



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

17 July 2023

Dear Michael,

I write regarding the Department's investment in housing, and to seek an update on the [Reforms to national planning policy](#) consultation.

Housing investment

According to recent media reports, the Department has returned £1.9 billion of funding intended for housing projects to the Treasury, including £255 million intended to fund new affordable housing and £245 million intended to improve building safety.¹

On 14 July 2023, my Committee published its [Reforms to national planning policy report](#) which recommends that the Government must take urgent action to build more affordable homes and ensure sufficient resourcing of local planning authorities, in order to deliver 300,000 net new homes per year by the mid-2020s.

Separately, in [correspondence with Lee Rowley MP](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Local Government and Building Safety), we have also highlighted the need to implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Construction Product Testing Regime as soon as possible, to improve building safety.

I would be grateful if you could provide clarification on the Department's reported decision to return this funding to the Treasury, and why it could not be allocated to housing projects as was intended.

Reforms to national planning policy consultation

¹ The Guardian, [Gove's department hands back £1.9bn meant to tackle England's housing crisis](#) (July 2023)



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I also seek an update on the Government's response to the [Reforms to national planning policy](#) consultation and the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes proposed in December 2022.

The consultation said that "The government will respond to this consultation by spring 2023, publishing the Framework revisions as part of this, so that policy changes can take effect as soon as possible."² On 24 March 2023, in oral evidence to my Committee's [Reforms to national planning policy inquiry](#), Emran Mian OBE, Director General for Regeneration, DLUHC, told us "We do not have a date by which we will publish our response to the consultation [...] we have had over 20,000 responses to it. We do want to work through those carefully, and there are a lot of issues to cover as part of that. We are trying to do that as quickly as we possibly can."³

On 5 July 2023, it was reported that you announced a delay to the consultation response at the Local Government Association conference, and a DLUHC spokesperson was reported as saying that "The [consultation] response will not be published until after the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill gets [Royal] Assent".⁴

Our final [Report](#) published last week emphasised the housing sector's need for clarity, consistency and certainty over the Government's national planning policy, and called on the Government to present its final package of reforms urgently.⁵

Please could you provide an update on the anticipated timeline with approximate dates for the Government's response to the *Reforms to national planning policy* consultation, and the implementation of the NPPF changes?

Almshouses and the NPPF

On a related issue, I have received representations from the Almshouse Association, with details of cases where almshouse charities have been unable to access affordable housing funds for the development of new almshouses due to the NPPF definition of 'affordable housing for rent'. The current NPPF definition of 'affordable housing for rent' stipulates that the landlord should be a Registered Provider of social housing. Many almshouses choose not to become Registered Providers on grounds of proportionality. In relation to question 26 of the *Reforms to national planning policy* consultation, I would appreciate an update on the Department's assessment of the definition of 'affordable housing for rent' in the NPPF.

² DLUHC, [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy](#) (December 2022), chapter 1, para 5

³ Oral evidence: Reforms to national planning policy, [24 April 2023](#), Q165 (Emran Mian OBE)

⁴ Planning Resource, [NPPF revisions will be delayed until at least September, DLUHC confirms](#) (July 2023)

⁵ Seventh Report of Session 2022–23, [Reforms to national planning policy](#), HC 1122, p. 4



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I would be grateful for your response to all of these matters by 31 July 2023.

Best wishes,

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee