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NEWS + INSIGHT



JULY
2021

THE CHALLENGE OF CLASS Q PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

Class Q permitted development was the first step to achieving consent for this stunning rural home in Tetsworth - a clever planning strategy.
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BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN - WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

This is a radical and far reaching change to planning and biodiversity and it means that planning applications are set to become more complex!
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ARE WE HEADED FOR A SELF BUILD REVOLUTION?

It is a seller's market at the moment... so how can buyers get the best value from a new home? For many, the answer could be self-building.
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A SELF BUILD REVOLUTION IN THE OFFING...

WWA's Ifti Maniar looks at market trends that may point toward growth in self build popularity...

History and conventional wisdom shows that when an economy crashes, so does the housing market. The pandemic has proven to be the antithesis of this theory, with the average house price in the UK rising by 10.2% (or £24,000) over the last year.

This rise in house prices has been especially felt outside of the major towns and cities in the UK, as people seek more space after more than a year spent indoors. With this remaining very much a seller's market, how can buyers get the best value out a new home? For many, the answer could be self-building.

Just 7% of homes in the UK are built via self and custom build, this is considerably lower than in most of Europe and North America, where self-building makes up between 30% and 80% of the industry.

The Government is aiming to change that, releasing their "Self and Custom Build Action Plan" at the end of April. This included £150 million pledge over the next 4 years to support

low deposit mortgages and improve the affordability of self-building, whilst an obligation for local authorities to keep a register of demand for self-build and permission serviced plots already exists.

The additional funding for prospective self-builders is welcome, but it doesn't address the fundamental issue that most people do not see self-building as a viable alternative to house buying.

Most of us know someone who has bought a house which gives us an understanding of the processes involved, and someone to turn to when we need advice. There is much less understanding of the self-building process in the UK, which makes it a scarier and more difficult prospect than house buying.

At WWA we have extensive knowledge of the self build process and have successfully guided many homeowners through the journey. Get in touch if you would like to know more!



Above: Hopkins Yard, North Oxfordshire - A self-build development by WWA



Above: Herons, South Oxfordshire, A self-build development by WWA

'PINS' PERFORMANCE - IS THE PLANNING SYSTEM BROKEN?

Post-Covid-19 pandemic, not only are local authorities extremely busy dealing with a large number of planning applications with limited resources, but the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) are also facing the same challenges!

In April 2021, PINS had the highest number of open cases (11,184) in a year according to its latest performance update May 2021. Despite PINS delivered over 700 cases via virtual hearings/inquiries by April 2021, timescales for inquiries hit a peak of 68 weeks in February. It says that average (mean) decision times for planning appeals progressing by hearing is 56 weeks, while for inquiries is 54 weeks.

The statement went on to say that "continuing Covid-19 restrictions in place over the past months has meant our ability to visit sites and capacity to run hearings and inquiries has been reduced", which has meant an "increased number of cases that are waiting to start, and consequently longer decision times".

PINS considered that due to the lockdown restrictions, many staff took leave over spring, this combined with the local elections last Month have had an impact on their overall productivity. PINS latest performance update recognised that "some appellants have had to wait longer than usual for a decision."

Clearly, the current delay of planning applications/ appeals is halting much-needed developments for the post-pandemic recovery economic growth. We strongly believe that the Government must invest and attract talented planning staff for both local authorities and PINS to unlock economic growth.



Applicants also need a planning strategy to deliver the projects within the target budget and timescale. WWA is well experienced in forming planning strategy to get the best results for our clients. For the latest update on the timescales for the applications and appeals, please do not hesitate to contact us.

KATHRYN GUNDY WINS THE SECBE FUTURE LEADER AWARD!

We know Kathryn is both extremely talented and passionate about her area of expertise – it is great for this to be recognised and celebrated with our wider network of industry colleagues and clients through this award.

At WWA, Kathryn brings together research and practice offering our clients nothing but the most up-to-date thinking in the residential care and extra care sectors.

We look forward to updating you with future news of Kathryn's book chapter contribution. She is writing about design in the extra care setting.

Kathryn is also nominated for Young Propert Person of the Year award at the OxPropFest 2021 Awards - please join us in cheering her on!



"I am massively honoured to have won this award. An absolutely fantastic event! Congratulations to all the winners and finalists."

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING



According to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the word 'biodiversity' refers to the variety of life on earth, including the different species of animals, plants, and micro-organisms that coexist globally.

Centuries of farming, building & industry have left the UK as one of the most nature depleted countries. An estimated 97% of unimproved meadows were lost between 1932 and 1984 and 85% of heathland has been lost over the past 150 years. Sadly, declines are still occurring with an estimated 40 million birds lost from the UK skies since 1970.

In Biodiversity 2020: 'A Strategy for England's

'Wildlife and Ecosystem Services', the ambition was to halt biodiversity loss by 2020. This was not achieved and the Government decided that more drastic action is needed to not only halt the loss in biodiversity, but lead to a net gain.

The new Environment Bill going through Parliament will make provision for a 10% biodiversity gain to be a condition of gaining planning permission and a Biodiversity Gain Plan will need to be submitted for approval with any planning application.

This shift in policy is of the magnitude one might expect from the Green Party but is quite radical for a Conservative

government. So, what does this new legislation mean for town planning?

With many years experience in Planning Policy Research, WWA's Steve Pickles has pulled together a brief summary:

So, how do you measure biodiversity net gain?

The biodiversity value of a site and any habitat creation/enhancement

are to be calculated in accordance with a biodiversity metric which is to be published by the Secretary of State.

The metric will assess losses and gains by assessing habitats:

- » distinctiveness
- » condition
- » extent

The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of:

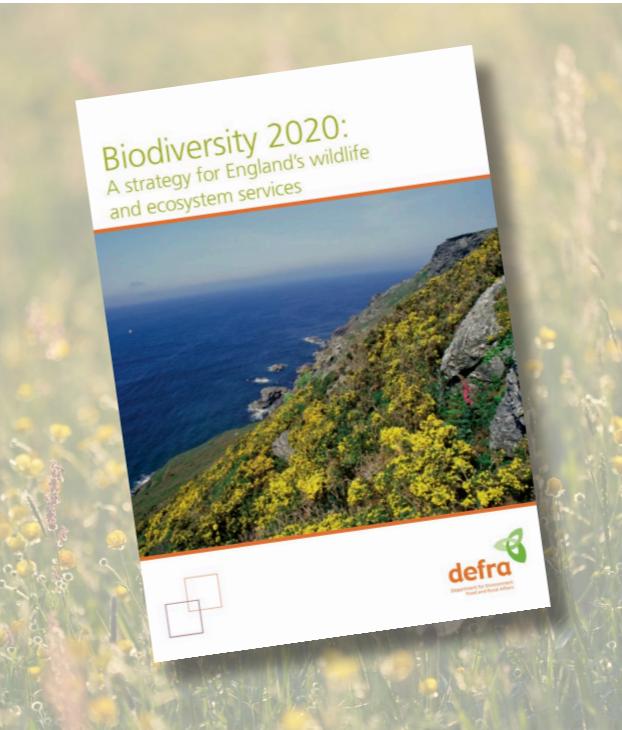
- (a) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,
- (b) the biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development, and
- (c) the biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.

The pre-development biodiversity value will normally be the date on which the planning application is made.

The post-development biodiversity value is the projected value of the onsite habitat at the time the development is completed.



Steve Pickles - Senior Town Planner



timetable provided for their determination. How they will cope with this additional responsibility is unclear. They will clearly need a significant increase in funding and also to employ many more ecologists!

It is also unclear whether sufficient sites will be forthcoming to include on the register of off-site biodiversity gains. The big unknown is the opportunity cost and whether the long term commitment required will prevent sites coming forward.

There is the relationship between the biodiversity net gain requirements of the Environment Bill

and the Government's proposed planning reforms which are also to be subject to radical new legislation.

Robert Jenrick, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary states that the current system is 'slow, bureaucratic and inefficient,' and not 'fit for purpose.' He states that the new planning system will be 'simpler, faster and more predictable.'

The biodiversity net gain provisions would seem to be working in the opposite direction, adding a whole additional set of complexities to the system!

HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE A NET GAIN?

The required biodiversity gains will be secured through:

- a) a planning condition;
- b) a planning obligation;
- c) a conservation covenant

and be maintained for at least 30 years after the development is completed.

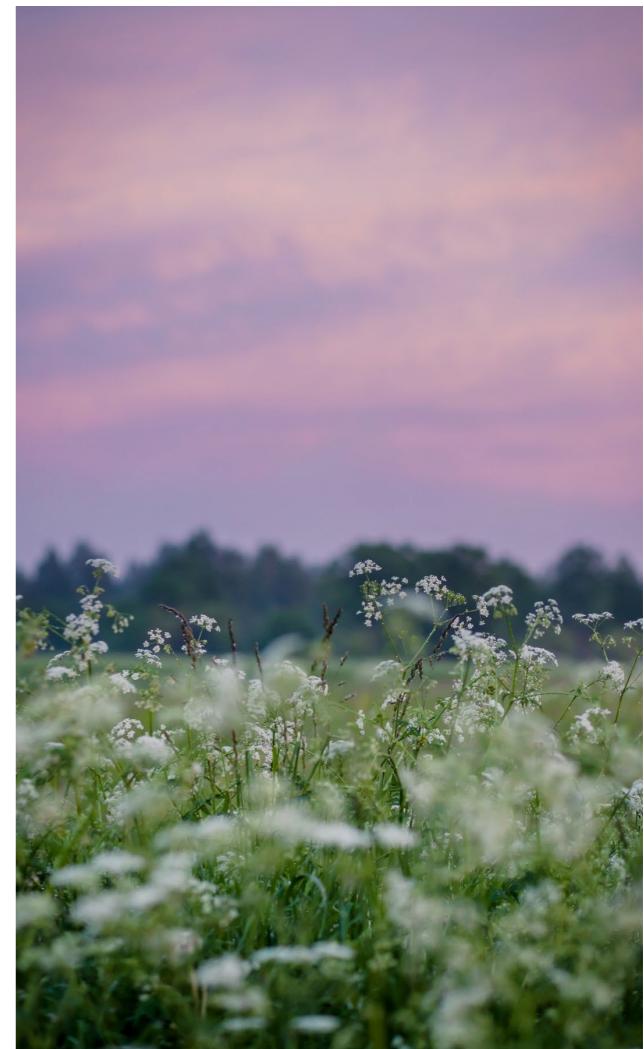
If it is not possible to achieve the 10% biodiversity gain on-site, then the net gain has to be achieved off-site, either by a registered offsite biodiversity gain or through biodiversity credits purchased for the development.

The first preference would be to carry out the biodiversity enhancements on the site followed by

improvements to be carried out in the vicinity on one of the register of biodiversity gain sites. A biodiversity credit would be purchased as a last resort.

In recent years local authorities planning budgets have been significantly cut, so that they are not able to provide an efficient service as it is.

A Local Planning Authority recently took six weeks to register an application submitted by WWA; while another has received six applications from WWA all of which have passed their determination date but no assessment has been received from the case officer or any



THE CHALLENGE OF CLASS Q DEVELOPMENT



We successfully obtained planning consent under Class Q of the General Permitted Development order in 2019 for the conversion of a modern portal framed barn in a stunning hilltop location near Oxford.

Having secured this consent we then prepared a new build option which proposed demolition of the barn and its replacement with a bespoke energy efficient dwelling designed specifically to take advantage of its unique setting and with

landscaping and level changes incorporated to reduce the visual impact of the structure on the open countryside.

Careful volume calculations were done to understand the size of the existing massing, and we set upon a strategy to redistribute this mass into a cruciform shape plan accommodating open-plan living areas.

A semi-subterranean level below provided space for 5 bedrooms with views out over the open countryside.

The scheme showcases how specialist planning knowledge and creative architecture can work together to increase the value of land.

We demonstrated how the overall impact of the new build solution would be reduced compared to the original Class Q permitted development conversion through a Landscape and Visual Impact assessment and detailed landscaping proposals, securing this valuable consent for our client in May 2020.

PROJECT DETAILS

- » Class Q consent to convert Barn secured first
- » Subsequent application for replacement dwelling approved
- » Rural setting with panoramic views over Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire
- » Contemporary style with rural palette



SUCCESS IN SURREY

We are delighted to announce our first garage site received unanimous planning approval at planning committee earlier this week. It is one of thirty garage sites currently in the planning system and represents a major step forward in the development of underused sites across Elmbridge.

Developed on brownfield land in residential areas,

the garage sites maximise the potential of land that is otherwise used for anti-social behaviour and will provide much needed affordable housing in an expensive borough.

The clever L-shaped design creates a future proof home with a bedroom located at ground floor whilst respecting the existing trees that surround the site.



56 EXTRA CARE APARTMENTS SUBMITTED

Our latest extra care scheme for 56 apartments plus communal spaces and day centre in the South Downs National Park has been submitted for planning. The project is located on the site of Bulmer House in Petersfield and retains Elsa Bulmer's legacy to provide accommodation for older people on the site.

The design takes inspiration for the surrounding landscape and historic vernacular

in Petersfield to create a contemporary proposal arranged around a series of courtyard gardens. The design builds on the latest dementia design guidance and will provide high quality accommodation for local older people.

SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT PUBLISHED ON THE PLANNING WHITE PAPER

In its comprehensive report on the future of the planning system, published in June, the Committee calls on the Government to revisit its proposals. The Committee also asks for further information on how the Government's target to build 300,000 homes a year will be achieved and further calls for local authorities to have more powers to act where developers are too slow in completing sites they have planning permission for – recommending that local authorities are able to levy full council tax charges on incomplete properties if sufficient progress has not been made within 36 months.

Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee Clive Betts MP said:

"The Government's aim of developing a planning system that enables buildings to be built more quickly and with greater input from local

communities is welcome, but it is far from clear how the current proposals will achieve this."

"Of course, planning also has wider impacts beyond housing. There were many issues that weren't addressed in the Government's proposals – including how the changes will affect the levelling-up agenda, economic recovery from Covid-19, and the environment."

WWA Managing Director Philip Waddy gave evidence to the Select Committee on behalf of the RIBA explaining that good design is more than just how a building looks.

Good design requires a holistic approach including functionality, sustainability, social interaction, personal safety and a sense of place.

One of the real frustrations when presenting a scheme to planning committee or the public is that people just look at the appearance of a building and think that is all that matters.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE
White Paper August 2020



BULLETIN

WHAT WE OFFER

- » A client centric approach to our work delivering an outstanding client experience
- » High quality designs to reduce energy use and improve the quality of life for the end users
- » A responsive, reliable and results orientated service
- » Socially, ethically and environmentally aware
- » Thought leaders in Architecture, Urban Design and Town Planning

MATT AND HELENA JOIN THE TEAM!



Matthew Jackson has joined the growing team at WWA studios as a Project Architect, bringing significant experience in residential and education sectors. Having working in practice in Oxfordshire for a number of years, Matt has hit the ground running with a number of exciting projects at WWA.

Helena Gatland joins us from Oxford Brookes University where she recently graduated with a First Class degree in Architecture. We are excited to see what new skills and fresh perspectives Helena will bring to the team through her academic experience.

CHECK OUT OUR
NEW WEBSITE

WWA-STUDIOS.COM

ABOUT

WWA is a innovative multi-disciplinary practice of Architects, Urban Designers and Town Planners with a rich pedigree of successful projects delivered over our 136 year history. We offer outstanding client focussed services embracing the natural crossover between built environment disciplines and we consistently deliver high quality projects on time and on budget. Our team of town planners offer added value to clients with an exceptional success rate in achieving planning consent.

Please contact one of the Directors for a no obligation discussion about how we might assist you with your planning or development project.

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