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Planning for affordable housing: priorities for the Planning Bill

On 10 June 2021 CPRE and Shelter organised a joint policy seminar. The aim was to input to the government's thinking on affordable housing policy before it published its response to the Planning White Paper, expected in July 2021. The White Paper proposals will have major implications for the future delivery of affordable homes, particularly with respect to the scrapping of Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the introduction of the Infrastructure Levy.

The seminar brought together leading academics, sector stakeholders, MHCLG and Defra officials to discuss and workshop policy solutions that the government can consider as it forms its response to the Planning White Paper and starts drafting the future Planning Bill, expected to be brought forward at the end of 2021. It built on the solutions put forward in the joint [Vision for Planning](#), which was published in January 2021 with input from both CPRE and Shelter.

Based on the input received we believe that there are six priorities for the government to address.

1. **The government should use the Planning Bill to set out its strategic, long-term vision for housing and the planning system.** The existing statutory purpose for planning (to pursue sustainable development) is not clear enough, and a strategic vision for housing will be important in clearly setting out what the planning system intends to achieve, and also in assessing targets for social and affordable housing delivery across the country.
2. **We need to deliver a better mix of affordable and social housing.** Sir Oliver Letwin's [recommendations](#) on increasing build out shows how strong planning policies on tenure mix, followed through in planning decisions, are essential to housing delivery. The planning system cannot be tenure blind.
3. **Land values:** land values expected are currently unrealistic. There is a political barrier to the delivery of affordable housing. Current land value capture mechanisms (S106 and CIL) are tinkering around the edges of what actually needs to be done to address the land value capture issue and stop the accruing of money at the land value level.
4. **Democratic accountability:** local communities need to be involved at all stages. Housing policies and outcomes in both urban and rural areas need to respond more effectively to local need.
5. **Funding & resourcing:** We need to fix the power balance by giving local authorities the power and funding they need to ensure fair settlements; and provide housing associations with enough funding left to cope with affordable housing need on top of other requirements.
6. **Making sure the Infrastructure Levy is fit for purpose:** The government must urgently undertake an assessment of the impact that the new Infrastructure Levy will have on social and affordable housing delivery. This should be undertaken before the legislative process begins, to detail exactly how the reforms will deliver social housing on the scale we need. In order to ensure the new Infrastructure Levy is fit for purpose, the government should also adopt a 'test and learn' approach, piloting these changes in certain parts of the country to understand the impact and identify any perverse incentives.