

What we can expect from the new planning Green Paper

[Back in March](#), housing secretary James Brokenshire announced in the Spring Statement that the government would publish an "Accelerated Planning Green Paper" later in the year. This would focus on "how greater capacity and capability, performance management and procedural improvements can accelerate the end-to-end process", he said. It would also draw on the recent Rosewell Review on speeding up appeal inquiries and look at the effectiveness of the compulsory purchase regime, Brokenshire added.

Speaking the following month, [government chief planner Steve Quartermain said](#) the paper would seek to both assess the impact of recent policy changes and to identify any further changes needed. Planning minister Kit Malthouse, meanwhile, [told the National Planning Summit earlier this month](#) that using incentives and penalties linked to community infrastructure levy payments - according to the speed at which developers build out their schemes - may be considered as "part of the mix" of the paper's measures.

Sector organisations say they have been given few clues as to what else the government may be considering, with discussions understood to be ongoing between stakeholders and ministry officials. Even the timing of the green paper is uncertain at this stage. Observers expect that the green paper will be published in the autumn, but fear the arrival of a new prime minister and ministerial team during the summer may affect that timing, or even raise doubts about the whole exercise. "It will be interesting to see if the green paper proposals emerge at all," said Hugh Ellis, policy director at the Town and Country Planning Association.

Presuming the government does press ahead with it, stakeholders suggest there are a range of measures that the government is likely to consider. One commentator from the property industry posits that the green paper will be a tinkering of the system rather than a major overhaul. "It's not going to be anything that needs primary legislation or a vast amount of regulatory realignment," she said. "It will be more about strengthening the tools that already exist." Such measures would be likely to include greater use of neighbourhood development orders, local development orders and simplified planning zones to speed up delivery, she suggested.

Elsewhere, capacity in the planning system is likely to be a prominent issue, with commentators highlighting ways in which local authority planning teams can be better resourced. As part of an effort to shape the content of the green paper, local authority body the Planning Officers Society has submitted a paper to government chief planner Steve Quartermain outlining how the planning system can be speeded up and improved. At the top of the list is resourcing development management. The document says that most of the service "can be made self-financing by allowing local planning authorities to set their own fees". Building control "has been successfully doing this for many years", it goes on to say, while developers are willing to fund good quality services.

One stakeholder from the property and development industry predicted that the green paper will contain ideas on how local authorities can learn from the commercial sector when recruiting staff, together with lessons from cross-sector social enterprises such as Public Practice.

Other observers call for a much more radical set of actions from the green paper than tinkering with timescales. Ellis said: "My test for the green paper is not the minutiae of whether we need to speed up the planning system, but dealing with the real point of planning. Can it help us deal with the existential challenges of climate change, demographic change and the enormous impact of new technology on places? If the green paper does not fully deal with those three issues, then it is a total waste of time."