

East of England Position Statement – Planning and Infrastructure Bill**Date:** 25/04/25**Report By:** Matthew Stewart, Policy and Programmes Manager**Contact:** matt.stewart@localgoveasteng.gov.uk

Purpose

To make clear the views of Local Government East on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and propose action around the Bill currently working its way through Parliament.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 While stakeholders in the East of England broadly welcome many of the changes made in the Bill, there are some outstanding areas where local authorities would welcome additional powers, clarity, or amendments.

2. Encourage developers to build affordable homes

- 2.1 The East of England is the fastest-growing region in the country according to the 2021 census¹, and the East of England has been targeted to build 227,145 such homes over the next 5 years - 12.3% of the England total². It is essential to ensure that as many of these new homes as possible are genuinely affordable for local communities, particularly at social rent. As a result, there is a need to encourage developers to deliver the right kind of housing at a faster pace. In 2022, there were as many as 236,000 sites with planning permission that had not yet started building in the East of England alone³. It is crucial to find ways to encourage developers to build the housing our communities need, while enabling their businesses and local economies to grow.

2.2 **To enable this:**

- The government should amend the bill to modify viability assessments through enhancing their transparency and increasing the opportunity for scrutiny, enabling local authorities to hold developers to account.
- Investigate the impact and practicability of financial penalties for slow build-out and consider amending the bill to include such measures.

3. Strategic Development Plans (SDS) and local plan coordination

- 3.1 The local plan system is also undergoing reform. Many plans will be at the advanced examination stage and will need to align with SDS requirements once adopted. Therefore, there's a need to ensure that the timetables between SDS implementation and local plan approval are coordinated.

¹ [Population and household estimates, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

² [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Housing report highlights challenge and need for new housing in East](#)

- 3.2 **To enable this: The government must publish clear guidance for local authorities on what to expect around SDSs, to enable alignment with local plans.**

4. Strategic Development Plans and border coordination

- 4.1 There is considerable rate of reform within local government currently, particularly around administrative boundaries. Local government reorganisation will lead to changing roles and cultures. There will be other changes such as: the reduction in Integrated Care System funding; the introduction of Regional Energy Plans; ongoing co-ordination on cross-boundary dynamics (including interactions with London) and economic services (including minerals and waste); infrastructure provision; and environmental challenges such as water availability and quality. Therefore, it is important that existing initiatives are maintained, and functional geographies are established, to allow for holistic strategic planning. This will enable local bodies to better support the Government's missions.
- 4.2 **To enable this: The government should facilitate structured engagement between local authorities, Integrated Care Boards, NHS trusts, and other stakeholders.**

5. Planning fee recovery

- 5.1 Local authorities welcome the chance to recover their costs as part of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. However, greater clarity over exactly what can be covered would be appreciated at the earliest possible opportunity. In addition, councils would appreciate guidance on the level of collaboration expected between authorities to manage fee levels. Finally, upfront new burdens funding would be needed to create the internal resource required to set the new charges on a reasonable, effective, and full cost-recovery basis.
- 5.2 **To enable this:**
- **The government should amend the Bill to make clear exactly what "cost recovery" means, and ensure it includes related costs like local plan creation**
 - **The government should publish guidance on council collaboration on fees.**
 - **The government should provide start-up funding to cover the policy and strategy set-up costs of planning charges.**

6. Delegated planning

- 6.1 The new bill contains provisions for delegated planning through planners rather than through planning committees, reducing councillor input into the process. There are concerns that planning committees are painted in an excessively negative light given the role they play in housebuilding and planning good places to live. We would also like further clarity on how the delegated planning structure will work with regards to accountability, as officers may be reluctant to make decisions without sufficient indemnification.
- 6.2 **To enable this:**
- **Clarification is needed for planner liability and accountability under the new delegated planning system.**
 - **Changes proposed in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill should not erode or curtail the role of democratically elected councillors in the planning process**