

**Westminster Social Policy Forum conference:
Next steps for the planning system and housebuilding in England**

Timing: Morning, Friday, 16th October 2026

Taking Place Online



WESTMINSTER
SOCIAL POLICY
FORUM

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **The new National Planning Policy Framework and priorities for policy**
Dr Michael Bingham, Deputy Director, Planning Policy, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Implementing the new NPPF and wider planning reform**
minimum housing density requirements | alignment with infrastructure projects and existing railway stations | land value capture operation and legal weight of national decision-making policies in practice | impact of Section 106 reform | application of strengthened brownfield-first and density policies | implications for rural communities and businesses, including changes to Rural Exception Sites policy | impact of NPPF changes on viability, land value and developer contributions | new "medium site" category requirements | assessing scope for further reform and Autumn Budget 2026 priorities
Mike Hooper, Technical Director, Planning, Arcadis
Senior representative, developer
Senior representative, legal
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, land
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.20 **Aligning housing, infrastructure and growth through the Spatial Development Strategy**
Senior representative, strategic authority
- 10.30 **Assessing key reforms to planning structures - Spatial Development Strategies, Local Plans and system coordination**
priorities for coordination and systems working across national policy, SDSs, and local plans | funding, governance and accountability for preparing and maintaining SDSs | expected impact of Local Plan reform on developer certainty | meeting statutory timelines under the Gateway system | embedding new powers under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill | potential alignment with the Land Use Framework | resourcing and skills challenges for local and strategic authorities | implications of local planning committee reform
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, developer
Senior representative, commercial
- 10.45 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.05 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.10 Break
- 11.20 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.25 **Priorities for ensuring sustainable development through the Nature Restoration Fund and Environmental Delivery Plans**
Mike Burke, Sustainable Development Portfolio Director, Natural England
- 11.50 **Balancing nature recovery outcomes and development delivery in practice**
early considerations from rollout of Environmental Delivery Plans | implications of NPPF reforms and enforcing nature improvement requirements | ensuring proportionality across different site sizes, including potential BNG exemptions for small residential brownfield sites | expectations for monitoring, reporting and long-term stewardship | impacts on site viability, land value and development density
Sally Hayns, CEO, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
Senior representative, developer
- 12.00 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.20 **Assessing key reforms to housing design, energy efficiency and the Future Homes Standard**
meeting updated Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance | preparing for implementation of new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and low-carbon requirements under the Future Homes Standard | interaction between national standards, local design codes and site-specific considerations | implications for viability and construction costs | alignment with building safety requirements and oversight | skills, capacity and supply-chain readiness across the sector | practicalities for enforcement | wider diversity of provision, including affordable and accessible homes in rural areas
Senior representative, design
Senior representative, construction
Senior representative, standards
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Social Policy Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Harry Nelson, Westminster Social Policy Forum