

## 'More work to be done' on the new standard housing need method

**There is "more work to be done" on the government's controversial proposed changes to its standard method of assessing housing need, the housing secretary Robert Jenrick has said, while ministers are looking to begin legislating next year to implement measures in the planning white paper.**

Jenrick was [speaking to former chief planner Steve Quartermain in an online discussion](#) organised by public affairs consultancy Cratus and law firm Town Legal.

The secretary of state was asked by Quartermain if the government has got its proposed changes to the standard method right yet. Jenrick said: "There is more work to be done. It's a genuine consultation and we're listening to people's views".

"The methodology is quite weighted to affordable homes and to helping people onto the housing ladder - that's a legitimate objective," he said. "Our ambition [is also] to be levelling up and building in other parts of the country, particularly the Midlands and North, and to regenerate towns and cities. But we can't do that alone because the demand isn't there, so we need a broader strategy - we have to get a balance."

The standard method changes are outlined in the [Changes to the Current Planning System](#) document, consultation on which closed on 1st October 2020.

On concurrent proposals in the [Planning White Paper](#) to change the planning system, which are still being consulted on until the end of the month, Jenrick said: "We aren't sweeping away what came before - it's still incremental change. It's not American-style zoning."

As for the timescale by which the government's planning programme might come into effect, he said: "We'd like to move fairly swiftly, but accept this is a very complicated area affecting many sectors. Next year we will be able to publish proposals in detail and to begin the legislative process, but there is a lot of work to do before then."

Once legislation is in place, "we will then look to take it in stages, to bring some local authorities with us as the pilots, and give them the support they need to do the first plan-making process", he said. "This will be a long-term project that will take a number of years to execute, we are not under any illusions about that."

And he added: "It's important everyone keeps going under the current system in the interim, and that local authorities don't pause their plan-making processes, or developers making choices thinking about what a future system might look like."

Asked what he saw more generally as the purpose of planning, he said. "The role of the planner matters because we want to define the sort of places we would be proud of in the future. That doesn't always happen organically if completely left to the market. So we want to ensure that there is a guiding hand, hopefully quite a light-touch one - that ensures good-quality, well designed beautiful communities that stand the test of time."

He said on this "we could think about" making this purpose clear in the upcoming legislation. "I would like to think the reforms we bring forward will return planning to its roots, [as] an idealistic profession where people wanted to create better places, and were interested in health and social justice, beauty and design," he said.

"Whether that's through design work, or more masterplanning of sites, and a more meaningful plan-making process that engages more, I believe we can free up planners from a lot of the day-to-day and help them to focus on the things that drove them into the profession."

Quartermain [works for Cratus as a senior associate](#) in its advisory team and for [Town Legal as a part-time consultant](#).