

New plans to get Britain building in coronavirus recovery

- Government to extend planning permission deadlines, saving hundreds of construction projects' permissions from expiring
- Flexible working hours on construction sites to support social distancing, helping people return to work safely
- New changes could speed up the pace of the planning appeal process

New measures to help the construction industry boost building and return to work safely will be introduced this week, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick MP announced today (22 June 2020).

Planning permission deadlines will be extended, planning appeals will be sped up and builders will be allowed more flexible working hours following agreement with their local council.

Planning permission usually expires after three years if work has not started onsite. Sites with consent that have an expiry date between the start of lockdown and the end of this year will now see their consent extended to 1 April 2021. This will prevent work that has been temporarily disrupted by the pandemic from stopping altogether.

The government estimates that by the end of this month alone, more than 400 residential permissions providing more than 24,000 new homes would have expired. The new measures will help these developments and more resume as the economy recovers.

New measures will also permanently grant the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) the ability to use more than one procedure – written representations, hearings and inquiries – at the same time when dealing with a planning appeal, enabling appeals to happen much faster.

Last year a pilot programme tested this approach and implemented recommendations of the Rosewell Review, which more than halved the time taken for appeal inquiries, from 47 weeks to 23 weeks.

This will also help builders to quickly agree more flexible construction site working hours with their local council for a temporary period. This will make it easier to follow public health guidance onsite and by staggering builders' arrival times, public transport will be less busy and the risk of infection will be reduced.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Building the homes the country needs is central to the mission of this government and is an important part of our plans to recover from the impact of the coronavirus.

New laws will enable us to speed up the pace of planning appeals and save hundreds of construction sites from being cancelled before they have a chance to get spades in the ground, helping to protect hundreds of thousands of jobs and create many others.

Taken together, these measures will help to keep workers safe and our economy moving as we work together to bounce back from the pandemic.

Today's announcement builds on measures to support the economy and protect the capacity of the construction sector, including:

- Introducing more than £330 billion of loans and guarantees to help firms continue operating
- Deferring self-assessment payments until 2021 – crucial for a sector in which many are self-employed
- Providing households across the country with reassurance such as 3-month mortgage holidays, including for landlords, alongside a ban on tenant evictions which has been extended to 5 months
- Safely reopening the housing market, helping estate agents, conveyancers, removals firms and the wider construction and property industry to return to work while following social distancing guidelines
- Launching a Charter with the Home Builders Federation, helping construction sites reopen in line with health and safety guidance

The government continues to listen to all parts of industry to see what further support may be required.