

Parish Council Briefing Note regarding the Planning for the Future - White Paper and Neighbourhood Planning

As you may be aware the Government issued a consultation paper '*Planning for the Future*' on 6 August 2020. The white paper outlines a potential streamlining of the planning process and some of the biggest changes to the planning system in 40 years.

It is important to remember that at this stage the paper is a consultation document and none of the changes outlined within *Planning for the Future* will be enacted without changes to the primary and secondary legislation. Therefore, this does not have an immediate effect on any neighbourhood plan either adopted or in production.

The white paper consultation runs until 29 October 2020 and we would encourage parish councils to respond to the consultation, particularly questions 13a and 13b regarding neighbourhood planning.

This note outlines the matters within the white paper which are most pertinent to neighbourhood planning and is not a synopsis of all the proposals being consulted upon.

Neighbourhood Plans

The white paper indicates that there will be a future for NDPs within the new planning system (Proposal 9). There is a need to consider whether their future content reflects that of the new simplified local plans.

Four key highlights:

- NDPs could cover a smaller area – the paper is suggesting even to individual streets
- There will be a greater use of digital formats and mapping including 3D visuals. The Government have indicated that they will be looking for pilot projects in the near future.
- Great use of design codes and guides. NDPs and Local Orders could be used to modify standard area design codes.
- There will be no 'development management' style policies within Local Plans or NDPs. These will be contained within national planning policy probably a revised NPPF.

Streamlining Local Plans/Core Strategy

There have been some significant changes suggested to the local planning system (Proposal 1 -3). You will probably increasingly see references to Core Strategy now being replaced by the term 'local plan'. Local plans will focus on identifying site and area-specific requirements, alongside design codes and not a large number of development management criteria policies.

The White Paper has indicated that housing growth requirement will be nationally determined and binding on the local planning authorities (Proposal 4).

It also indicates that Local Plans will be focused on identifying land under three categories:

- a. **Growth areas** – where outline approval for development would be automatically secured.
- b. **Renewal areas** - suitable for some development where there would be a presumption in favour of development.
- c. **Protected areas** where development is restricted. This would include areas such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Conservation Areas, Local Wildlife Sites, areas of significant flood risk and important areas of green space.

The new Local Plans will be visual map-based and standardised across the country using a wider range of digital technology. More prominence will be placed on social media and electronic consultations and less paper based consultations. There is will be greater emphasis on engagement at the plan-making stage and a streamlining of consultation at the planning application stage (Proposal 6 -7).

All Local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate will be required to meet a statutory timetable (of no more than 30 months) for the production of their local plans (Proposal 8)

- **Stage 1** [6 months]: The local planning authority “calls for” suggestions for areas under the three categories;
- **Stage 2** [12 months]: The local planning authority draws up its proposed Local Plan, and produces any necessary evidence to inform and justify the plan;
- **Stage 3** [6 weeks]: The local planning authority submits the Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination and publicises the plan for the public to comment on;
- **Stage 4** [9 months]: A planning inspector considers whether the three categories shown in the proposed Local Plan are “sustainable” and makes binding changes which are necessary to satisfy the test.
- **Stage 5** [6 weeks]: Local Plan map, key and text are finalised, and come into force.

This represents a major streamlining in the process which is currently taking on average 7 years.

New focus on design and sustainability:

A greater focus on ‘place making’ will be given within the National Planning Policy Framework. There is an emphasis on locally produced Design guidance and codes and suggestions of introducing a ‘fast-track for beauty’ to automatically permit proposals for high-quality developments. There will be more emphasis on climate change and energy efficiency. (Proposal 10 -12, 14, 17 and 18).

Improve infrastructure delivery

The White Paper also indicates reforms to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and system of planning obligations by setting a national, value-based flat rate charge (the ‘Infrastructure Levy’). This will aim to raise more revenue than under the current system of developer contributions, and deliver at least as much on-site affordable housing as at present. (Proposal 19 -22). The ‘neighbourhood share’ is proposed to be kept.

The link to the Planning for the Future white paper can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>