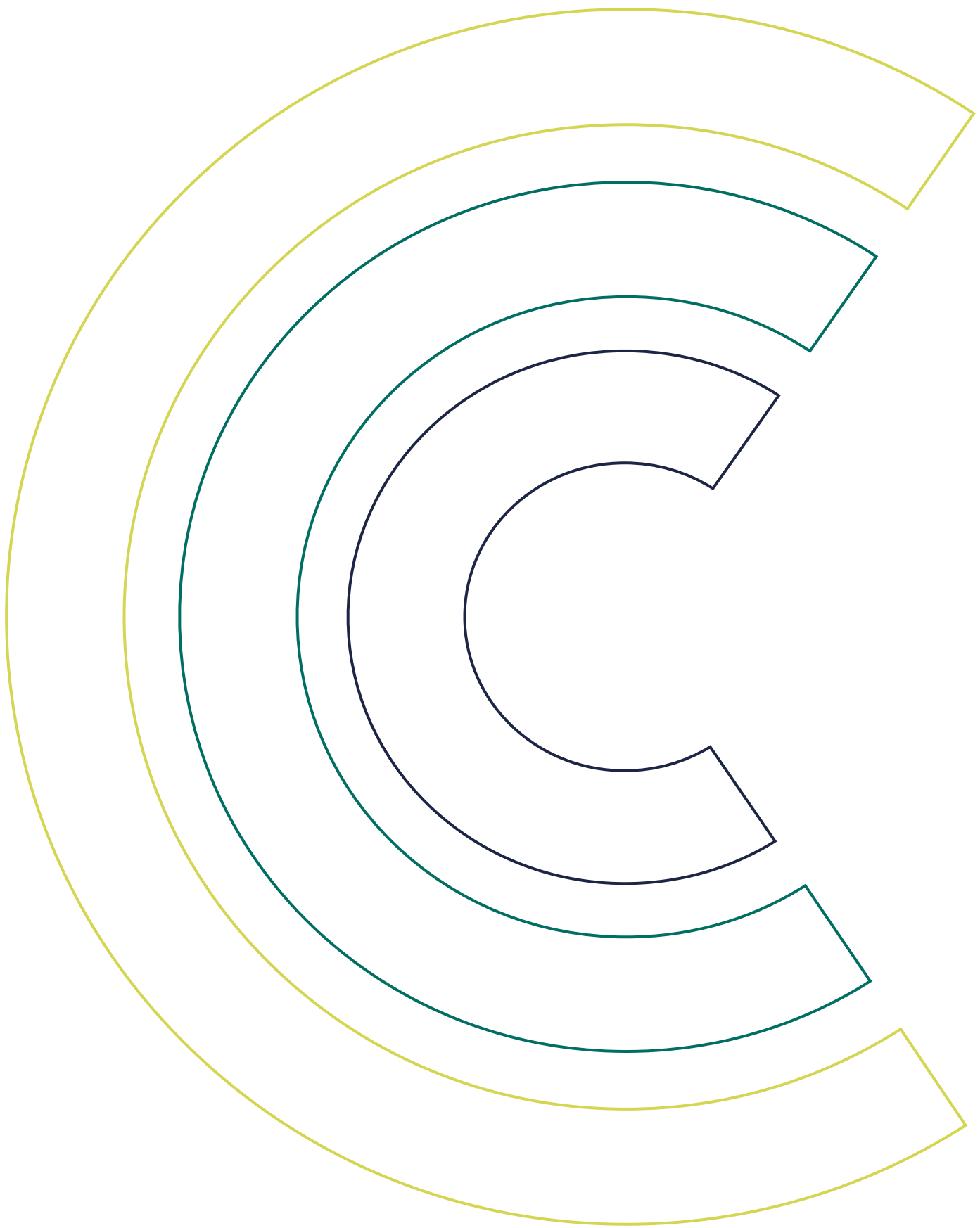




***Building
Britain's
Future***
2025-2026





Foreword

If Britain is serious about building for the future, housing and infrastructure must finally be planned as two parts of the same national mission.

Few issues demonstrate the gap between political ambition and practical delivery more clearly than housing and infrastructure.

During my time as a Housing and Communities Minister, I saw the pressures facing local government as councils sought to balance the need for new homes and regeneration with the legitimate expectations of existing communities. Earlier, as a Transport Minister responsible for some of the country's largest rail infrastructure programmes, I saw the same challenge from another perspective: major infrastructure can transform places and unlock economic opportunity, but only when planning, investment and delivery are properly joined up.

Those experiences have reinforced my belief that we cannot continue to treat housing, transport and infrastructure as separate policy challenges.

Where we build matters just as much as how much we build. New homes should be supported by the transport links, utilities, public services and employment opportunities required to create successful communities. Equally, public investment in major transport infrastructure should be used more effectively to unlock housing, regeneration and private investment around it.

That principle sits at the heart of Building Britain's Future.

Curia has previously warned that planning risk and uncertainty can act as significant barriers to housebuilding. Its [Transforming Communities Commission](#) called for clearer, long-term regulation across the housebuilding supply chain, from national planning frameworks and local planning authorities through to the businesses ultimately responsible for delivery.

Curia has repeatedly called for the Government to move towards a less discretionary, more predictable planning system. Greater certainty about what can be built and where, alongside a stronger approach to appropriate development around well-connected railway stations, offers an opportunity to better align housing growth with Britain's existing infrastructure.

But reform must go further.

A more predictable planning system should not mean removing communities from the process. The distinction we should make is between whether appropriate development should proceed and how that development takes place. Communities should have a meaningful voice in shaping new development, ensuring it is well designed and securing the infrastructure and economic benefits required to make growth work locally.

We must also recognise that rules themselves do not build homes or infrastructure. Local planning authorities need the people, expertise and resources required to make timely decisions. Infrastructure providers need sufficient certainty to plan ahead. Government departments, councils, transport bodies and developers need to work from a shared understanding of where growth will happen and what will be required to support it.

My experience in both housing and transport has taught me that the most successful projects are those in which these decisions are taken together rather than sequentially.

Britain has an opportunity to make a significant change in how we build. We can provide greater certainty, make better use of existing transport infrastructure, unlock strategic sites and give communities greater confidence that development will bring tangible benefits.

The opportunity is more clarity and more certainty - however, there are plenty of challenges facing this country's infrastructure - delivery is now key.

Rt Hon Andrew Stephenson CBE
Chair, Curia
Former Housing and Communities Minister
and Minister of State for Transport





Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham launches the Stockport Interchange infrastructure project. Photo: Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Update: August 2026 Planning Reform: From Uncertainty to Delivery

Curia's Transforming Communities Commission, and more recent 2025-26 Housing and Infrastructure programme, identified uncertainty within the planning system as a significant barrier to increasing housing supply. Evidence to the Commission and housing and infrastructure programme argued that England operated too much as a development-control system rather than a predictable, plan-led regulatory system, while the Commission itself called for clear, long-term regulation across the housebuilding supply chain.

The Government's new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) represents substantial progress towards that objective. It explicitly seeks to create a clearer, rules-based system, provide a more certain basis for decision-making and reduce delays that hold back homes and economic growth.

Update August 2026:

Recommendation 4: Establish a clear, predictable and rules-based planning system

 Government should continue the transition towards a planning system in which councils, developers, investors, and communities have much greater certainty about what can be built and where.

 Curia previously called for “clear, long-term regulation and support for housebuilding” across a supply chain stretching from national planning frameworks through local planning authorities to the businesses responsible for delivery.

 **Analysis**
The 2026 NPPF is a significant step in this direction. Its separation of plan-making and decision-making policies, alongside clearer national rules, should reduce unnecessary interpretation and inconsistency. The Government should now ensure that forthcoming Planning Practice Guidance reinforces rather than recreates complexity.

Curia calls for: a planning system where compliance with clear national and local plans creates a strong expectation that appropriate development will proceed.

Recommendation 5: Remove unnecessary barriers across the housebuilding and infrastructure delivery system

 Planning reform cannot stop with the wording of the NPPF. Curia's Commission argued that Government must strengthen the full housebuilding supply chain, recognising that delivery depends on the interaction between national frameworks, local planning authorities and businesses.

Analysis

The Government's reforms to statutory consultees are therefore welcome. Ministers have acknowledged that unnecessary referrals and delayed advice can slow decision-making and hold back homes and growth, and are seeking more timely, proportionate and targeted consultation.

Analysis

That principle should now be applied across the wider development system.

Curia calls for: a systematic review of the regulatory and institutional barriers between planning permission and delivery, with clearer deadlines, accountability and co-ordination between planning authorities, statutory consultees and infrastructure providers.

Recommendation 6: Match planning reform with local authority capacity and capability



Rules cannot deliver development without the institutions capable of applying them.



The Transforming Communities Commission heard directly that “the planning system is under-resourced”, alongside concerns about weak co-ordination between local authorities and infrastructure providers.



Analysis

The Government has now explicitly recognised local authority capacity and capability as part of the next stage of planning reform. This should become a core component of implementation rather than an afterthought.

Curia calls for: a long-term planning capacity programme that gives local authorities the professional skills, digital capability and specialist expertise required to make high-quality decisions quickly, particularly for major housing, regeneration and infrastructure projects.

The next test is delivery

The Government has moved significantly towards the clearer and more predictable planning framework Curia has previously advocated. The challenge for 2026–27 is to ensure those reforms translate into faster decisions, greater investment and, ultimately, more homes and infrastructure being delivered.

Planning reform should now be judged not by how many rules are rewritten, but by whether Britain builds.



