

Government's launch of a consultation into revising the National Planning Policy Framework

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[Commenting on the Government's proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, which opened to consultation \(30 July\).](#)

Ben Standing, Partner specialising in [planning](#) and [environmental law](#) at UK and Ireland law firm **Browne Jacobson** said: "It's welcoming to see the new Government waste no time in unveiling its plans for reforming the planning system, but it must ensure it works in close collaboration with the local authorities that will execute this new regime, rather than forcing something on them.

"The proposals point to a whole-system upheaval, but it must also consider whether any system can function effectively without the necessary people and skills, which are in high demand in local government due to insufficient funding over a prolonged period.

"Time and again, we hear from local planning authorities that they are having to consider the merits of large, complex developments that require specific expertise to handle a wide range of planning and legal issues.

"Their inability to call upon this resource is bringing the planning system to a gridlock and prevents councils from regularly updating local plans, which is why only a third have a plan that is under five years old.

"We would therefore urge the Government to tackle this issue in co-ordination with its proposed revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). We would like to see new funding announced for local authorities and a focus on accessing the necessary training. Perhaps a dedicated central resource of specific skills could be made available.

"The combination of more resource, along with an NPPF that clearly sets priorities for specific issues, should allow the planning system to be quicker and more consistent in its outcomes."

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