

## Plan better with communities in mind, Localis report urges

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### Press release

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### Plan better with communities in mind, Localis report urges

Communities should be put at the heart of the government's proposed planning reforms to build new developments that are more affordable, more beautiful, greener and more likely to endure for generations, the think-tank Localis has argued.

In a report published today entitled '**Building Communities: planning for a clean and good growth future**' the place experts in conjunction with mixed tenure developer Countryside, outline how genuine community engagement through better neighbourhood plans, the use of new design codes, as well as better digital channels of communication between councils and residents, will be vital to achieving national housing targets.

Among its key recommendations, Localis calls for the widespread development of a stewardship model for the long-term investment in areas where new communities will be established, to ensure the continued provision of both physical and social infrastructure for future generations.

Other report recommendations include calls to:

- amend Infrastructure Levy to be paid **at the point of commencement** on site and to include a ringfenced proportion for affordable housing provision;
- work to develop a centralised portal where residents can access development plans and decisions for their area, in their entirety and in one place;
- acknowledge the need for a regional approach to new building – from garden cities in the South East to greater vertical development in major cities – through the creation of new boards for regional spatial planning.

**Localis chief executive, Jonathan Werran**, said: "Whatever appears in the final planning bill, we have to increase trust and generate genuinely popular consent for local housing growth. This is to ensure that the abundant build out of affordable new homes of mixed tenure, and with it the creation of lasting new communities, remains a sustainable, place-sensitive and commercially viable process.

"Each actor – central government, our councils, our communities and developers - will have their part to play in reforming the planning process so that it finally delivers at the required pace and scale the new developments that are both wanted and attainable, and which suit their local culture, economy and environment.

"To this end, Localis's report recommends the setting up of two separate national funds to provide firstly greater capacity for neighbourhood planning and the roll out of new design codes, to ensure homes are beautiful and locally popular, and, secondly, to pay for carbon offsetting to deliver green homes fit for the age of net zero."

**Andrew Taylor, Group Planning Director, Countryside**, said: "We are delighted to have worked with Localis on this report in supporting the pledge to keep communities at the heart of planning.

"With community-based participation at its centre, an effective placemaking process can capitalise on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential. This results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well-being."

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### Scan Me:



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## Notes to Editors:

1. An advance copy of the report “Building Communities: planning for a clean and good growth future” is available for download:

[https://www.localis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/039\\_BuildingCommunities\\_AWK.pdf](https://www.localis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/039_BuildingCommunities_AWK.pdf)

And an Executive Summary is also available:

## 2. About Localis

Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism. We carry out innovative research, hold events and facilitate an ever growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

[www.localis.org.uk](http://www.localis.org.uk)

### About Countryside Properties

Countryside is the UK’s leading mixed-tenure developer with over 60 years’ experience, creating places people love, with sustainable communities built to last. In March 2021, it was awarded the 5 Star Rating by the Home Builders Federation again following the latest home building industry’s Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Specialising in estate and town centre regeneration schemes, Countryside’s Partnerships comprises four divisions – Partnerships South, Partnerships Home Counties, Partnerships North and Partnerships Midlands. It works mainly on public sector owned and brownfield land, in partnership with local authorities and housing associations to develop private, affordable and PRS homes. Its developments include large scale urban regeneration projects at Beam Park, Rainham; North Leigh Park, Wigan, and Drakelow Park in Burton-on-Trent. It has also developed a number of large-scale projects including Beaulieu, Chelmsford; Kingsmere, Bicester and Great Kneighton, Cambridge.

Countryside established a modular panel manufacturing facility in Warrington to improve quality and reduce build times on site. In 2019, the business announced two further factories to be built in the Midlands and Leicestershire to expand its offsite construction capability.

Countryside delivered 4,053 homes in the twelve months to September 2020 – 3,213 through its Partnerships division and 840 through its Housebuilding division, with a mix of private for sale, PRS and affordable homes. The Group has a strong balance sheet with new framework agreements signed during 2020 which, along with a record forward order book, up 23% to £1,432m, underpin the mixed-tenure delivery model focused on delivering quality homes and sector leading growth. It was listed on the London Stock Exchange in February 2016 as a constituent of the FTSE 250.

For more information see [www.countrysideproperties.com](http://www.countrysideproperties.com) or follow @CountrysideProp on Twitter

## 3. Key report recommendations

### Recommendations

If we are to succeed in building communities for the long-term, each principal actor, central government, local authorities, developers and our communities alike, will have their unique part to play in planning for and realising a good and clean growth future.

#### Recommendations for central government

**Make planning underscore good and green growth:** Some kind of national effort to collect and pool funding is necessary for the state to take its fair share of the burden towards affordable, mixed-tenure and sustainable housebuilding in the age of Net Zero.

What this spells out is the need for a new route forward, to the evolution of a balanced system in which the planning of new developments unlocks the release of sufficient and fair funding to bolster sustainable growth in new homes across varied tenures.

To this end, Localis recommends the setting up of separate funds as follows, overseen at national level and to address the challenges of generating popular consent for local housing growth and making new developments both sustainable and commercially viable:

- a Capacity Fund for neighbourhood planning
- a Carbon Offsetting Fund for development
  
- Amend Infrastructure Levy to be paid **at the point of commencement** on site and to include a ringfenced proportion for affordable housing provision.
- Include Health Impact Assessments as a requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Define and protect social infrastructure through the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Work to develop a centralised portal where residents can access development plans and decisions for their area, in their entirety and in one place.
- Acknowledge the need for a regional approach to new building – from garden cities in the South East to greater vertical development in major cities – through the creation of new boards for regional spatial planning.
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#### **Stewardship model: a strategic framework**

- Local government should:
  - Produce community value charters to provide a transparent picture of how procurement around development is benefiting the local area.
- Work with communities to embed local design codes into neighbourhood plans.
- Produce cultural statements for new developments containing the provision and protection of cultural assets and ACVs.
- Commit to a hybrid model of community engagement around local plan-making with digital outreach combined with more extensive physical events.
- Organise developers forums to bridge the gap between developers and communities around new development.
- Communities should be encouraged and supported to:
  - Produce neighbourhood plans through statutory bodies (parish councils and neighbourhood forums) which do not undercut government housing targets
- Developers should be encouraged to:
  - Attend and actively contribute to developer's forums in support of strong collective place leadership and strategic planning.
- Agree productivity deals with local authorities:
  - Local labour market uplift: skills and wages
- For long-running developments of over 200 dwellings, run a local growth board to oversee the productivity deal.

## Company Contact:

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## Additional Assets:

Building Communities - full report

Building Communities - executive summary

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