

PM: Build, Build, Build

Boris Johnson has announced the most radical reforms to our planning system since the Second World War, making it easier to build better homes where people want to live.

New regulations will give greater freedom for buildings and land in our town centres to change use without planning permission and create new homes from the regeneration of vacant and redundant buildings.

Under the new rules, existing commercial properties, including newly vacant shops, can be converted into residential housing more easily, in a move to kick start the construction industry and speed up rebuilding. The changes include:

- More types of commercial premises having total flexibility to be repurposed through reform of the Use Classes Order. A building used for retail, for instance, would be able to be permanently used as a café or office without requiring a planning application and local authority approval. Pubs, libraries, village shops and other types of uses essential to the lifeblood of communities will not be covered by these flexibilities.
- A wider range of commercial buildings will be allowed to change to residential use without the need for a planning application.
- Builders will no longer need a normal planning application to demolish and rebuild vacant and redundant residential and commercial buildings if they are rebuilt as homes.
- Property owners will be able to build additional space above their properties via a fast track approval process, subject to neighbour consultation.

These changes, which are planned to come into effect by September through changes to the law, will both support the high street revival by allowing empty commercial properties to be quickly repurposed and reduce the pressure to build on green field land by making brownfield development easier. Developers will still need to adhere to high standards and regulations, just without the unnecessary red tape.

The Prime Minister also announced that work will begin to look at how land owned by the government can be managed more effectively.

Ahead of the Spending Review, a new, ambitious cross-government strategy will look at how public sector land can be managed and released so it can be put

to better use. This would include home building, improving the environment, contributing to net zero goals and injecting growth opportunities into communities across the country.

These announcements come alongside a package of measures to support home building across England. These include:

- A £12bn affordable homes programme that will support up to 180,000 new affordable homes for ownership and rent over the next 8 years, confirmed today.
- Included in the affordable homes programme will be a 1,500 unit pilot of 'First Homes': houses that will be sold to first time buyers at a 30% discount which will remain in perpetuity, keeping them affordable for generations of families to own.
- Funds from the £400m Brownfield Land Fund have today been allocated to the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, and North of Tyne and Tees Valley to support around 24,000 homes.
- The Home Builders Fund to help smaller developers access finance for new housing developments will receive additional £450m boost. This is expected to support delivery of around 7,200 new homes.

Also announced today, the government will launch a planning Policy Paper in July setting out our plan for comprehensive reform of England's seven-decade old planning system, to introduce a new approach that works better for our modern economy and society.

Later this year, we will also bring forward a Local Recovery White Paper detailing how the UK government will partner with places across the UK to build a sustainable economic recovery, launch our National Infrastructure Plan and legislate for wider de-regulatory reforms.

[Severn Trent Water prosecuted for Shropshire sewage pollution](#)

The company pleaded guilty at Telford Magistrates' Court to 3 charges:

- causing sewage to discharge into the Row Brook from the Acton Burnell

Treatment Works between November 2014 and May 2016

- failing to provide a labelled sampling point
- failing to operate and maintain a grass plot treatment facility

In the case brought by the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water was yesterday fined £800,000 in total (£400,000 on the first and last charge and no separate penalty on the second).

They were ordered to pay costs of £70,420.28 and a victim surcharge of £120. The offences came to light on 10 May 2016 when a member of the public smelled a strong unpleasant odour and saw a ditch full of raw sewage at Acton Burnell.

As a result, an Environment Agency officer inspected the site and found the brook was polluted for 250 metres downstream of the works. This incident was caused by a fat blockage at the works inlet.

On returning 3 days later to check that the sewage had been cleared, the officer saw a discharge of raw sewage was happening again. A Severn Trent Water site operative told him that this was due to the expansion of the nearby Concord College. He said the sewage works serving it was due to be upgraded. Sewage effluent normally discharges into storm tanks during very poor weather conditions, but in this case was found to have been incorrectly discharging via the works storm tanks during normal weather. This meant sewage was being discharged into the brook without being properly treated.

As a result of the pollution Severn Trent Water set up a system of pumping the storm tanks at the works to sludge holding tanks, which would then be emptied and taken off site by road tanker. This showed it was possible to run the site in accordance with their permit despite capacity issues.

A survey by the Environment Agency carried out the following day concluded that sewage in the brook had had a significant impact on macroinvertebrate ecology.

On inspecting the flow data to the works, the Environment Agency was able to show that discharges of raw sewage had been happening regularly for 17 months, calculating that during this period Severn Trent Water had illegally discharged over 3.8 million litres of raw sewage to the brook.

Speaking after the case, Environment Agency officer, Adam Shipp, said:

Severn Trent Water Limited had been aware of the capacity issues at the works since 2011 yet had taken inadequate steps to address them. When the incidents happened in May 2016 they were able to put in place simple measures that stopped raw sewage entering the brook. Putting the measures in place in 2011 would have protected

the environment and kept them out of court.

He went on to say:

Water companies are aware that their activities have the potential for serious environmental impacts, and they know that we will take appropriate action when they cause pollution.

Notes to editors

Severn Trent Water was charged with:

- Between 4 November 2014 and 13 May 2016 the Defendant, at the Acton Burnell Sewage Treatment Works (the Works) did cause a water discharge activity, namely a discharge of sewerage into Row Brook except under and to the extent authorised by an Environmental Permit, contrary to Regulation 38(1)(a) and Regulation 12(1)(b) of the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2010.
- Between 10 and 13 May 2016 the Defendant at the Works failed to provide and/or maintain at National Grid Reference SJ5299 0235 or some other point as agreed in writing with the Environment Agency a labelled sampling point so that a representative sample of the Discharge could be obtained, in breach of Condition 3 Schedule 2 of Environmental Permit S/02/55556/R contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2010.
- Between 10 and 13 May 2016 the Defendant at the Works failed to operate and maintain in accordance with good operational practice a grass plot treatment facility of not less than 1,099 square metres in breach of conditions 7 and 8 of Schedule 2 of Environmental Permit S/02/55556/R contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2010.

[Environment Agency joins Warwickshire Police to stamp out illegal waste crime](#)

Following a report that large scale waste was being deposited on a former car

boot site and then buried near the bank of the River Cole in Coleshill, the Environment Agency started an investigation.

The officer investigating for the Environment Agency has worked with the Warwickshire Rural Crime Team. The team surveyed the site and provided photographs of illegal activity taking place that could later be used as evidence.

An excavator that was initially on site has since been removed, after the Environment Agency's investigating officer warned the company that had supplied the equipment that any activity on the site was illegal and any plant or vehicle found on the site would be seized.

While the machinery has since been removed, the waste, which includes household and construction materials, remains on site. The investigating officer along with the Environment Agency's National Enforcement Service who followed up the police investigation, are now monitoring the site for signs of any further illegal activity.

The land is privately owned and efforts are now being made to notify the landowner of the illegal activity that is taking place. Landowners may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on their land without the relevant permissions, which could leave them liable to prosecution, or they may not be aware of the waste that has been dumped on their land.

Gerry Magee, Senior Investigating Crime Officer for the Environment Agency, said:

We remain committed during the coronavirus situation to reducing waste crime and reducing the opportunities for those operating illegally to do so.

Thanks to the support and assistance from the Warwickshire Rural Crime team we have some good photographic evidence which will help with our investigation into the illegal waste activity near Coleshill.

Landowners need to be extra vigilant during the current situation so they don't get dumped on. Waste criminals could target their land so landowners should make regular checks to make sure it's secure.

Our advice to homeowners and businesses, as always, is to check someone is registered to take your waste away as you could be breaking the law if your waste isn't managed properly.

To report illegal waste activity, or if you suspect a company is operating illegally, call the Environment Agency 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60 or report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Notes to editors

- An illegal waste site is any site routinely operating without a permit or outside of its permit limits. They pose a risk of harm to the health of people and the environment.
- [Check a waste carrier, broker or dealer is registered](#) before you use them.
- Waste site operators should make sure their site is legal and [check they have the right permit for their activities](#).
- It is illegal to burn most types of waste. Burning waste such as treated wood, tyres, plastics, rubber and oil can seriously harm health and pollute the environment. People face a fine of up to £50,000 for illegally managing waste.

[Revolutionising the way we fly: apply for business funding](#)



Flying taxis, drones delivering medical supplies, small electric aircraft, vertical take-off and landing vehicles and autonomous aircraft are some of the innovations that could transform aviation and broader transportation in the future.

New systems and technologies must be developed to allow them to use existing airports and airspace to fly in and around rural and urban environments. New business models must be created, and the public must have confidence in new services.

The government has set aside £125 million as part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund Future Flight Challenge to make the UK a world leader in

aviation systems, products and markets. The funding supports development of capabilities to enable safe operations of these new modes of air transportation.

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, has up to £30 million from the fund to support projects that develop and demonstrate integrated aviation systems for new electric and autonomous aircraft.

Projects should help new aircraft to fly in and out

Projects should aim to develop and demonstrate integrated aviation systems that allow drones, urban aircraft or electric regional aircraft to fly in and out of airports, airspace, and rural and urban environments. They should take a 'system of systems' approach and could focus on several areas including:

- air traffic management and unmanned traffic management systems
- physical and digital infrastructure to support future flight
- autonomy
- digital and communications systems
- new business models
- public acceptance
- transport integration
- vehicle technologies enabling integration to new aviation systems
- simulation
- non-aerospace regulation
- viable, challenging, use cases
- total security systems

There are two strands to the competition, one for smaller fast-track projects and the second for larger consortia undertaking more ambitious projects.

Applications are sought from businesses that work in the aviation sector and from businesses outside the sector that can bring in new technologies.

Strand 1

- the competition is open, and the closing date is at midday on 1 July 2020
- projects must be led by an SME working with at least one other business, research organisation, public sector organisation or charity
- we expect projects to range in size between £150,000 and £500,000 and to last between 6 and 18 months
- a briefing event will be held on 19 May 2020

Strand 2

- the competition is open, and the closing date is at midday on 1 July 2020
- projects can be led by businesses of any size but must include at least 1 SME as a project partner
- we expect projects to range in size between £500,000 and £10 million and

to last between 6 and 18 months

- a briefing event will be held on 19 May 2020

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[Michael Walker, Referee Analyst, honoured by Queen's University](#)

[Michael Walker](#), a leading expert in food safety and authenticity, and a longtime partner of the Institute for Global Food Security, IGFS, has received an honorary professorship from Queen's University Belfast.

Professor Walker said:

I am deeply honoured. It is a privilege to support the Institute for Global Food Security and Queens University Belfast. I look forward to continuing my work alongside those at the forefront of food safety, authenticity and sustainability, which I enjoy immensely. It is also a reflection of the high standards of science in the Laboratory of the Government Chemist (LGC).

A graduate of Queen's, Sussex and Kingston universities, Dr Walker has always maintained close links with Queen's. He worked alongside Professor Chris Elliott in the '[Elliott Review](#)' into the integrity and assurance of food supply networks in the aftermath of the horsemeat scandal.

He has collaborated with a number of other IGFS scientists on research projects and publications and contributes to the supervision of final-year undergraduate projects alongside IGFS Emeritus Professor, Duncan Thorburn Burns.

Dr Walker also sits on the Industrial Advisory Board of the School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Queen's.

Michael is a champion of forensic measurement science, particularly as it applies to food allergens and authenticity, and remains a very active (and

past local Chair) of the Institute of Food Science & Technology (IFST) and was awarded an honorary Fellowship of IFST.

Michael is experienced in the fields of public strategy and policy. After serving as Public Analyst in Northern Ireland he spent a short period as Chief Executive of Forensic Science NI before taking up post at the Office of the Government Chemist, at the [UK National Measurement Laboratory](#) in Teddington, south west London.

In parallel, he has been a non-executive Director with the Consumer Council, a founder Board member of the Food Standards Agency and a Board member of AFBI, the Agrifood Biosciences Institute for NI. Michael applies his science in his own chemico-legal consultancy as an expert witness.

Professor Nigel Scollan, Director of IGFS, said the honorary professorship was a fitting acknowledgement of Dr Walker's contribution:

Michael has given strong support and assistance to Queen's over many years. We have benefitted from his insights into the bioanalysis of food allergens and in many other key food-safety and authenticity research areas and I look forward to continuing close collaboration.