

News story: Government announces new housing measures

The government has today announced:

- a New Homes Ombudsman to support homebuyers facing problems with their newly built home
- plans to help provide the homes the country needs through planning reform
- plans to create a lasting legacy from the 2022 Commonwealth Games
- measures to improve the safety of high-rise buildings

Measures to champion the rights of homebuyers and help ensure that when they buy a new home they get the quality of build they rightly expect. The New Homes Ombudsman will protect the interests of homebuyers and hold developers to account when things go wrong.

The government is committed to delivering 300,000 homes a year by the mid 2020s and has today (1 October 2018) announced further plans to speed up the planning system as well as make better use of land and vacant buildings to provide the homes that communities need.

This includes more flexibility to extend upwards on existing blocks of flats, shops and offices making better use of space by increasing housing density.

Championing ambitious councils keen to make new garden communities a central part of their plans for housing and economic growth and have local support there will be clearer rules to give more certainty for communities when land is needed to make this a reality.

Local authorities will also receive additional freedom to make the most of existing brownfield land and dispose of surplus land that could instead accommodate new homes.

To support a successful Commonwealth Games in 2022 and create a legacy long after the games are over, £165 million has been announced to unlock up to 5,100 homes in Birmingham and provide the infrastructure to support these new homes.

As part of its comprehensive programme to improve building safety following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the government has also confirmed that it will ban the use of combustible materials on external walls of high-rise residential buildings. The ban will also apply to hospitals, care homes and student accommodation over 18 metres.

Support for homebuyers facing problems with their newbuild

The government has announced that there will be a New Homes Ombudsman – a watchdog that will champion homebuyers, protect their interests and hold

developers to account.

We intend to legislate to require all new developers to belong to a new homes ombudsman.

House buyers should be confident that when they purchase a new home, they get the quality of build and finish they expected.

We will work with consumers and industry to develop our proposals and publish more details in due course.

In the meantime government expects industry to continue to improve the current redress arrangements and improve the consistency of quality for new build homes.

Planning reform

The government set out a package of reforms to deliver 300,000 homes a year by the mid 2020s through planning reform and targeted investment.

As part of this the government has announced plans to consult on further measures to speed up the planning system as well as make better use of land and vacant buildings to deliver the homes that communities need.

This includes:

- introducing a new permitted development right to allow property owners to extend certain buildings upwards, while maintaining the character of residential and conservation areas and safeguarding people's privacy.
- clearer guidance to give more certainty for communities when land is needed to make a New Town a reality.
- giving local authorities more flexibility to dispose of surplus land that could instead accommodate new homes.

The government will consult on these new measures in due course.

Funding for 2022 Commonwealth Games

Funding to help deliver the 2022 Commonwealth Games Village, provide necessary transport improvements and create a legacy after the games has ended has also been announced.

The government will provide a £165 million funding boost to unlock up to 5,100 homes in Birmingham and support wider regeneration of the Perry Barr area through major infrastructure projects:

- creating a Commonwealth Games Village – providing a home-away-from-home

for athletes and officials which will be converted to housing in Perry Barr following the games

- providing road and public transport improvements including upgrading the railway station, to support both new and existing communities

With construction due to begin in 2019, the government will work with the West Midlands Combined Authority and Birmingham City council to support these ambitious plans.

Birmingham 2022 is set to showcase Birmingham, the West Midlands and the entire country to the rest of the world as a destination for international trade, education, world class sport and tourism.

Building safety

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy the government established a comprehensive building safety programme that included an [independent review on fire safety and building regulations](#). In the summer the government published its response to this review and said it would ban the use of combustible materials on external walls of high-rise buildings subject to consultation.

Following this consultation the government has today (1 October 2018) confirmed that it will take forward this ban on all high-rise buildings that contains flats, as well as hospitals, residential care premises and student accommodation above 18 metres.

This ban will be delivered through changes to building regulations guidance and will limit materials available to products achieving a European classification of Class A1 or A2.

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Press release: £5m Youth Performance Partnerships to boost performing arts

Five Youth Performance Partnerships will be created in England to give young people greater access to the performing arts, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Jeremy Wright has announced.

The scheme will bring arts organisations and schools together to teach practical performance skills both on and off stage, including drama, dance, art, creative writing, lighting, sound and set design.

Primary and secondary schools will also be linked up with playwrights to give children the opportunity to perform new works by up and coming writers.

The Youth Performance Partnerships will be delivered by Arts Council England over three academic years and will reach 10,000 young people.

The Arts Council will select one partnership in the North, the Midlands, South West, South East and London, and prioritise places where not enough young people have the chance to take part in performance.

The Partnerships build on the success of Music Education Hubs which helps over 600,000 children a year access activities like playing an instrument, singing in a choir or joining a band.

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Press release: HM Land Registry to explore the benefits of blockchain

HM Land Registry is partnering with software company Methods, who will utilise R3's blockchain platform, Corda, for the second phase of HM Land Registry's groundbreaking research and development project, Digital Street.

Methods will be supported by a team of global experts from R3, Blockchain Digital, and their wider partner network. The organisations will bring their blockchain expertise to HM Land Registry, enabling Digital Street to fully explore the potential benefits of the new technology.

[Digital Street](#) will work with the industry to understand how the innovative use of technology, such as blockchain, distributed ledgers and smart contracts, could revolutionise the land registration and property buy-sell process.

Graham Farrant, Chief Executive of HM Land Registry, said:

Our ambition to become the world's leading land registry for speed, ease of use and an open approach to data requires HM Land Registry to be at the forefront of global innovation in land registration. By working with Methods on Digital Street we are taking another step toward that goal, as we explore how new technologies like blockchain can help us to develop a faster, simpler and cheaper land registration process.

Peter Rowlinson, Chief Executive Officer of Methods, commented:

When we read the HM Land Registry requirement, we recognised that the unique features offered by Corda in terms of security, privacy, interoperability and the smart contract flow framework, originally designed for financial services, would be an excellent fit.

David Rutter, Chief Executive Officer of R3, commented:

We are pleased to see another innovative deployment of Corda in the public sector and look forward to working with the world's most well-recognised land registry, HM Land Registry. Blockchain holds the potential to transform land registry services by improving speed, simplicity and efficiency. We will be working closely with HM Land Registry, Methods and our partners over the coming months to turn this potential into reality.

John Reynolds, Blockchain Digital's Innovation & Delivery Director, commented:

Digital Street and blockchain has the potential to synchronise and optimise the way all participants in the property market interact, from solicitors to banks, from surveyors to estate agents. Over the coming months, and in support of HM Land Registry's commitment to open data and open innovation, we will be announcing a programme of innovation and collaboration events that enable the property ecosystem to join the Digital Street Community.

Digital Street

HM Land Registry's ambition is to be at the forefront of innovation by exploring how land registration and conveyancing can be made easier and how technology and data could revolutionise the process.

Digital Street is HM Land Registry's research and development project designed to make buying and selling property simpler, quicker and cheaper through the innovative use of technology. Now in its second year, the project is exploring the use of blockchain technology and smart contracts to bring greater transparency, speed, and trust to property transactions.

The project has already created a digital register for a small selection of properties, which is a first step towards establishing a register that is fully machine-readable and able to be updated instantly.

Methods was selected following a tender process which attracted 22 bids to support the Digital Street project team and develop greater in-house expertise.

HM Land Registry

HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth in excess of £4 trillion, including around £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for more than 85% of the land mass of England and Wales.

HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition

is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.

For further information about HM Land Registry visit gov.uk/land-registry.

Follow us on: Twitter [@HMLandRegistry](https://twitter.com/HMLandRegistry), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

HM Land Registry Business Strategy

Digital Street is just one of many projects being developed by HM Land Registry as part of the organisation's [Business Strategy](#). The organisation is exploring a number of potential services to make the buying, renting, selling, financing, building and managing property easier.

The first digital mortgage was signed in April using HM Land Registry's 'Sign your mortgage deed' service. The initial mortgages have signed by customers of Coventry Building Society and Enact Conveyancing, HM Land Registry is now actively expanding the number of lenders and conveyancers who are using the service.

The recently launched Local Land Charge Register brings data from 326 local authorities to a central database, removing the need for manual searches in overworked local offices and removing weeks of potential delays from each sale.

Homebuyers can use the 'Find property information' service to quickly find information about properties they are interested in at the start of the transaction, rather than waiting until an offer has been accepted.

Working in collaboration with key stakeholders from across the industry, including property technology (PropTech) specialists, data experts, conveyancers, property developers, mortgage lenders and others, over the coming years HM Land Registry will be exploring innovative uses of technology.

Methods

[Methods](#) is the leading digital transformation partner for the UK public sector. We bring innovation, bespoke development, and service management capability to align UK public services around citizens and safeguard them for future generations.

R3

[R3](#) is an enterprise blockchain software firm working with a broad ecosystem of more than 200 members and partners across multiple industries from both the private and public sectors to develop on Corda, its open-source blockchain platform, and Corda Enterprise, a commercial version of Corda for enterprise usage.

R3's global team of over 180 professionals in 13 countries is supported by over 2,000 technology, financial, and legal experts drawn from its global

member base. R3 is backed by investment of over \$120 million from more than 45 firms.

The Corda platform is already being used in industries from financial services to healthcare, shipping, insurance and more. It records, manages and executes institutions' financial agreements in perfect synchrony with their peers, creating a world of frictionless commerce.

Persistent Systems

[Persistent Systems](#), a \$470 million listed company, builds software that drives the business of our customers; enterprises and software product companies with software at the core of their digital transformation.

Blockchain Digital

[Blockchain Digital](#) is the leading business process innovation and service design consultancy, focused on the application of blockchain in the public sector and enterprise.

Contact