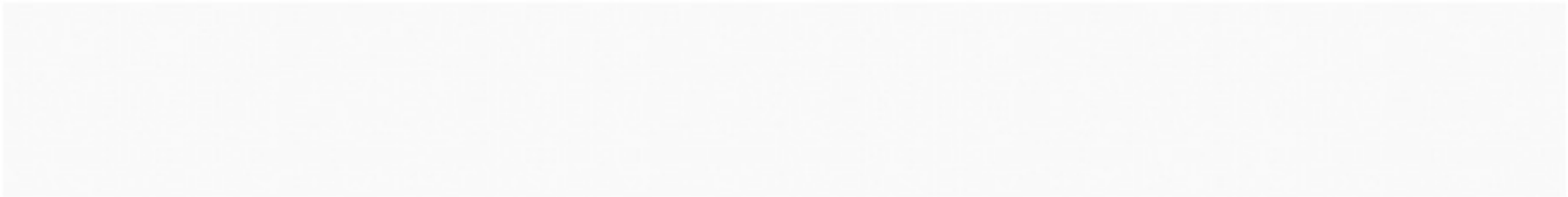


Any house to be convertible into two flats – Autumn Statement



The government will consult on a law allowing any house to be converted into two flats as long as the interior is respected, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt has announced.



There will be a consultation on the new Permitted Development Right early in the new year, while it will be implemented in 2024.

On the subject of planning, he also said councils will be able to recover the full costs of planning applications if they stay on deadline from next year – as he looks to cut the time infrastructure projects take.

Trevor Abrahmsohn of estate agent Glentree International said: “Chancellor Hunt’s proposals to speed up planning applications is certainly a step in the right direction, but the system still needs a root and branch revamp since it is the chicane which attenuates the supply of new homes in the UK.

“Although it is a narrow interest and only effects a few participants, the presumption of planning consent to change a single property into two dwellings (provided the exterior remains the same) will assist this sector, but only marginally”.

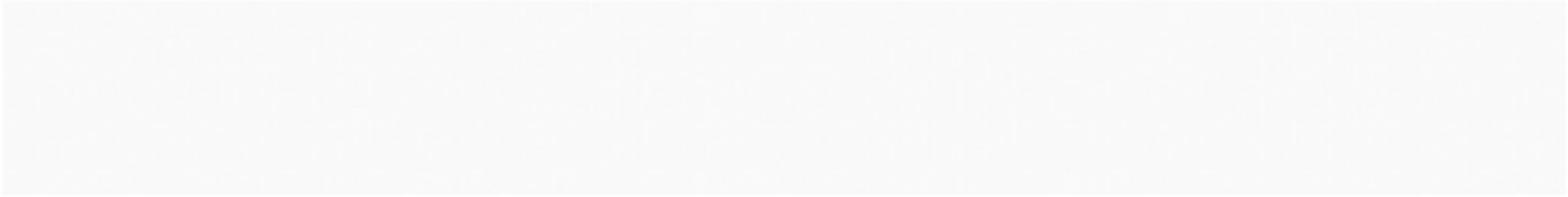
However Paul Wakefield, partner at law firm, Shakespeare Martineau, speculated that this policy could stir up problems for the future.

He said: If this were to be widely utilised, it would mean a potential increase on local services, without any financial mitigation, with local authorities presumably required to fund the increased impacts on local services which would ordinarily be offset through the use of section 106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy.

“Given the likely timescale for delivery of these proposals, and the prospect that many of these consequences won’t be felt until after a general election, there may be a case of storing up problems for the next government to resolve.

“As the Chancellor has already signalled his intention to stand down at the general election, I suspect he may not be too worried about that, regardless of the outcome of the vote.”

The Chancellor also allocated £450 million housing fund, which Hunt said would deliver 2,400 new homes.



Meanwhile he announced three new ‘investment zones’ in West Midlands, East Midlands and Greater Manchester, with another due in Wrexham and Flincher.

Alistair Watson, UK head of planning and environment at global law firm Taylor Wessing, said: “It’s a teeny tiny titchy amount of the planning reform that is really needed and nowhere near what the real estate sector – well, most of the country – has been asking for, for years and has been promised for years.

“This supposed planning reform announced today won’t bring about the development and the infrastructure that the Government says it wants the real estate sector to deliver.

“‘Growth’ requires a well-resourced planning system and pro-development policies – that’s common sense, and today’s Statement gives us neither.”