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An aerial photograph of a suburban village. The foreground and middle ground show a mix of green fields, some with trees, and a residential area with many houses. The houses are mostly two-story, light-colored buildings with dark roofs. There are roads winding through the area, and some commercial buildings are visible in the distance. The background shows rolling hills under a clear blue sky.

## Planning Bulletin

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# The councils that relied upon the most extension of time agreements in 2024/25

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (**MHCLG**) has published the planning application statistics for the year up to March 2025, including data on when extension of time agreements were entered into by local planning authorities.

In England, 122,967 decisions were made with an extension of time agreement. These decisions made up 39.9% of the 307,816 decisions made by English authorities.

Melton Borough Council entered into extension of time agreements in 83.4% of its 343 decisions which made it the council which was most reliant on extension of time agreements relative to the number of decisions made. Great Yarmouth Council used extension of time agreements in 77.5% of its 333 decisions in 2024/25 and the City of London Corporation used extension of time agreements in 75.5% of its 465 decisions.

A spokesperson for Great Yarmouth Council said:



As with many authorities, we have experienced resourcing challenges and spent a lot of time in 2024 in tackling a significant backlog.

We have a clear protocol that sets out the circumstances when the council is able to negotiate on applications, and a very successful pre-application advice service that delivers clear results for applicants. In the vast majority of cases we are successful in helping amend schemes or find solutions to concerns raised by partner consultation bodies to enable approval to be granted.

We seek to take that approach when there is scope to deliver high-quality development, rather than refuse applications and put the council, applicant and development industry to additional costs and delay.

Nevertheless, we have been working hard to reduce our use of extension of time agreements, and results have improved.

Lydia Rusling, Director of Place and Prosperity at Melton Borough Council said the council works “closely with applicants to ensure high-quality developments get approved”, which can involve “asking for changes to address any concerns” such as “improving designs or resolving issues raised by statutory consultees or public feedback”. However Rusling added that the council is reviewing its procedures so it can speed up decision-making.

A City of London Corporation spokesperson said:



With more than 600 listed buildings, 28 conservation areas, 48 scheduled ancient monuments and four historic parks and gardens, the Square Mile’s rich and varied heritage means that even minor applications have a complexity that require detailed assessment.

Nevertheless, our proactive and pro-growth approach to negotiations throughout the planning process has led to an exceptional approval rate, 96 per cent for 2024/25.

Buckinghamshire Council made 2,247 decisions using extension of time requests, making them the local planning authority which, in strict numerical terms, was the highest in England. Cornwall Council was second highest with 2,069 extension of time agreement decisions and North Yorkshire Council was third with 2,032 decisions involving an extension of time agreement.

You can read more [here](#).

**Source:** Planning.



# What Labour's £39 billion affordable housing programme means for planning

In last month's spending review, the Labour government announced its intention to spend £39 billion on affordable housing. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves said the government would invest this money in a successor to the Affordable Homes Programme.

The Affordable Homes Programme was set up by the Conservative government in 2021 and allocated grant funding to local authorities and housing associations to help support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale.

The successor to the Affordable Housing Programme will run over ten years from 2026 to 2036 and the MHCLG said the government would aim to deliver "around 300,000 new social and affordable homes" through the new settlement, including "around 180,000 homes for social rent".

The MHCLG said government housing agency Homes England will be responsible for delivering "the majority of the funding", while "up to £11.7 billion" will be "used to support housing delivery from the Greater London Authority in the capital".

The cash injection comes at an important time for affordable housing as council planners have noticed that housing associations have been purchasing fewer homes built by private developers but reserved for affordable housing under s 106 agreements.

Group Land and Planning Manager at Barratt Redrow, Chris Webber, has stated that the new settlement was "a major step toward stabilising a sector under significant financial pressure". However, he added: "Questions remain around how registered providers can deploy this funding, particularly for section 106 home acquisitions, and whether their existing financial constraints will limit its impact."

Iain Gilbey, a Senior Planning Partner at law firm Pinsent Masons, said the new settlement was "the largest investment in social and affordable housing in decades".

However analysis carried out by the Financial Times and the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that only £3 billion will be allocated until 2029 before rising to £4.5 billion in 2035/36.





Emily Williams, Research Director at Savills acknowledged that:

“year-on-year comparisons can be misleading, as spend is not always distributed evenly over the course of the programme”. However, she maintained that “£39 billion over ten years is a significant rise against the initial £11.5 billion available through the 2021-25 AHP and should unlock more development activity from housing associations in the long term”.

Observers saw the government committing to ten years of funding as good policy. Dinny Shaw, Head of Planning Developments at Places for People, said:

“The ten-year plan gives us long-term funding certainty and enables us to forecast our investment into affordable housing over a longer time period.”

Gilbey said this was the first instance “in modern times where housing investment has been committed over a full decade, which is expected to be transformative”, explaining that this would “enable providers to make long-term plans for delivery and provide confidence for those seeking to invest in affordable housing”.

Commentators generally agreed that it was too early to say what proportion of grant funding would be allocated to housing associations versus councils. Will Jeffwitz, Head of Policy at National Housing Federation said:

“it will be determined by who bids into the programme and which bids are accepted, but we assume the majority would be spent by housing associations, as it has been in previous programmes.”

Williams stated that the £39 billion was “a step in the right direction”, but that it would not “mean

that we will see the taps turned on and housing associations developing on a large scale”.

Williams added:

“The sector has also been under financial pressure for years. Housing associations weren't able to increase rents in line with inflation, meaning their costs increased but their incomes didn't. It will take a long time for that capacity to rebuild.”

Commentators also agreed that the grant funding will not address the reduced demand for section 106 homes because the grants cannot be used to buy these types of homes.

Richard Cook, Senior Director of Economics at Pegasus said:

“Significant industry questions remain, such as around how this funding will be portioned per region, when the funding will come available and who will be responsible for dividing the money. Ultimately, developers are in urgent need of guidance on how this funding is going to work.”

Robbie Calvert, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at the RTPI said:

“The government's commitment to a decade of housing renewal is a major milestone. But without comprehensive reform of our planning system and investment in the planning workforce, delivery will stall.”

He added: “The right mix of affordable housing must be delivered in the right locations. Planners will play a pivotal role in doing this.”

You can read more [here](#).

**Source:** Planning



# Lack of a s106 obligation meant houses were not self-build units

Planning Practice Guidance confirms that when authorities review whether a home is a self-build or a custom build home, they must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home has primary input into its final design and layout.

In a Planning Appeal hearing held on 4 June 2025 before A J Sutton, the main parties suggested that the above could be secured by way of planning condition. However A J Sutton was unconvinced that the proposed conditions provided the necessary certainty. The first suggested condition referred to the definition in the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (SBA 2015) and required first occupiers to have primary input into its design. However there was nothing preventing subsequent occupants asserting compliance with this by just choosing some minor design choice. The inspector considered this was little different to purchasing a home-off plan and considered that the condition did not provide the necessary certainty that the development sought by the SBA 2015.

The Council's condition required documents to be submitted within six months of completion to ensure the self-build definition was met. However, the inspector questioned what "completion" entailed, as an incomplete house could be occupied. The consequences of non-compliance or failure to submit information were also unclear.

A J Sutton believed a legal agreement could provide more certainty, restricting the type of housing and binding those with an interest in the land and their successors. A deed could also obligate those with an interest in the appeal site to dispose of the land only to those intent on self-build.

A J Sutton concluded that the proposed conditions failed to meet the tests set out in the national guidance. Without a completed legal agreement, the inspector remained unconvinced that the plots would be developed as proposed and contribute to the supply of self-build homes. If there was no mechanism providing certainty, the proposal would not comprise self-build units as defined in the SBA 2015.

You can read more [here](#).

**Source:** Practical Law





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