

Relaxation of the planning rules for change of use from commercial to residential: Consultation

Steve Quartermain
Chief Planner

The Government is committed to reforming the planning system to:

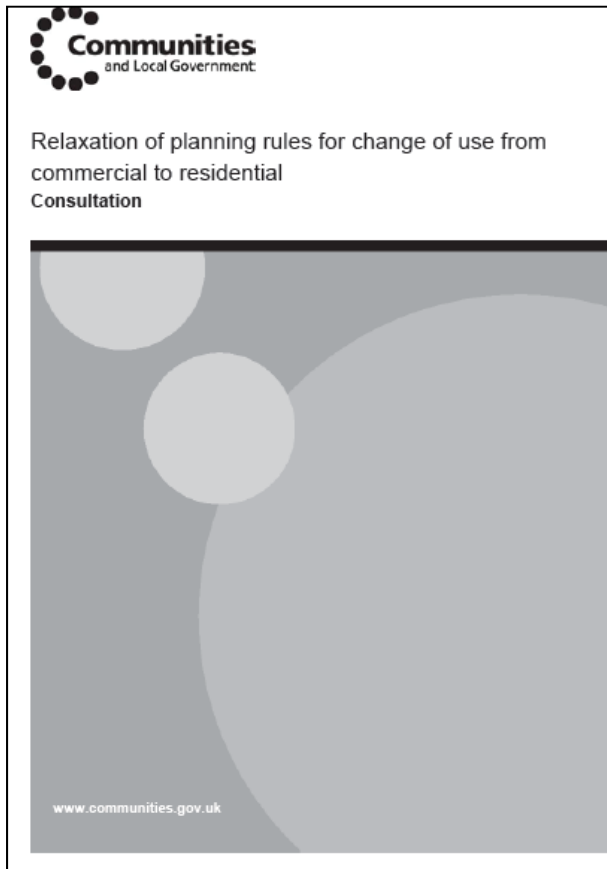
- **support economic growth and drive increase in supply of land for housing**
- **make it less bureaucratic and allow it to respond more effectively to market signals**
- **allow decisions to be taken at right level and ensure communities receive economic benefits of wider growth**

- **Overwhelming need to increase housing supply to meet needs and aspirations of growing population**
- **Rate of house-building in England at record low**
- **In 2009-10, net additions stood at 129,000 homes compared to project growth in households of 232,000 per year**

What is the Government already doing?

- **New Homes Bonus**
- **Localism Bill**
 - **Neighbourhood planning**
 - **Community Right to Build**
 - **Community Right to Buy**
- **Plan for Growth**
 - **disposal of publicly owned land**
 - **commitment to reduce regulation on house-builders**
 - **national planning policy framework**
 - **presumption in favour of sustainable development**

- **Use Classes Order**
 - **groups together uses with similar land use impacts into classes**
 - **changes of use within a class do not constitute development and so permission is not needed**
- **General Permitted Development Order**
 - **grants general permission for moves between certain use classes where the impacts of the proposed use are considered to be less than existing use**



- **Published on 8 April**
- **12 week consultation period**
- **Contains set of proposals**
- **Explores risks and seeks views on mitigations**
- **Proposals deliverable through secondary legislation**

- **Granting new permitted development rights to allow change of use to dwelling houses (C3) from:**
 - **B1 (business – offices, research and development uses, light industry); and**
 - **B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution)**
- **Extending existing permitted development rights to allow changes of use of space above A1 (shops) and A2 (financial and professional) to more than the single flat currently allowed**

Why these proposals?

- **Key barrier to increasing housing supply is lack of land**
- **Yet some office blocks and business parks are lying empty and dilapidated**
- **In many cases these would lend themselves to conversion to housing without extensive external works**



Potential issues arising from proposals

- **Impact on amenity, local services and housing mix**
- **Loss of commercial land and property**
- **Impact on areas with high residential value**
- **Transport and parking**
- **Noise**
- **Unsuitable locations**
- **Bad neighbour issues**

Possible options to address those issues

- **Conditions and prior approval**
- **Thresholds and exclusions**
- **Article 4 directions**
- **Availability of commercial land and local development orders**

- **Urgent need for housing merits national change**
- **Greater freedoms will encourage more efficient use of land and buildings**
- **Possible to frame permitted development right with sufficient safeguards**
- **Together with presumption in favour this has potential to deliver significant increase in housing supply**

- **Deadline for responses – 30 June**
- **C3consultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk**
- **Publication of summary of responses**
- **Decision on way forward as soon as possible**
- **Wider review of how change of use is handled in planning system underway**

- **Will these proposals work in practice?**
- **What circumstances would these proposals be most suited to?**
- **Ideas for keeping essential safeguards?**
- **Are there any alternative approaches?**