

Press release: Government action on councils failing to plan new homes

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has today (23 March 2018) [written to 15 local authorities](#) in England to inform them of decisions on intervention following their continued failure to produce a local plan, which are key to setting out how and where they expect to meet residents' needs for new homes, for more than a decade.

In [November 2017](#), the government confirmed it would commence the consideration of intervention in 15 local authorities where there has been a failure to produce a local plan.

Local Plans are a key part of the government's comprehensive programme of planning reform and targeted investment to ensure the homes local communities need are built.

The councils had until 31 January 2018 to explain why they hadn't yet published a plan, providing any exceptional circumstances for why the government shouldn't intervene.

Following their submission, the government is now setting out next steps.

Of the 15 local authorities:

- in Castle Point, Thanet, and Wirral, the government's Chief Planner and a team of experts will be sent in to assess if the government needs to take over the process of producing the local plan
- in Northumberland the government has instructed the council to produce their plan earlier and to make the timetable clearer
- in Basildon, Bolsover, Brentwood, Calderdale, Eastleigh, Mansfield, St Albans, which have all committed to publishing draft plans before the end of September 2018, the government has made clear it will monitor their progress and that any further significant delay to meet this timescale will lead to the case for intervention being reconsidered
- 4 local authorities – Liverpool, North East Derbyshire, Runnymede, York – have since published their plans

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has written to them to welcome this progress, but has made clear that should there be any further significant delays to their timetable to submit the plan, the government will not hesitate to act.

The government has abolished top-down regional planning. But a locally-led

planning system requires elected local representatives to take the lead, listen to local residents and business, and set out a clear framework to build new homes, provide key infrastructure, support the local economy and protect the environment.

Most councils have seized the opportunity that localism presents – however a small minority have not and do not have a local plan in place. This can mean uncertainty for local people, have a negative impact on neighbourhood planning groups, result in piecemeal speculative housing development and communities having no plans in place for crucial local infrastructure and services.

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Whilst most councils rightly recognise their responsibilities and most have worked hard to meet the housing challenge, some have failed.

I expect those authorities we identified in November to continue to make progress. I'm also stepping it up with 3 councils in particular, sending in a team of experts to make a direct assessment, ensuring they plan properly for the future or we'll have to do it for them.

The department has also commenced preparations to take over plan production so that work can begin as soon as possible, subject to decisions taken after the Chief Planner and his experts report back.

A procurement process is currently underway to secure planning consultants and specialists who will swiftly undertake the work on plan production should these councils not comply in the time required.

The department will also make contact with county councils and combined authorities in the areas concerned about the possibility of inviting those authorities to write plans.

See the [letters sent to the relevant local authorities](#).

The [housing white paper](#) set out how the government would prioritise intervention – where:

- the least progress in plan-making has been made
- policies in plans had not been kept up to date
- there was higher housing pressure
- intervention would have the greatest impact in accelerating local plan production

The strategy also made clear that decisions on intervention will also be informed by the wider planning context in each area (specifically, the extent to which authorities are working cooperatively to put strategic plans in place, and the potential impact that not having a plan has on neighbourhood

planning activity).

Planning experts – Castle Point, Thanet, and Wirral

The government's Chief Planner, Steve Quartermain CBE and a team of experts will report back to the Secretary of State who will then take a final decision on formal intervention later this year.

In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will conduct formal discussions with relevant county councils and city regions to see if they could take over plan production on the Secretary of State's behalf.