

# Local Government Officer perspective on Planning Reforms

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**POS**  
Planning Officers Society

# We will cover:

- Planning Officers Society overview.
- Summary of what planning reform means from a local government officer perspective
  - Challenges
  - Opportunities
  - Needs

# What is POS?

- Leading body for public sector planners operating in England – we represent planners working in **80%** of the local authorities and public sector organisations around England.

## Aim

- *“To ensure that planning makes a major contribution to achieving sustainable development from national to local level in ways which are fair and equitable and achieve the social, economic and environmental aspirations of the community.”*

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# POS operates in 3 main ways..

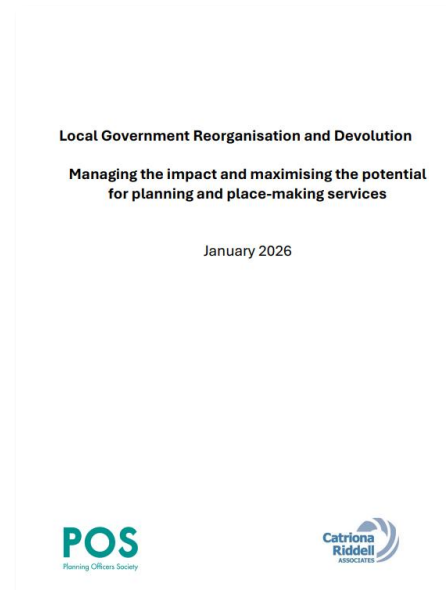
- As a support network for planners in the public sector
  - Championing the voice of practitioners.
  - Providing guidance, training, and peer support.
  - Facilitating networks for support and advice.
- As promoters of best practice in planning.
- As a think tank and lobbying organisation for excellence in planning practice.

# POS Support Networks

- Both subject and regional networks to support our members and subject specialists to provide advice to government, the press and others on their specialist areas.
  - Regional Networks
  - Subject Networks
    - Development Management Network
    - Spatial Planning Network
  - Young POS
  - Policy Forum

# A Think Tank and Lobbying Organisation

- You can view the POS Manifestos at:  
<https://www.planningofficers.org.uk/pos-manifesto>
- 1. Local plans: an evolutionary approach to improvement
- 2. Infrastructure: funding it in a more effective way
- 3. We need to talk about the Green Belt
- 4. Red line submissions: a proportionate approach
- 5. Affordable housing: delivering it in a more effective way
- 6. Compulsory purchase: three essential improvements
- 7. Land value capture: exploring the options
- 8. Spatial Planning: simplifying the process
- 9. iDM: managing development in industry 4.0
- 10. Improving enforcement services
- 11. Planning Resources: designing a more efficient system
- 12. Addressing the housing crisis
- 13. Dealing with overlapping consents
- 14. Planning applications: how to speed up the process
- 15. Improving LPA funding
- 16. From concept to construction: making the system more flexible



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# Current Landscape

- **Planning Reform:** legislative changes, policy shifts, digital transformation, transitional implications
- **Contextual pressures:**
  - Housing delivery expectations
  - Climate and nature recovery duties
  - Infrastructure funding challenges
  - Public trust and political scrutiny
- **The reality on the ground:** scale of change, pace of reform, stretched capacity, recruitment challenges, rising complexity of applications, increased expectations on planning services.



*“Taken together, these reforms represent a truly seismic regearing of the system.....”*

# Key Challenges for Local Planning Authorities

## Capacity and Skills

- Shortage of planners across all levels.
- Need for new skillsets: digital, data, design coding, viability, environmental assessment.
- Competition with private sector salaries.

## Funding and Resources

- Core budgets under strain.
- Uncertainty around fee income and cost recovery.
- New burdens without matching long-term funding (30-month timescale of Local Plans).

## Digital and Data Requirements

- Transition to digital planning systems.
- Data standards, interoperability, and the need for consistent national guidance.
- Risk of widening the gap between well-resourced and under-resourced authorities.

## Policy Complexity and Pace of Change

- Frequent updates to national policy.
- Need for rapid local plan updates.
- Managing transitional arrangements and legacy systems.

## Public Engagement and Trust

- Rising expectations for transparency and responsiveness.
- Need for new engagement methods that reach more diverse communities.

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# Opportunities Created by Reform

## Modernisation of the Planning System

- Digital tools enabling faster, more transparent processes.
- Better data for decision-making and monitoring.

## Stronger Strategic Planning

- Potential for more integrated approaches to housing, infrastructure, climate, and economic growth.
- Opportunities for cross-boundary collaboration.

## Place-Making and Design Quality

- Design codes and local design frameworks empowering councils to shape better places.
- Stronger emphasis on sustainability and resilience.

## Reframing the Role of Planning

- Moving from regulatory gatekeeping to proactive place leadership.
- Greater alignment with corporate priorities and long-term visioning.

# What Local Authorities Need to Deliver Reform

## Stable, Long-Term Funding

- Multi-year settlements for planning services and to provide for the full cost of preparing Plans.
- Full cost recovery for development management.
- Dedicated funding for digital transformation and skills.

## National Consistency and Clarity

- Clear, stable national policy to reduce uncertainty.
- Realistic implementation timelines.
- Standardised digital and data requirements.

## Workforce Strategy

- National programme to grow the profession.
- Apprenticeships, graduate pipelines, mid-career pathways.
- Support for leadership development within planning services.

## Digital Infrastructure and Support

- National platforms and shared services.
- Investment in training for digital tools.
- Support for data governance and interoperability.

## Collaborative Governance

- Mechanisms for cross-authority working.
- Stronger partnerships with infrastructure providers, Homes England, and the private sector.

# Call to Action for Heads of Planning

- Lead the cultural shift toward modern, proactive planning.
- Invest in teams and talent pipelines.
- Embrace digital transformation.
- Strengthen cross-boundary collaboration.
- Engage with POS and others to shape national reform.

Further information.....

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

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