public servants away from politics.

We cannot allow this sort of behaviour to jeopardize our long-standing tradition of free speech and inclusive politics – the hallmarks of what make us a proud democratic

What we need to do domestically and globally within parties and Parliament

So, I am delighted to see such a diverse representation of people here today.

Delegates from different countries, different societies, different histories and different political systems.

Everyone will have a sense of how far their own political culture has come on the journey to a better parliamentary democracy – one that serves the interests of women as well as men – and how much further there is to go.

But we are all bound by the need to tackle violence against all women in

politics.

Not only is it unacceptable, and often criminal, and not only does it lead to wider exclusion of women in public life, but it has a detrimental impact on the people we represent.

Women around the world need women in politics.

It gives them a voice, and a seat at the table.

We can make our democracies a welcome place for women by creating the most inclusive environment possible:

- One that educates our young people to respect the views of others, and to value women equally;
- One where our electoral laws are respected and upheld;
- One where women are given equal pay for equal work;
- And one where opportunities for women open up across all sectors – from the engine room to the boardroom.

Whether working in parties or in parliaments, as elected representatives or the officials who support them –

Women make an enormous difference to our democratic life.

That is as true in the United Kingdom as it is in every other country around the world.

So when I look at the recommendations this conference has produced, I see real lessons for the UK –

Particularly in what our political parties can do to stop violence against women.

We've got to stamp out this pervasive culture of bullying and harassment, which so often deters women from working in politics –

And it is my sincere hope that the new independent complaints policy I am implementing in the UK will provide the support, confidentiality, and most importantly the sanctions –

That will fundamentally change our parliamentary culture for the better.

Conclusion

Before I finish, I would like to take a moment to share with you some of the lessons I have learned in the work that I have been doing.

The first is, when women speak out, and say 'there is a problem', the answer is not 'no there isn't.'

Even if we worry about what that answer might mean, the response cannot be to close ranks.

And when women speak out, and say 'these processes aren't working for me', the answer is not 'yes they are'.

Just because things have always been done 'a certain way' does not mean that is 'the right way', particularly as the scale of the problems becomes clear, and the evidence that the responses to it have failed in the past.

All parties have got to recognise that changing the way we respond to bullying, harassment, and sexual violence is not just inevitable, but it is the right thing to do.

These issues transcend politics.

When I became Leader of the House I did not expect my job to become so focused on tackling the darker side of the culture in parliament, but I think it's important that it has, and I hope the groundbreaking changes we are making will support women working in parliaments in the decades ahead.

This conference holds important lessons for all of us who want to change society for the better.

Your actions, your deeds, will make the world a better place, just like the suffragettes before us, and for that, you should all be immensely proud.

Thank you very much.

[Press release: Dame Judith Hackitt hears from industry working groups](#)

Issued for and on behalf of Dame Judith Hackitt and the Independent Review team

This week, Dame Judith Hackitt hosted a meeting of the Chairs of the working groups which were formed following the [Independent Review's interim report](#) publication in December and Summit meeting in January.

The working groups were asked to consider how to develop elements of a more effective building regulations and fire safety system, taking forward the directions of travel identified by Dame Judith in her interim report.

We had an overwhelming response for people to be involved. To ensure the groups were able to respond in a timely manner, it was necessary to restrict the size but group chairs were encouraged to consult as widely as possible when developing their advice.

The inputs of the working groups will be made available after the final

report.

Dame Judith praised the commitment of the working groups, all of which have met multiple times over a 6-week period and thanked them for the quality of their contributions.

She will now consider their advice as she develops the recommendations of her final report, intended to deliver the systemic overhaul and culture change required of the building regulations and fire safety system to make sure the people are safe, and feel safe, in the homes that they live in.

Dame Judith Hackitt's final report will be published in the spring.

Dame Judith and the Independent Review Team would like to thank the following organisations and experts for their contributions.

A [list of participants in Dame Judith Hackitt's January summit](#) has also been published today.

Working Group 1: Construction and Design

Chair

Rachel White, Institute for Civil Engineers

Members

- ACAI
- Build UK
- Construction Leadership Council
- Health and Safety Executive
- Institute of Fire Engineers
- Local Authority Building Control
- National Fire Chiefs Council
- National House Building Council
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- Royal Institute of British Architects

Working Sub-Group 1b: Procurement

Chair

Paul Nash, Chartered Institute of Building

Members

- Construction Industry Council
- Crown Commercial Services
- Home Builders Federation
- Kier Services
- Local Government Association
- Telford Homes

Working Group 2: Occupation and Maintenance

Chair

Nick Coombe, National Fire Chiefs Council

Members

- Association of British Insurers
- Association of Residential Managing Agents
- British Institute of Facilities Management
- Health and Safety Executive
- Leasehold Advisory Service
- Local Government Association
- National Fire Chiefs Council
- National Housing Federation
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

Working Sub-Group 1 & 2: Golden Thread

This group looked at how to ensure an accurate record of high risk/complex buildings is compiled during the design and construction phase, and then handed to the person responsible for managing the building during occupation.

Chair

Independent Review Team

Members

- National Fire Chiefs Council
- Local Authority Building Control
- Construction Products Association
- National Housing Federation
- Health and Safety Executive
- Institution of Fire Engineers
- Digital Built Britain

Working Group 3: Regulations and Guidance

Chair

Peter Caplehorn, Construction Products Association

Members

- Building Research Establishment
- Build UK
- Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
- Fire Industry Association
- Health and Safety Executive
- Local Authority Building Control

- National Fire Chiefs Council

Working Group 4: Competence

Chair

Graham Watts, Construction Industry Council

Members

- BUILDUK
- CICAIR
- Chartered Institute of Building
- Construction Industry Training Board
- Engineering Council
- Fire Industry Association
- Fire Protection Association
- Institution of Fire Engineers
- Local Authority Building Control
- National Fire Chiefs Council
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- School of Engineering University of Edinburgh

Working Group 5: Residents' Voice

Chair

Darren Hartley, Tenants and Resident Organisations of England

Members

- Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA)
- British Property Federation
- Camden Leaseholders Forum, nominated by LEASE
- Confederation of Co-operative Housing
- Fire Industry Association
- Local Government Association
- National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations
- Optivo Homes, nominated by National Housing Federation
- Shelter
- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Tpas)

Working Group 6: Quality Assurance and Products

Chair

Dr. Debbie Smith, Building Research Establishment (BRE)

Members

- British Board of Agreement

- British Standards Institution
 - Centre for Fire and Hazards Science, University of Central Lancashire
 - Construction Products Association
 - Fire Industry Association
 - Fire Protection Association
 - Institution of Fire Engineers
 - National Fire Chiefs Council
 - United Kingdom Accreditation Service
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[Press release: CMA secures changes from further gambling firm](#)

BGO Entertainment Ltd has formally agreed to change the way it offers bonus promotions to customers playing casino-like games online. This means players will be able to access and release their own money.

This follows an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), conducted in collaboration with the Gambling Commission, to make sure the £4.7 billion online gambling sector is not breaking consumer protection law in its promotions.

BGO has now given the CMA formal commitments that it will be clear in the terms and conditions of its bonus promotions, and that it will prominently flag any significant restrictions to players. It will not have terms which:

- Require people to play multiple times before allowing them to withdraw their own money
- Prevent them from withdrawing their full balance by minimum withdrawal limits
- Could oblige players to take part in publicity.

The [commitments](#) were made in response to the CMA's concerns that certain terms in these promotions were likely to be unfair, and that its practices could mislead consumers in breach of consumer protection law. This follows similar commitments given by 3 other operators – Ladbrokes, William Hill, and PT Entertainment – announced on [1 February 2018](#).

BGO has also separately agreed that it will not include terms which could be used to unfairly change promotions after players have opted in.

George Lusty, CMA Senior Director for Consumer Protection, said:

Gambling firms should not have terms that could be used to catch players out by unfairly changing their promotions after a customer has opted in.

We are therefore pleased that BGO has pledged to make these important changes. Following the CMA's action, the gambling industry is rightly taking steps to overhaul online terms and conditions that could be misleading or unfair.

Before entering into these commitments with the CMA, BGO had already made welcome changes to address some of the CMA's concerns – such as removing restrictions on winnings from cash deposits.

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
2. The Gambling Commission regulates gambling in Great Britain in partnership with licensing authorities. It also regulates the National Lottery. Regulations are aimed at ensuring gambling is crime-free, fair and open and children and other vulnerable people are protected. It advises central and local government on the impact of gambling and its regulation. It holds operators to account; it ensures operators meet licensing standards and takes action against those that don't. It ensures that National Lottery returns to good causes are maximised.
3. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015.
4. The CMA [opened an investigation](#) into the gambling sector's compliance with consumer protection law in October 2016 after hearing about a range of concerns that suggested some operators were not treating their customers fairly. This investigation heard from over 1,000 customers with concerns. The CMA investigation required companies to answer questions about how they operate, it closely examined the advertising and terms on a range of websites, and asked companies to give it demonstrations of the consumer journey and consumer play on their sites.
5. The CMA acknowledges the co-operation of BGO, and in particular that in October 2017 it made a number of welcome changes which addressed some of the CMA's concerns.
6. The CMA has produced a ['60-second summary'](#) and [further information](#) to help all gambling operators review their practices and ensure their terms and conditions are in line with consumer protection law. It has

also produced '[advice for gamblers](#)' and a [short video guide](#) for consumers.

7. If you are a member of the public with a query please email general.enquiries@cma.gsi.gov.uk or call 020 3737 6000.
8. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798. Media enquiries to the Gambling Commission should be directed to Ben Glass at bglass@gamblingcommission.gov.uk on 0121 230 6700.