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Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

By email: PSRobertJenrick@communities.gov.uk

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Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to share with you the RTPI's views on what is needed to keep the planning system delivering during the pandemic, as well as to enclose a copy of *Priorities for Planning Reform in England*. The planning profession is the gateway to construction: the pragmatism and innovation shown over the last month demonstrates how seriously this has been taken. I would be pleased to meet with you or a member of your team to discuss these issues.

Extending planning permissions

Following discussions with our membership and with MHCLG, it is evident that Government action is urgently needed to provide extensions to planning permissions set to expire in England during the period of the pandemic. Primary legislation appears to be required in order to provide automatic extensions to the permissions (Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Planning act 2008), and we urge you to consider bringing this forward as a matter of priority. We suggest that you look at primary legislation to automatically extend those permissions expiring between now and the end of December, so they expire instead on 31 December, as well as ensure that the period of time for submitting reserved matters on outline applications is also extended such that those expiring between now and the end of December expire on 31 December instead.

Planners responding to Covid-19

We have collected over 1,000 responses on the effect of the pandemic on planning, and can report widespread support and take-up of technological and innovative solutions. Our members are overwhelmingly concerned with ensuring planning continues to deliver, with the majority supporting the use of digital hearings, inquiries, local review bodies and plan examinations, and two-thirds supported schemes of delegation to enable planning officers to make decisions during the crisis. Our members expressed concern around the effectiveness of current technological solutions for public consultations, and highlighted the issue of planning permission expiries. We are also collating cases studies of innovations from local authorities, to share best practice during the pandemic and inform reforms around digital planning.

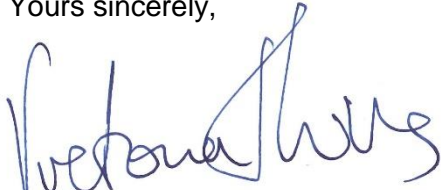
Planning White Paper

Your document *Planning for the Future* laid out a vision of a well-resourced, innovative English planning system that harnesses technology to deliver housing and address climate change. We are pleased to support these objectives, and in *Priorities for Planning Reform in England* (attached) we share our views on how this can be achieved within the Planning White Paper. In summary, we recommend:

- Investment in place, through support for regional housebuilding, the establishment of Chief Planning Officers as statutory positions and greater resourcing for planning
- Wider consideration of 21st century issues within reforms, including decarbonisation and climate resilience, design, connectivity and accessibility, health and economic growth
- Government play a leading role in the digital transformation of planning, building upon recent sectoral innovations in response to Covid-19
- Strategic planning, to consider economic, infrastructure and environment priorities in the round across wider geographical regions
- Implementation of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission's recommendation that planning should emphasise proactive plan-making.

Please do let me know if we can provide further detail on any of these matters, and I would be pleased to meet with a member of your team to discuss. We stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Yours sincerely,



Victoria Hills MRTPI FICE
Chief Executive
Royal Town Planning Institute