

JPLC Chair's Welcome

Dear JPLC Delegates and Guests,

Welcome to the Joint Planning Law Conference 2025. The title this year - Eat, Sleep, Plan, Repeat! - references the frenetic pace of planning reform and the focus of this Labour Government on changing the system, to deliver economic growth and meet the target (in England) of 1.5 million homes.

The conference committee debated various potential titles and the winning entry - in a sign of things to come - was put forward by ChatGPT.

It is hard to keep track of all the new initiatives and changes, since the last conference. So, I asked researchers at Quod to summarise them. Their note is published on the JPLC website and on the App. An obvious highlight is the revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, quickly followed by major local plan reforms in February 2025.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 11 March 2025 and is now being debated in the House of Lords. This is a wide-ranging bill that aims to accelerate housing and infrastructure development across the UK.

The Government has also introduced legislation on English Devolution and Community Empowerment, Renters' Rights, Leasehold and Freehold Reform (enacted) and Great British Energy (enacted).

There has been a National Policy Statement on water resources infrastructure and other policy updates on crown development, the effective use of land, planning fees, housing and economic needs assessments, the green belt, housing supply and delivery, the natural environment, plan-making and viability. Plus new procedural guidance on planning appeals.

The research has also picked up 15 sets of regulations (statutory instruments), over 40 Ministerial Statements touching on planning, by Rachel Reeves, Angela Rayner and Matthew Pennycook and a dozen policy (white) papers, the latter on a diverse range of subjects including English devolution, the NSIP regime, commonhold, the UK Industrial Strategy, a 10 year infrastructure strategy, an onshore wind taskforce strategy and, of course, the overall Plan for Change.

The industry has digested 8 planning reform working papers and more than 10 major consultations, on subjects such as biodiversity net gain (BNG), fusion energy facilities, electricity distribution infrastructure, carbon capture and underground storage.

There are numerous task forces and working groups, including the New Towns Task Force and all manner of Spending Review and other funding announcements.

Our conference provides an opportunity to take stock of this legislative and policy barrage, take a breather, separate the wheat from the chaff with the help of expert colleagues and catch up amongst friends.

Welcome back to our regular attendees, and welcome too if it's your first time at the Conference - especially our Next Genners and local authority representatives. We are grateful to the sponsors of these initiatives: Ashurst, Town Legal, the Planning Inspectorate, Imperial, Quod, No5 Chambers, Francis Taylor Building, Landmark Chambers, Cornerstone Barristers, Kings' Chambers and 39 Essex Chambers, the Planning Officers Society, Newmark and Savills.

The key topics this year are big hitters and they reflect the dizzying pace of the reform agenda: boosting growth, housing delivery, strategic planning, development plans, land use and planning, legal strategies for consents, planning large-scale communities and of course the legal update. It has been a busy time in the Courts.

Looking back at our conference title, Rachel Fisher will cover 'Eat' and the relationship or disconnect between our planning system and other land uses such as food production. Peter Freeman CBE and James Maurici KC will address where a growing population will 'Sleep' and how to deliver all the homes we need.

Catriona Riddell, Nicholle Kingsley, Simon Berkeley, James Scott will tell us how to 'Plan' better and faster. And the ever-popular legal update and Gala Dinner will 'Repeat' with Constanze Bell and Paul Tucker KC.

On behalf of the JPLC committee I extend my heartfelt thanks to all our speakers for the time and invaluable experience that they have invested in the Conference.

I hope all attendees enjoy the weekend in the glorious surroundings of New College and Rhodes House. Of course, none of this would be possible without Lucinda and her team at Quadrilect. Our thanks also to Turley for graphic design support, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer for our conference app, Dentons for providing jugs of beer in the after dinner bar and Sweet & Maxwell for sponsoring the champagne reception on Saturday evening.

I wish you a most enjoyable JPLC 2025 and please celebrate with a small fist-pump, if you guess correctly the artist behind this year's walk on music for our speakers.



Robert Evans

CEO of the Wellcome Genome Campus,
Non Executive Director, Quod and Chair,
Joint Planning Law Conference 2025