Plannning, Nature and Growth: Unresolved Conflicts

The debates surrounding the Environment White Paper (and the National Ecosystem Assessment) highlight unresolved conflicts in the government's approach to planning, nature and economic growth.

Local Green Areas and Nature Improvement Areas look set to add to the large amount of land that is already protected from development. At the same time planning reform "will guide development to the best locations", which should (but probably won't) lead to development on currently protected land.

Through neighbourhood plans, local communities will be given more power to say no to development but local authorities will be provided greater financial incentives to say yes to development.

The government wants economic growth and is worried about the cost of living, but it doesn't want more out of town supermarkets and clone towns (even if these may deliver growth and lower costs of living).

It's considered risky to suggest that we need a period of house price stability and very dangerous to suggest they should fall but the government worries about 'generation rent' and the fact that young people are unable to get their foot on the housing ladder.

The land planning system sits at the heart of all these controversies (and more besides). Uncertainty isn't great for developers, but it is increasingly clear that serious debate is needed if we are to reform a system that clearly isn't working.