

**From:** [Edward Thwaite](#)  
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**Subject:** FW: What yesterday's "Planning changes" will mean  
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**From:** lowton east neighbourhood development forum [mailto:lendf99@gmail.com]

## **An at a glance look at the key news contained in yesterday's package of planning reforms.**

The coalition government yesterday announced a set of reforms to speed up the planning system, with Prime Minister David Cameron stressing that his administration is determined to "cut through the bureaucracy" holding back economic growth. "That starts with getting the planners off our backs," he said.

Read on for our 60 second guide to yesterday's key announcements.

- The government is to legislate to allow applications to be decided by the Planning Inspectorate, if the local authority has a track record of consistently poor performance in the speed or quality of its decisions. A press release issued yesterday by Number 10 described this process as putting the worst performing departments in "special measures"
- The Planning Inspectorate has been instructed with immediate effect to divert resources to prioritise all major economic and housing related appeals

CLG - Mr Pickles has extended a measure that allows developers the chance to seek additional time to get their sites up and running before planning permission expires for an additional year

- The government says that it intends to "review the thresholds for some categories" in the nationally significant infrastructure projects regime, and also to "bring new categories of commercial and business development into the regime". Special parliamentary procedures which apply to major infrastructure will be amended to ensure that they are fit for purpose
- The government has unveiled plans to relax planning rules for a three-year period allow allow homeowners and businesses to build much bigger extensions without planning permission than they can at present. Speaking yesterday in Parliament, communities secretary Eric Pickles said that householders would be able to extend their properties by "roughly" six metres rather than the current three metres without the need for planning permission, provided the extension does not extend beyond half the garden

**- Councils which review their green belts will be given preferential treatment in their local plan examinations. Pickles' written ministerial statement said: "When green belt is considered in reviewing or drawing up local plans, we will support councils to move quickly through the process by prioritising their local plan examinations."**

- Recently-abandoned proposals to allow buildings to be switched from office to residential use without the need for planning permission have been revived

**- The government will legislate to allow any developer of sites which are unviable because of the number of affordable homes to appeal with immediate effect. Under the plans, the Planning Inspectorate will be instructed to assess how many affordable homes would need to be removed from the section 106 agreement for the site to become viable. It would then set aside the section 106 agreement for a three-year period**

- Pickles has announced a "fundamental and urgent review" into the local and national standards used in different parts of the country. The review will work with interested parties to rationalise these standards and will result in a clear plan of action by next spring, said the communities secretary.

NWTRA is indebted to "Planning" for this appraisal of yesterday's announced changes to the Planning system.

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Today the Labour spokesperson on Planning matters has published a press release which claims that these Planning changes will effectively 100% disempower local people and LAs, as planning decisions will be taken out of their sphere altogether for at least the next three years . NWTRA agrees with this Labour conclusion and would ask what has happened to the Localism agenda?

Since its inception many NWTRA members supposed that Localism was a sop to the complete dismantling of Community Empowerment , through an attempt to remove the appeal rights of representative community /residents groups on a wide range of housing and planning issues ,despite Coalition claims to the opposite.

Yesterday's changes will kill Neighbourhood Planning stone dead in those places where there's no Core Strategy supported by the communities, as any local plan will obviously be repeatedly overridden higher up the command chain.

s106 agreements concerning "Affordable Housing " quotas also being dropped with immediate effect is also disastrous news for all those without a home whichever part of England they live. Hope and aspiration is almost completely drained in many parts of the North West . Post industrialisation leading to no jobs, no homes, and now no hope that things will improve in our lifetimes. The global financial collapse will undermine efforts for decades .....where will the necessary growth come from ?