



Towards a Big Society

July 2010

Recent publications by Government departments give some idea of the direction and strategy of the Coalition Government relating to real estate.

Planning and Development

A timetable for milestones in the Government's proposed reform of the planning system and decentralisation agenda is found in the Department for Communities and Local Government draft Structural Reform Plan. The programme includes:

- Passing the Localism Bill bringing significant reform to the planning system by November 2011
- Publishing home building strategy, to replace targets previously in Regional Strategies, by July 2010
- Implementing "Open Source Planning" - new national planning policy - by April 2012
- Dissolving Regional Development Agencies and transferring their functions to other bodies (Local Enterprise Partnerships?) by April 2012
- Initiatives to bring more empty homes back into use by December 2010
- Introducing Home on the Farm Schemes encouraging conversion of under used farm buildings to affordable housing by June 2011
- Options for energy efficiency improvements to housing and non-domestic buildings to be in place by December 2010.

DCLG has also announced plans for a "Community Right to Build". Local communities will be able to implement small scale developments without planning permission provided they have community support for the proposals. More details are due to be published in the Autumn.

Natural Environment

DEFRA's White Paper "An invitation to shape the nature of England" is open to comments until 30 October 2010. to be followed by a draft Bill next April to implement reform. The aim is to integrate protection and enhancement of the natural environment and resources into general policy, recognise the economic value of England's natural assets and the risks to the wider economy and society of allowing these to be over-exploited and eroded.

Disclaimer: This briefing is not intended to be a complete coverage of the law in this area. Legal advice should always be taken in any particular case.

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