Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
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To: All MPs

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Dear colleagues,

LEVELLING UP & REGENERATION BILL

I have today introduced the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill.

The Bill offers local councils and communities an ambitious package on regeneration to empower them to rejuvenate their high streets, protect their green spaces, and regenerate brownfield sites. In tandem, the Bill will improve the planning system in England by putting local people at the heart of local plan making, so that they can take back control of the development of their areas. There will be no forced 'zoning' of land, increased community engagement in the local plan making process, and individuals will continue to have the right to comment on every individual planning application. These changes will ensure more local plans are created, delivering more, beautiful, greener homes in the right places for communities, with the infrastructure to support them.

The Bill enshrines in law important, long-term levelling up missions to close the gap in productivity, health, incomes and opportunity across all of the United Kingdom. It also contains measures to help fulfil our manifesto commitment to offer devolved powers to areas in England that want them.

The majority of provisions in the Bill extend and apply to England only. The exception are provisions for the Levelling Up Mission, Environmental Outcomes Reports, Planning Data, the review of Governance of Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, which extend and apply across the whole of the UK; and Compulsory Purchase, and Information About Interests and Dealings in Land which extend and apply to England and Wales.

I have enclosed a short summary of the Bill as an annex, and a longer policy document. The latter will shortly be published on GOV.UK.

This Bill helps deliver on our promise to level up the country. I hope that you will support its successful passage through Parliament.

With every good wish,



RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

ANNEX: LEVELLING UP & REGENERATION BILL – SUMMARY

LEVELLING UP

Measures include:

- Creating a legal duty for the Government to set and report on a number of missions for levelling up the country. The deadline for each mission is 2030, but the Levelling Up Bill will create a duty for the Government to report on progress annually. These missions will include:
    - closing the gap in pay and productivity between the richest and poorest areas
    - effectively eradicating child illiteracy and innumeracy
    - closing gaps in healthy life expectancy
    - getting the rest of the country's transport connectivity much closer to the standards of London's, and
    - making sure everyone has a local community they can be proud of.
- The legislation needed so that every part of England that wants a strong devolution deal can have one.
- Enabling more areas to have the kinds of devolved powers which currently only the largest cities enjoy, helping drive improvements on local priorities such as transport and skills.
- New provisions on council borrowing to protect taxpayers' money while enabling local areas to make much needed investment.

REGENERATION

Measures include:

- New powers for local leaders to run High Street Rental Auctions, where they can auction off tenancies in shops that have been vacant for over a year. This will help to end the plague of empty shops that blight so many high streets.
- Councils will also be able to double council tax on empty and second homes, ensuring everyone pays their fair share towards local services and boost levelling up.
- The 'al-fresco dining revolution' will be made permanent, injecting new life into the high street through creating a sustainable process for communities, business and local authorities, making it permanently cheaper and quicker to get a licence for outdoor dining.
- A new, locally set infrastructure levy, charged on the final value of property when its sold, will replace much of the broken S106 payments system. This will see the big developers contribute far more of the money they make from development towards building better local roads, rail, schools, hospitals, and more affordable housing.
- Legislation to make it easier for councils to regenerate their town centres through Compulsory Purchase Orders, making the process quicker and easier to use.

RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Measures include:

- Local plans - the way in which councils set the vision for future development in their area and decide whether to give planning permission - will gain stronger legal weight and be made simpler to produce. Communities will have a major say in these plans giving them more opportunity to shape what happens in their areas. Currently 61% of councils do not have an up to date local plan, which leaves communities exposed to development on which they haven't had a meaningful say.
- A digitised planning system making plans and planning applications fully available on your smartphone.
- Stronger protections for the environment in local plans, empowering councils to make better use of brownfield land and protect precious greenbelt land.
- Local design codes will be made mandatory so that developers have to respect styles drawn up and favoured locally - from the layout or materials used, to how it provides green space.