

Government plans guidance for councils on garden towns

18 January 2018 by Richard Garlick , Be the First to Comment

The government intends to publish guidance for councils on how to approach garden town projects, the housing secretary Sajid Javid said last night.



Communities secretary Sajid Javid

The Autumn Budget confirmed ministers' intention to back five new locally-led garden towns in places where demand is high.

In December, the government published draft regulations to amend the New Towns Act 1981, which would allow local authorities to set up new town development corporations to plan and develop new garden towns and villages.

Work on the new garden towns is due to kick off this year with publication of a prospectus inviting expressions of interest from areas keen to host them.

But, speaking to *Planning* last night, Javid said that this prospectus would be

accompanied by new guidance. "The legislation has already gone through," he said. "We are going to set out shortly exactly how you can take advantage of that."

Javid was speaking after a launch event for the new all-party parliamentary group for new towns. Some guests at the event had argued that, for the new generation of locally-led corporations to be effective, it would be essential for the housing secretary to back them when they wanted to use compulsory purchase.

Javid told *Planning* that people should recognise the government's intent to use compulsory purchase to tackle housing shortages.

"They shouldn't be in any doubt [that we will back development corporations if they want to use compulsory purchase powers]," he said.

"We've made it very clear, and [government housing agency] Homes England also has compulsory purchase powers. When I've talked about a more muscular housing agency, that's one of the things I expect them to do ... to do whatever it takes to make sure we are building the homes that we need".

Earlier he had told guests at the APPG launch that new towns "have got a lot to offer" and that "we need to do more to ensure they're fit for the future".

But he said that they also had flaws that stemmed from "the downsides of the rapid development and, in particular, centralised planning".

Many new towns suffered from "dated, often identikit housing, infrastructure and town centres that, too often, look like everywhere and nowhere," he said. This made "it harder for them to be seen as truly aspirational and attract the investment they need to grow and thrive", he added. But the best examples of current new town regeneration were led locally, he said.

The APPG is chaired by Lucy Allan, MP for Telford. She said that the group would consider the successes and failures of existing new towns in order to learn from past mistakes and to help shape future government policy.

She told guests: "The APPG will ... aim to tackle new town challenges such as ageing infrastructure, poor private rental housing and connectivity, as well as deprivation, in order to influence future government policy and keep new towns centre stage.

Campaign group the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) is providing the secretariat for the APPG. TCPA chief executive Kate Henderson said: "With the government supporting a new programme of garden cities, towns and villages, the APPG will provide a highly influential, cross-party forum

to learn the lessons – good and bad – of past new towns to help shape future policy".

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