

Queen's Speech 2017 - Development takes a back seat



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Although the majority of the delayed Queen's Speech, and the media coverage of it, was predictably focused on Brexit, some development related matters were squeezed in.

Housing

Readers may recall that the Housing White Paper, published in February, identified the nation's "broken" housing market as one of the "greatest barriers to progress" in Britain today. Notwithstanding this, the need for more homes was restricted to one passing reference in the speech, as an add-on to non-development related property reforms.

There is a commitment to delivering the reforms proposed in the White Paper, but this is only outlined on two thirds of a page towards the end of the background notes of the speech. There is little detail about how this is to be achieved, except for an implication that any initiatives will be pursued through non-legislative means.

Roadside development

In contrast to fixing the housing market, encouraging the adoption of electric vehicles is considered by the Government to be worthy of new legislation. The thinking behind this is perhaps difficult to argue with, but a part of the proposal is a requirement for motorway service areas (MSAs) and "large fuel retailers" to provide electric vehicle charge points.

Most MSAs have already installed charging points, but the vagueness of, and the potential financial burden arising from, the second category of facilities has already caused some concern in the industry. If

"large fuel retailers" refers to operators, rather than individual facilities themselves, this could have a significant and detrimental impact on smaller and tighter sites, as few amenities can be offered whilst charging takes place, and space is already at a premium.

HS2

Also benefiting from its own bill is the next stage of the HS2 link between Birmingham and Crewe. The bill will include details relative to compulsory purchase of the land required to deliver it, as well as granting deemed planning permission to deliver the scheme (with the details to be developed in coordination with the relevant local authorities).

Commentary

Although most recognise that Brexit will consume much of the Government's time over the coming years, the Queen's Speech suggests that development is now quite low on its list of priorities. This is particularly true of housing, which the Government itself has identified as one of the largest matters that Britain needs to address. If this is the case, at the very least one can anticipate a continued gap between development pressure and local appetite (in much of the country) to accommodate it.

As ever, time will tell – Rapleys will continue to keep a close eye on the situation, and keep you informed of developments as they emerge.