



By Email Only

**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022**

## **Message from Chief Planner**

This newsletter includes information on issues relating to planning policy and practice, including two important updates to PPGs (Planning Practice Guidance) on Flood Risk and Coastal Change and Health and Safe Communities.

It's a good time to thank and celebrate all the work being done to digitise planning application services led by Southwark, Lambeth and Buckinghamshire with support from DLUHC and partners. The launch of this technology into the public sphere marks an important moment in our investment to modernise planning services and improve the user experience. It forms part of our digital planning programme and there are details about how keep in touch with the latest innovations and lessons learnt through our collaborations with local authorities and the prop-tech sector.

It's been a summer of challenges for many and there is no doubt more to come. As we start to look forward to the new term, I hope you had the opportunity to replenish your batteries and enjoy some time off.

I had the pleasure this week of visiting the Lake District National Park hosted by the National Park Authority. What is striking about all the great work they do is the lessons we can all learn from the coalescence of thinking about how we manage the natural environments, agricultural environments, cultural and built heritage and the places where people live, work and visit. The National Park have their management plan and local plan working together and aiming to deliver through a strong collaboration of the many interests who should be part of the delivery of both. It's a timely reminder, as we seek to address climate change, adaptation (including flooding risk), nature recovery, housing need and affordability, economic growth and infrastructure delivery, that we are town and country planners.

Kind regards

**Joanna Averley**  
**Chief Planner**



## Planning Practice Guidance update: Flood risk and coastal change

Climate change will increase the risk of flooding from all sources including rivers, surface water, and coastal flooding. That is why it is more important than ever that we fulfil our commitment made in the '[Review of Policy for Development in Areas at Flood Risk](#)' to publish updated Planning Practice Guidance on Flood Risk and Coastal Change. This update provides a significant refresh to the guidance and brings it up to date and in line with the latest policy position on flood risk introduced in the updates to the National Planning Policy Framework in 2018 and 2021.

Key themes of the updated guidance include:

- Elaboration of the hierarchical approach to flood risk of assess, avoid, control, mitigate and manage, that we want to see Local Planning Authorities following when allocating land for development through their Local Plans and when determining planning applications.
- Emphasis that the application of flood risk policy should be based on an up-to-date strategic flood risk assessment and/or site-specific flood risk assessment.
- Greater detail on the purpose and application of both the Sequential Test and the Exception Test. Including detail on key terms such as "reasonably available" and "wider sustainable development objectives".
- Encouragement of the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), advocating their multi-functional benefits including for water quantity, water quality, biodiversity, and amenity.
- Further information on safeguarding approaches, the role of planning in relocation in coastal settings, and unsustainable locations.
- Additionally, there is further detail on flood risk in relation to Neighbourhood Plans, Design Codes, article 4 direction, permitted development/change of use, and the call-in process.

The updated Planning Practice Guidance on Flood Risk and Coastal Change is available [here](#).

## Planning Practice Guidance update: Healthy and safe communities

As part of the High Streets Strategy, DLUHC have published a new question in the Healthy and Safe Communities Planning Practice Guidance to help councils put controls on litter when considering applications for takeaway food businesses.

The update provides advice on what actions Local Planning Authorities can take when considering applications for new hot food takeaways. This can include seeking



details from applicants on proposals and imposing conditions to install bins, litter picking and advisory signage to ensure developments for new takeaway food do not increase the impact of litter on local communities.

We know a number of councils are already making use of these conditions. This national guidance aims to build on this good practice and help make this more widespread. The updated guidance can be found [here](#). The updated guidance can be found [here](#).

## **New user-centred services for planning applications are now live on council websites**

Three new digital planning services co-designed by a pioneering group of local councils, are now live on the websites of Buckinghamshire, Lambeth and Southwark councils.

Funded by DLUHC, the applicant facing 'Find out if you need planning permission' and 'Apply for a Lawful Development Certificate' services help residents and planning professionals to understand what permitted development rights exist on a property, and to submit proposals where planning permission is unlikely to be needed.

The back-office planning system (BOPS) tool is used by council officers to validate and process applications and manage any follow up communication with the applicant.

You can find out more in [this blog post](#) and [register for future updates and invitations to the team's Show and Tells](#). You can also follow the [DLUHC Digital Planning team on Twitter](#).

## **Fast-Track planning route to speed up major infrastructure projects**

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up Greg Clark announced on 30<sup>th</sup> August that major infrastructure projects, such road improvements and offshore wind farms, will be delivered more quickly through a new fast-track planning route.

Proposed new powers, that would be introduced through legislation, will mean shorter deadlines could be set for examinations of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP); speeding up decisions and getting projects built more quickly. The relevant Secretary of the State (for example for Energy, Transport, Environment or Levelling Up) will decide whether to put the shorter deadline in place, with only suitable projects going through the new fast track process.

This also means decisions on smaller (non-material) changes to projects that have already been approved can be made much more quickly. Currently these can take up to 16 months, sometimes causing significant delays to delivery.



This is part of plans to speed up the planning process for large-scale projects and builds on efforts in the Government's Energy Security Strategy to make sure the country is building the infrastructure it needs faster than before.

Councils and local communities will continue to play a key role in the planning process, including by producing local impact reports that represent the views of residents to be taken into account. Alongside this announcement more than £750,000 has been awarded to 10 council-led projects to support innovation in ensuring the needs of local communities are reflected in the process.

If you would like to consider taking part in upcoming research on a confidential basis, sign up through [this form](#). More information about user research, how we anonymise your inputs, and how we store your data can be viewed through this [privacy notice](#).

## Consultation on the Strategic Road Network

The Government is consulting on an update to the Department for Transport's circular 02/2013: the strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development.

The Circular sets out how National Highways engage in plan-making and decision-taking as well as what the operators of Motorway Service Areas (MSAs) and other roadside facilities must provide for users in order to be eligible for signing on the strategic road network.

The draft Circular update responds to the government's commitments in the transport decarbonisation plan and the delivery of zero emission transport. Updates include but are not limited to:

- better facilities for HGV drivers and other network users;
- the provision of user friendly and accessible electric vehicle charge points at MSAs; and
- additional safeguards to ensure new development is not reliant on the strategic road network for access to goods and services, and supports the delivery of walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport provision.

The consultation on the Circular will run until **15th September 2022** and can be found online [here](#).

## Planning Inspectorate launch recruitment campaign for new Chief Executive

The recruitment campaign has now begun for the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate, following the recent announcement that Sarah Richards will be standing down from this role.



This is a pivotal role which has overall responsibility and accountability for ensuring the Inspectorate is operating and delivering efficiently and effectively. The Chief Executive is at the heart of delivering the Planning Inspectorate's vision to provide customers with high quality, timely and efficient services that support the nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by engaging, empowering and equipping the workforce and by delivering ambitious policy changes.

Individuals from across local government, the wider public sector, the voluntary sector and commercial enterprises are encouraged to apply for this opportunity, as well as existing civil servants.

[Navees Rahman](#), currently Corporate Services Director for the Planning Inspectorate, has been appointed Interim Chief Executive.

The candidate pack for the role and the advertisement can be found [here](#). Applications close at **11.55pm on Sunday 18th September**.

## **Call for Participation: User Research and Planning**

DLUHC is carry out user research user research, which means we're speaking to those involved in the planning system, from all sectors, to hear about your experiences of planning and build that into future policy thinking.

Over 200 people from across local authorities, the development industry and elsewhere have taken part in our research so far. We're very grateful to those who have shared their time and expertise with us. If you've not yet had the opportunity to take part and would like to you can sign up to be part of our user research panel; so that when we're conducting research you'll be offered the opportunity to take part. Each opportunity is on a voluntary and confidential basis, with no obligation to take part, but you'll hear about it first.

If you would like to consider taking part sign up through [this form](#). More information about user research, how we anonymise your inputs, and how we store your data can be viewed through this [privacy notice](#).