

Government's last-minute Planning Bill amendments will tackle blockers and boost growth

6 months ago



The Government has announced several major amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, which further streamline the planning process. They include reducing the length of consultation, stripping uncooperative councils of the right to make certain decisions, and paring back the impact and ability to raise legal disputes.

Richard Beresford, Chief Executive of the [National Federation of Builders](#) said: “Planning reform was never going to be a quick endeavour because our sclerotic, siloed system needs careful analysis to unpick and understand. The Government should be commended on recognising this and taking a proactive approach to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill because it will be an integral piece of legislation in ensuring all projects can be delivered more quickly.”

Proposed amendments to Planning and Infrastructure Bill, include:

- Changes to ‘holding directions’ – which stop local planning authorities from considering an application – can now be issued by ministers while they decide whether to ‘call-in’ the application. Previously, they were only able to do this when a council was set to approve it.
- Enabling non-water companies to build reservoirs, with all such developments being considered ‘nationally significant infrastructure projects’.
- Allowing Natural England to decline requests from local authorities to comment on nature-related planning applications. At present, it must reply to all requests, even ones that it believes are not relevant.

- Automatic extensions of the time for implementing planning permission where it is challenged in legal proceedings.
- Cutting back legal challenges for major infrastructure projects from three to one and slashing a year off the statutory pre-consultation period.

The Bill, announced as part of the King's Speech in July 2024, is designed to fast-track major infrastructure projects deemed to be of national significance, make grid connections and pylon construction easier, and give greater compulsory purchase and planning fee setting power to local authorities.

The Government believes these new tweaks will remove barriers to their plans for economic growth and fulfil their 1.5 million homes target by the end of the Parliament.

Rico Wojtulewicz, Head of Policy and Market Insight at the National Federation of Builders said: "Tweaks to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will help deliver the water and grid capacity that projects require to get planning permission. They will stop councils finding loopholes to avoid building homes. This is a clear indication that the Government understands that 'Build, baby, build' is a mantra, not a slogan."

The 11th-hour rewrite to the Bill was demanded by the Prime Minister, with ministers working over the weekend on drafting the amendments.

The amendments, while backed by the Government, need to be approved by Parliament in a vote on Monday 20 October 2025. Once the Bill is approved by the House of Lords, it will go back to the Commons.

Ministers hope it will become law by early November 2025, meaning that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will be able to consider the economic benefits that will come from it in time for the Autumn Budget.