

What does the future hold now for the government's planning reforms?



The future of the [government's planning reforms](#) seems uncertain with reports in national newspapers over the last week suggesting that the government is set to ditch many of the proposals in the Planning White Paper, which was spearheaded by the now former Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick.

The Times newspaper reported this weekend that the [*"biggest shake-up of planning laws for 70 years is set to be abandoned after a backlash from voters and Tory MPs in southern England"*](#).

The Times understood that the government's plans for the new "zonal" system are possibly going to be watered down from the system described in the White Paper. The Planning White Paper allocated land as "growth areas", "renewal areas" and "protected areas" which the government hoped would simplify and speed-up the process for delivering new housing and infrastructure. The Times report suggests that those plans may not be retained in the Planning Bill.

The Telegraph reported on Tuesday that [ministers are planning to rewrite the Planning Bill and that a new section would be added to the Planning Bill](#) that "will allow local people to vote on plans for development near them." This comes after reports that a number of Conservative MPs would vote against the Planning Bill. The Telegraph reports that: "The idea, first proposed in a paper by the Policy Exchange think tank, would involve residents of a street voting on the design of new homes around them, or modification to existing buildings."

A private members' bill, the [Planning \(Street Plans\) Bill](#), was introduced to Parliament on 13 September 2021 and is set for its second reading on 22 October 2021. The bill is aimed at making "provision about the creation and operation of street-level plans for local development; and for connected purposes." It will be interesting to see if



the amendments to the Planning Bill will reflect the changes sought in the private members' bill.

It also now seems likely that the government's plans to introduce binding housing targets are set to be put aside. The Times reports that the government will no longer "set local councils individual housebuilding targets, with the precise numbers to be determined by an algorithm designed to ensure that homes are built where people want to live".

This may come as a relief for many campaigners but we do not know what the government's alternative proposals will be which creates yet further uncertainty for the industry.

In Wednesday's cabinet reshuffle, Michael Gove, a former secretary for Environment, Food and Rural affairs, has now replaced Robert Jenrick. The government's response to the consultation on the Planning White Paper has already been delayed once before the cabinet reshuffle and perhaps even the long awaited "Autumn" response is now looking unlikely.

Only time will tell what effect this cabinet reshuffle will have on the government's planning reform and the timetable for implementing that reform.



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