# Planning and Infrastructure Bill clears Commons amid housing, environmental and property rights controversies



Flagship planning reforms, deemed essential for delivering Labour's ambitious pledge to construct 1.5 million homes, have successfully passed through the House of Commons. On Tuesday evening, MPs voted 306 to 174 in favour of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, marking a significant step towards addressing the UK's ongoing housing crisis.

Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook emphasised the importance of the Bill in fostering economic growth and enhancing decision-making within the planning system. He stated, “This landmark Bill will get Britain building again... it will enable us to tackle the housing crisis and raise living standards in every part of the country.” The Bill is pivotal, not only in its aim to meet housing demands but also in streamlining processes related to infrastructure projects crucial for economic development, as outlined in the government's broader Plan for Change.

In stark contrast, Shadow Housing Secretary Kevin Hollinrake labelled the proposal as “dangerous” and warned that it could result in uninspired, uniform developments that lack community character. He cautioned that the drive for quantity over quality may erode public trust in the planning system, arguing for the necessity of homes that resonate with the unique identities of local communities. “We need the right homes in the right places, shaped by the right principles,” he asserted.

Campaigners have raised alarming concerns about the Bill's potential to dilute environmental protections. They're worried that the reforms could empower developers to bypass important regulations, leading to detrimental environmental impacts such as increased flooding and loss of natural spaces. Responding to these accusations, Pennycook acknowledged the existing limitations of the current system and promised to introduce a nature restoration fund aimed at bolstering ecological conservation alongside development.

The controversy surrounding the Bill extends to its provisions regarding compulsory purchase orders (CPO). During the report stage, Conservative MP Robbie Moore voiced concerns that the Bill could amount to “absolute theft” of private property rights by allowing authorities to disregard land value expectations in CPO processes. He argued that property rights are foundational to society and reiterated the need for fair compensation when land is acquired for public use.

On the other side of the debate, Labour MP Chris Hinchliff advocated for a more progressive approach, suggesting the removal of “hope value” from land meant for housing to ease the financial burden on councils. Hinchliff’s proposed amendment aims to empower local authorities to purchase land at its current use value, thereby curbing speculation and facilitating the construction of affordable housing.

As the Bill progresses to the House of Lords for further scrutiny, it is amid a backdrop of stark political divisions. The government has set forth ambitious targets, increasing annual housing goals to 370,000 homes, a change underscoring a commitment to meet pressing housing needs while sparking ongoing debates about the implications for community identity and environmental stewardship.

With all eyes on the next legislative steps, the discourse surrounding the Planning and Infrastructure Bill encapsulates fundamental questions regarding the balance of growth, community integrity, and environmental sustainability in shaping the future landscape of England’s towns and cities.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/bill-matthew-pennycook-kevin-hollinrake-government-natural-england-b2767469.html), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/bill-matthew-pennycook-kevin-hollinrake-government-natural-england-b2767469.html), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/1cc1d7d0-a0d8-4fbf-9602-dd272090a140)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/new-uk-government-sets-higher-housebuilding-targets-planning-overhaul-2024-07-30/), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-kevin-hollinrake-uk-parliament-b2663192.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/bill-matthew-pennycook-kevin-hollinrake-government-natural-england-b2767469.html), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-reforms-to-slash-a-year-off-infrastructure-delivery), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/1cc1d7d0-a0d8-4fbf-9602-dd272090a140)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-kevin-hollinrake-uk-parliament-b2663192.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/bill-matthew-pennycook-kevin-hollinrake-government-natural-england-b2767469.html), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-kevin-hollinrake-uk-parliament-b2663192.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/new-uk-government-sets-higher-housebuilding-targets-planning-overhaul-2024-07-30/), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-kevin-hollinrake-uk-parliament-b2663192.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-kevin-hollinrake-uk-parliament-b2663192.html), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/kevin-hollinrake-matthew-pennycook-tories-government-england-b2663339.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/bill-matthew-pennycook-kevin-hollinrake-government-natural-england-b2767469.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill> - The UK government has introduced the Planning and Infrastructure Bill as part of its commitment to rebuild Britain, aiming to accelerate economic growth and raise living standards. The Bill supports the delivery of the government's ambitious Plan for Change milestones, including building 1.5 million homes in England and fast-tracking 150 planning decisions on major economic infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament. It seeks to streamline planning processes to expedite the delivery of high-quality infrastructure and housing, and to support the Clean Power 2030 target by ensuring key clean energy infrastructure is built swiftly.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-reforms-to-slash-a-year-off-infrastructure-delivery> - The UK government is implementing planning reforms to expedite the delivery of major infrastructure projects, including clean energy initiatives, reservoirs, and railway lines. These changes aim to halve the average two-year statutory pre-consultation period for major infrastructure projects, facilitating faster development of essential infrastructure. The reforms are part of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and are expected to save over £1 billion for industry and taxpayers during this Parliament. The government is also introducing a 'nature restoration fund' to support ecological compensation for developments.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/1cc1d7d0-a0d8-4fbf-9602-dd272090a140> - The UK government has introduced a new planning and infrastructure bill to spur economic growth and address the housing shortage. Announced during the King's Speech, the legislation aims to streamline the planning process for major projects and ensure fair compensation for compulsory land purchases, encouraging the development of homes and infrastructure. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer emphasized the government's commitment to building 1.5 million new homes and tackling local resistance to construction projects. The bill includes reforms to simplify planning consent, modernize council planning committees, and increase local planning capacity with an additional 300 planners. It also proposes using development projects to fund environmental recovery.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/new-uk-government-sets-higher-housebuilding-targets-planning-overhaul-2024-07-30/> - The new UK government has announced mandatory housing targets for English councils, aiming to deliver 1.5 million additional homes before the next election. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, following a Labour election victory, prioritizes this as a key part of his economic growth strategy. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner revealed plans to increase the annual housebuilding target to 370,000 homes from the previous 300,000. Acknowledging potential controversy, she emphasized the necessity for these reforms to address the housing shortage. The plan includes an eight-week consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework to expedite policy changes by year-end.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-kevin-hollinrake-uk-parliament-b2663192.html> - The UK government is 'absolutely willing' to intervene and take over plans from local authorities that refuse to comply with new housebuilding targets. A shake-up of planning rules will see councils given mandatory targets to deliver a total of 370,000 homes a year in England. Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook has urged local councils to 'exhaust all your options' to meet the goal, including releasing the 'right parts' of protected greenbelt land. Local authorities will receive government support to implement plans, but 'recalcitrant authorities' that refuse to comply could face the 'full range of ministerial intervention power'.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/kevin-hollinrake-matthew-pennycook-tories-government-england-b2663339.html> - Labour is accused of waging a 'war on rural England' with its overhaul of planning rules. Shadow housing secretary Kevin Hollinrake claimed that the majority of homes built to reach the government's target of 1.5 million homes will go to migrants coming to the UK. Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook branded Mr. Hollinrake's comments as 'scaremongering' and stated that the government has 'not shied away from controversial decisions'.