

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER- AUGUST 2020
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

“The Planning for the future consultation proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development.”

Planning for the Future consultation runs for 12 weeks from 6th August 29th October. Proposals cover plan-making, development management, developer contributions, and other related policy proposals.

Questions

1. What three words do you associate most with the planning system in England?
2. Do you get involved with planning decisions in your local area? [Yes / No]
2(a). If no, why not? [Don't know how to / It takes too long / It's too complicated / I don't care / Other – please specify]
3. Our proposals will make it much easier to access plans and contribute your views to planning decisions. How would you like to find out about plans and planning proposals in the future? [Social media / Online news / Newspaper / By post / Other – please specify]
4. What are your top three priorities for planning in your local area? [Building homes for young people / building homes for the homeless / Protection of green spaces / The environment, biodiversity and action on climate change / Increasing the affordability of housing / The design of new homes and places / Supporting the high street / Supporting the local economy / More or better local

Response

- 1 No comment
- 2 No comment
- 3 No comment
- 4 No comment

Proposals for detailed consultation are contained within 3 policy pillars.

Pillar One – Planning for Development

Proposal 1: Local Plans should identify three types of land:

- *Growth areas* suitable for larger-scale new development, and where such sites are allocated within the Local Plan would have outline planning approval;
- *Renewal areas* suitable for some development, such as gentle densification; and
- *Protected areas* where development is restricted.

Question

5. Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals?
[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Simplification of Local Planning is long overdue as the process has become more complicated over time, however the options presented in the white paper are not sufficiently detailed to justify the level of changes proposed. Clarification is needed on the approach and impact on housing requirement due to Cannock Chase being a heavily restricted area. Housing delivery is constrained by infrastructure and Infrastructure Levy will determine future levels of housing delivery.

The Cannock Chase district comprises over 60% Green Belt and AONB and the urban area is constrained to a very large degree. Growth Areas cannot be accommodated within the urban area as

evidenced by a recent Strategic Growth Study carried out for the Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area. The Green Belt offers the only prospect for meeting growth objectives and accommodating local housing needs.

Cannock Chase is unable to meet its local need within the urban area and the prospect of Protected Area designations will further limit the potential for growth that can only be accommodated on sites within protected areas. This will entail further detailed investigation and justification for sites to be considered for allocation with associated delays. As some of these sites require investment there will be a need to secure permissions and funding for infrastructure in order for sites to come forward and as this introduces uncertainty, the White Paper suggests that these sites should not be included within the Local Plan if they cannot be delivered within the plan period. Is it assumed therefore that proposals that rely on funding which is not secured should be excluded?

A standardised method to identify a local housing requirement is helpful and would simplify a part of the local plan process that generates considerable debate up to and including the examination. The new standard methodology introduces new variables that more than double Cannock Chase's housing requirement. Given that the district has been successful at accelerating housing delivery, a huge increase in the housing requirement creates immense difficulties. The district is defined by Green Belt and AONB comprising more than 60% of the district. The main urban areas are confined by these designations and there is a finite amount of sites that can be brought forward to meet local needs but it is clear that the current requirement cannot be accommodated within these urban centres. Existing infrastructure is already struggling to cope with current demands and new development will only increase that pressure further. Highway infrastructure predates development much of which has not been upgraded sufficiently to keep up with current day demands and no further development should be considered without the necessary investment in some locations where delays are severe and highway safety is compromised.

There has been substantial investment in preparing a detailed evidence base on which the Local Plan Review is based. It would appear that the proposals in the White Paper would do away with the need for some of the evidence base which reflects local conditions and circumstances. There are major concerns that centrally provided data and information would not be as robust as locally derived evidence. The underlying principle of an evidence based plan will, in our opinion, be compromised.

On this basis, local needs cannot be met at the level required through the current standard methodology and the new method proposed would lead to large scale incursion into 'protected areas'. The authority is strongly opposed to this scenario which will lead to damaging impacts within the district.

Proposal 2: Development management policies established at national scale and an altered role for Local Plans.

- The National Planning Policy Framework would become the primary source of policies for development management.
- Local Plans (and Neighbourhood Plans) would set out local rules through design guides and codes for inclusion in plans or Supplementary Planning Documents.
- Planning application processes reformed and automated to reduce time and cost.

Question

6. Do you agree with our proposals for streamlining the development management content of Local Plans, and setting out general development management policies nationally?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: In principle support to streamlining processes however, cost and staff resource impacts are not understood. There will be a need to develop new skills and responsibilities against a

backdrop of reduced teams and limited resources to purchase or develop new systems and processes.

Greater use of technology risks excluding groups that do not have access to appropriate technology. Cannock Chase computer literacy levels and access to computers and internet is low in comparison to other areas and consequently engagement with the planning process could decline.

Larger more complex applications need more time to determine. Imposing penalties may well lead to more refusals in order to meet timeframes for determination with a consequent increase in appeals. There may be unintended consequences in advocating this system.

Proposal 3: Local Plans should be subject to a single statutory “sustainable development” test, replacing the existing tests of soundness.

- abolish the Sustainability Appraisal system and develop a simplified process for assessing the environmental impact of plans;
- remove the Duty to Cooperate test;
- Plans should be informed by appropriate infrastructure planning, and sites should not be included in the plan where there is no reasonable prospect of any infrastructure that may be needed coming forward within the plan period.
- The new-style digital Local Plan would use data-driven insights to assess local infrastructure needs to help decide what infrastructure is needed and where it should be located.

Questions

7(a). Do you agree with our proposals to replace existing legal and policy tests for Local Plans with a consolidated test of “sustainable development”, which would include consideration of environmental impact?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

7(b). How could strategic, cross-boundary issues be best planned for in the absence of a formal Duty to Cooperate?

Response: 7a) Not sure – further detail needed but in principle if this could reduce complexity of the plan without compromising quality it would be supported.

7b) Co-operation will need to continue with adjacent LPAs within the HMA to ensure that growth can be accommodated as well as providing assistance where it is needed. The removal of regional planning has created difficulties in agreeing joint approaches across a large geographical area.

In the absence of detailed alternative proposals to the existing formal Duty to Co-operate, the Council will object to the removal of the DtC.

Proposal 4: A standard method for establishing housing requirement figures which ensures enough land is released in the areas where affordability is worst, to stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built.

The standard method would be a means of distributing the national housebuilding target of 300,000 new homes annually, and one million homes by the end of the Parliament, having regard to:

- the size of existing urban settlements
- the relative affordability of places (least affordable places take a greater share);
- the extent of land constraints in an area, including designated areas of environmental and heritage value, the Green Belt and flood risk.
- the opportunities to better use existing brownfield land;
- the land required for non-residential development; and
- inclusion of an appropriate buffer.

It would be possible for authorities to agree an alternative distribution of their requirement in the context of joint planning arrangements.

Remove requirement to be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of land, but maintain the Housing Delivery Test and the presumption in favour of sustainable development as part of the new system.

Questions

8(a). Do you agree that a standard method for establishing housing requirements (that takes into account constraints) should be introduced?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

8(b). Do you agree that affordability and the extent of existing urban areas are appropriate indicators of the quantity of development to be accommodated? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response 8a) standard method provides clarity so long as constraints and local circumstances are taken into account in setting local requirement that is deliverable and sustainable. The proposed standard method identifies a high number of new dwellings for the district that would be very difficult to deliver and raises the issue of cross-boundary work to accommodate shortfalls in less constrained areas.

The proposed new method removed a cap previously applied and also a further affordability factor introduced that increases the housing need figure for Cannock Chase District. The new method would see an increase from 277 dwellings to 575 dwellings. The previous three years has seen average delivery at 410 dwellings per annum due to a number of large developments taking place in the district. The first year of this was boosted by a significant increase in delivery that has not been attained since and delivery in excess of 500 units has only been achieved 4 times in the previous 20 years. There are few large sites in the district that could deliver substantial development and there will be a reliance on smaller sites to deliver Cannock's housing need in future years. These points illustrate our strong objection to the proposed new methodology and our firm view is that the current system should be retained including the 40% cap that would offer some relief from the grossly inflated housing need derived from the proposed new standard method that is not realistic or sustainable.

Cannock Chase District is heavily constrained as over 60% is designated as Green Belt or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Meeting the current Standard Methodology derived target of 277 dwellings is a challenge and will be difficult to deliver in the urban area. The proposed target of 575 dwellings would require Green Belt release which is contrary to proposals in the White Paper. In this instance there would be large tranches of protected areas comprising Green Belt and AONB and insufficient brownfield capacity to accommodate local need. Furthermore, the abolition of the Duty to Co-operate removes a mechanism to seek assistance with meeting local need. The consideration of constraints in the final decision on a housing need target is welcomed and it is strongly suggested that this is done as part of a dialogue rather than being imposed.

It is evident that areas that have successfully accelerated housing delivery, such as Cannock Chase, would be penalised for these efforts with a further unrealistic target being imposed. There will be strong opposition to this locally when adjacent areas that have a greater issue in relation to affordability and are less constrained will see a reduced housing requirement. This is unequitable and raises pressure for accommodating development in designated areas that would change the nature of the district in a way that could not be justified or supported. There is a pattern of shire districts seeing a disproportionate increase in housing numbers in comparison to urban metropolitan areas. This will act as a disincentive for developers to build out brownfield sites and creates further pressure to release large swathes of Green Belt areas.

Response 8b) issues are more complex – affordability is an issue across all sectors and a focus on market housing is not addressing the core issue that new homes are out of reach of the people most in need for which affordable products are required. Market housing favours certain typologies whereas affordable housing demand is skewed towards other types of houses.

This is a simplistic approach to increase supply in order to suppress prices as the level of impact on

affordability generally would be very small. There is no evidence to suggest that releasing additional housing land will provide higher delivery or reduction in the cost of providing new housing.

Proposal 5: Areas identified as Growth areas (suitable for substantial development) would automatically be granted outline planning permission for the principle of development, while automatic approvals would also be available for pre-established development types in other areas suitable for building.

In Growth areas, detailed planning permission could be secured in one of three ways:

- a reformed reserved matters process;
- a Local Development Order prepared by LPA in parallel with the Local Plan and linked to a master plan and design codes; or
- for exceptionally large sites such as a new town a Development Consent Order under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime could be an appropriate route .

In Renewal areas there would be a general presumption in favour of development established in legislation and consent for development would be granted in one of three ways:

- for pre-specified forms of development, through a new permission route which gives an automatic consent if the scheme meets design and other prior approval requirements;
- for other types of development, a faster planning application process;
- a Local or Neighbourhood Development Order.

In Protected areas development proposals would come forward as now through planning applications being made to the local authority (except where they are subject to permitted development rights or development orders), and judged against policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Questions

9(a). Do you agree that there should be automatic outline permission for areas for substantial development (Growth areas) with faster routes for detailed consent?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

9(b). Do you agree with our proposals above for the consent arrangements for Renewal and Protected areas?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

9(c). Do you think there is a case for allowing new settlements to be brought forward under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response 9(a) and 9(b) No. Further details are needed on the content and scope of the revised NPPF, the National Model Design Code, and the scope and detail that will be included in Local Design Codes to assess whether this proposal is workable. Assessing development and its impact on the local area is a complicated process requiring detailed technical appraisal. There are additional responsibilities in terms of design and setting development parameters that require a new level of detail that will need to be set out at the start of the process which would be during the formulation of the local plan otherwise national guidance would be applied. This would not be an ideal situation as each area is different and each application is assessed on its own merits and there would be a reduced emphasis on local circumstances if the policies are not in place. LPA's are left with a difficult choice in resourcing this activity to ensure local circumstances have appropriate weight.

Cannock Chase is further constrained by past mining activities. These sites have not been extensively reclaimed and only treated for recreation use. These sites will be expensive to bring forward if they are deemed to be suitable for development and support will be needed for reclaiming and derisking these sites. The same would apply for brownfield sites where reclamation will be needed and potential assistance to make them viable for development.

The White Paper makes no reference to employment land and town centres which have their own specific needs.

Response 9 (c) No. A local development order prepared by the LPA in parallel to the Local Plan would be a preferable route to delivery.:

Proposal 6: Decision-making should be faster and more certain, with firm deadlines, and make greater use of digital technology

- greater digitalisation of the application process;
- A new, more modular, software landscape to encourage digital innovation and provide access to underlying data;
- shorter and more standardised applications.
- data-rich planning application registers;
- data sets that underpin the planning system;
- a digital template for planning notices;
- greater standardisation of technical supporting information;
- clearer and more consistent planning conditions, with standard national conditions;
- a streamlined approach to developer contributions;
- the delegation of detailed planning decisions to planning officers where the principle of development has been established.

Clear incentives on the local planning authority to determine an application within the statutory time limits (refund of the planning fee , deemed to have been granted planning permission if there has not been a timely determination).

There will remain a power to call in decisions by the Secretary of State and for applicants to appeal against a decision by a local planning authority.

Question

10. Do you agree with our proposals to make decision-making faster and more certain? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: support in principle where benefits can be demonstrated but concerned with centralising decision making with less local control and influence. Not all Local authorities are party to pilot schemes to increase the use of technology and are not able to comment fully.

Major development requires careful and detailed consideration of necessary technical studies that will impact on the development proposal. This will include the identification of on-site and off-site mitigation and planning obligations. These are all complex matters that cannot be assessed at the outset and will affect the final decision. Imposing a time-constraint may assist the development industry but carries a risk that local communities may suffer the consequences of development that has not been appropriately assessed. Consultation with statutory bodies has the potential to delay decision making and this will need to be resolved if any deadlines are to be imposed.

Proposal 7: Local Plans should be visual and map-based, standardised, based on the latest digital technology, and supported by a new template.

Interactive, map-based Local Plans will be built upon data standards and digital principles. A guide will be published including clearer expectations around the more limited evidence that will be expected to support “sustainable” Local Plans, a “model” template for Local Plans and subsequent updates, well in advance of the legislation being brought into force.

There will be a series of pilots to work with local authorities and tech companies (the emerging ‘PropTech’ sector) to develop innovative solutions to support plan-making activities and make community involvement more accessible and engaging.

Question

11. Do you agree with our proposals for accessible, web-based Local Plans? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response; In principle this would be supported however would need to see this in action and assess benefits. Concern that investment in new systems/technology will be required when resources are

already stretched.

It is difficult to comment on a proposal that is still in development and relies on the possibility of a suitable solution and application being delivered in the near future. The 'hope' value associated with this proposal will undermine the local plan process where firm, reliable proposals and solutions are needed for there to be confidence that the process is fit for purpose. Such applications need to be proven and developed beyond an initial concept stage.

Proposal 8: Local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate will be required through legislation to meet a statutory timetable for key stages of the process, and we will consider what sanctions there would be for those who fail to do so.

Five stages, with meaningful public engagement at two stages:

- Stage 1 [6 months]: LPA "calls for" suggestions for areas under the three categories, including public involvement for where development should go and what it should look like.
- Stage 2 [12 months]: LPA draws up its proposed Local Plan, and 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 with a Statement of Reasons to explain why it has drawn up its plan as it has; and publicises the plan for the public to comment on.
- Stage 4 [9 months]: A planning inspector considers whether the three categories are "sustainable" as per the statutory test and accompanying national guidance 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.

A statutory duty for local authorities to adopt a new Local Plan by a specified date – 30 months from the legislation being brought into force.

Requirement for each planning authority to review its Local Plan at least every five years.

Alternative options:

- existing examination process could be reformed in order to speed up the process;
- remove the Examination stage entirely, instead requiring Local Planning Authorities to undertake a process of self-assessment against set criteria and guidance.

Question

12. Do you agree with our proposals for a 30 month statutory timescale for the production of Local Plans?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: No.

Timetable is very optimistic; does not relate to internal processes and committee meeting timetables and election cycles; concentrates key activities such as consultation and representations into a confined timeframe. The proposed new approach 'front-loads' community consultation on proposed development to the Local Plan, with more 'streamlined' consultation at the planning application stage. It is therefore essential that Local Plan consultation is inclusive and effective – and this will take time. Opportunities for debate are also limited potentially requiring a more detailed examination.

Site promoters will be required to carry out detailed appraisals at the outset of the process and justify their case for site designation.

The scale of evidence required for current local plans is onerous and costly, it would be beneficial to reduce this burden where possible as well as the cost of examination.

The changes to evidence requirements and assessing local housing need in particular provide an insecure environment in which to prepare a local plan. A period of stability is needed to allow plans to be prepared without having to respond to changing priorities and approaches which has been the case in recent times. The Cannock Chase Local Plan has suffered delays due to changes imposed through the 2018 NPPF which halted the progress of the plan at the time which reverted to a review. The standard methodology has been incorporated in the review but a further alteration will impact

on the review timetable. The scale of changes being suggested risks current plans being revisited with the consequent time delays and increased expense.

Proposal 9: Neighbourhood Plans should be retained as an important means of community input, and we will support communities to make better use of digital tools

Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system, but we will want to consider whether their content should become more focused to reflect our proposals for Local Plans.

Questions

13(a). Do you agree that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

13(b). How can the neighbourhood planning process be developed to meet our objectives, such as in the use of digital tools and reflecting community preferences about design?

Response 13 (a) Yeso. The erosion of neighbourhood planning would reduce interest and involvement in planning process if they have less opportunity to influence local area and decision making.

Response 13 (b) Technical and financial support will be necessary. It will be necessary to see the proposed changes before they can be commented on. There is potential to improve processes through new technology but this requires new skills and investment. (see previous comments in the response to question 11).

Proposal 10: A stronger emphasis on build out through planning

It is proposed to make it clear in the revised National Planning Policy Framework that the masterplans and design codes for sites prepared for substantial development should seek to include a variety of development types by different builders which allow more phases to come forward together. We will explore further options to support faster build out as we develop our proposals for the new planning system.

Questions

14. Do you agree there should be a stronger emphasis on the build out of developments? And if so, what further measures would you support?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Not sure. This is dependent on developers as once permission is secured the rate of delivery is outside of Local Authority influence. There are issues of market saturation and developer capacity that do not appear to have been considered and relies on developers accelerating delivery and collaborating to a point where there may be impacts on profit. Where market saturation is experienced, house prices may stabilise due to increased choice, however would this disincentivise developers to continue building if profits are constrained?

How would faster build out be imposed and who would have the powers to do this? Will penalties be considered where build out rates are not achieved? In the context of LPA's missing targets, penalties are suggested but no such measures are mentioned where developers do not meet targets or artificially constrain the market by controlling the phasing and delivery of development.

Pillar Two – Planning for beautiful and sustainable places

Proposal 11: To make design expectations more visual and predictable, we will expect design guidance and codes to be prepared locally with community involvement, and ensure that codes are more binding on decisions about development.

It is expected that the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code and the revised Manual for Streets will have a direct bearing on the design of new communities. But to ensure that schemes reflect the diverse character of our country, it is important that local guides and codes are prepared wherever possible.

Where locally-produced guides and codes are not in place, we also propose to make clear in policy that the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code and Manual for Streets should guide decisions on the form of development.

Questions 15. What do you think about the design of new development that has happened recently in your area? [Not sure or indifferent / Beautiful and/or well-designed / Ugly and/or poorly-designed / There hasn't been any / Other – please specify] 16. Sustainability is at the heart of our proposals. What is your priority for sustainability in your area? [Less reliance on cars / More green and open spaces / Energy efficiency of new buildings / More trees / Other – please specify]
Response: 15. Recent developments are generic in design and identical schemes could be found in any other part of the country, they are not locally distinctive and display little in terms of design flair. Response: 16. Climate change and affordability are key issues. Cannock Chase has levels of deprivation and housing stress exacerbated by the recent lockdown. There are high levels of building activity by the major housebuilders but schemes are of a generic nature comprising family housing in the main. Demand for smaller homes is high and the needs of people looking to rent including social and affordable rent is high as well as other affordable housing models. Housing in certain parts of Cannock display heat stress tied to poor thermal performance linked to the age, condition and construction of the properties affected. Cannock Chase Council has declared a climate change emergency and wishes to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as 2030. This requires significant change in terms of construction, transport, adoption of renewable energy systems and installation, increase in green and blue infrastructure and behavioural change. Cannock's ambitions are not matched by central government and consequently the climate change ambitions for the authority are compromised. The instances of housing stress and fuel poverty have been exacerbated by the pandemic and need to be addressed urgently.

Q17. Do you agree with our proposals for improving the production and use of design guides and codes? (Yes / No / Not Sure Please provide supporting information?)
Response: No Preparation of design guides and codes would divert staff resources that are already stretched. Urban designers have declined in number and authorities may need to buy in support in this area adding further to the cost of a local plan. For guides or codes to be effective, they need to be sufficiently detailed to set out clear standards that will allow schemes to be rejected if they do not meet requirements and will need to be bespoke to each area/site. Design SPD's are generic documents and design codes/guides will need to be developed for each site where the scale of development requires it. This is a big undertaking.

Proposal 12: To support the transition to a planning system which is more visual and rooted in local preferences and character, we will set up a body to support the delivery of provably locally-popular design codes, and propose that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making.

- Proposals later this year for improving the resourcing of planning departments more broadly and new expert body to oversee design agenda
- appoint a chief officer for design and place-making, as recommended by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission

Question

18. Do you agree that we should establish a new body to support design coding and building better places, and that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: No. It is not clear how a chief officer appointment would assist placemaking and improve design. Would specialist skills and knowledge be required or would responsibility be delegated? Cannock Chase Council would not support the appointment of a new Chief Officer in view of existing and future budget pressures. The priority should be to ensure planning services are adequately resourced and teams are fully staffed. Experienced and qualified planning staff are hard to recruit and there has been a known skills shortage for a number of years.

A new design body may add more complexity to the process and another layer of approval that could cause delay. Responsibilities will need to be clearly set out to provide clarity of roles and influence in design coding. For this to be effective, the design body and chief officer must be given powers to require and/or impose changes to schemes.

Proposal 13: To further embed national leadership on delivering better places, we will consider how Homes England's strategic objectives can give greater emphasis to delivering beautiful places.

Question 19. Do you agree with our proposal to consider how design might be given greater emphasis in the strategic objectives for Homes England?

Question

19. Do you agree with our proposal to consider how design might be given greater emphasis in the strategic objectives for Homes England?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Yes. Support in principle as public sector projects could help to set benchmarks and higher design and sustainability standards.

Proposal 14: We intend to introduce a fast-track for beauty through changes to national policy and legislation, to incentivise and accelerate high quality development which reflects local character and preferences.

- Advantage to schemes which comply with local design guides and codes for planning consent.
- Growth areas legislation will require that a masterplan and site-specific code are agreed as a condition of the permission in principle which is granted through the plan.
- Legislation to widen and change the nature of permitted development, so that it enables popular and replicable forms of development to be approved easily and quickly.
- In Renewal areas, a limited set of form-based development types will be developed to allow the redevelopment of existing residential buildings. These would benefit from permitted development rights.

Question

20. Do you agree with our proposals for implementing a fast-track for beauty?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Pilot projects should be assessed and outcomes shared in order to evaluate benefits. Scheme could work well but will need time to develop and refine. However, there will be a need to develop skills within planning teams that will take time to put in place. There will be a need to front load the design process putting additional burdens on LPA's in setting out clear design aspirations and parameters through masterplans and design coding.

Rolling out popular and replicable forms of development should be viewed with caution as variance in design is what generates visual interest rather than a concentration of reproduced designs. Design codes should allow for variation in buildings and landscape.

Design of buildings is only a component of delivering successful development, the emphasis should therefore be on placemaking which reduces the option of replicating popular development.

Successful developments tie the physical and natural environment with social needs creating pleasant and attractive developments that are valued by those that live and work in them. This is particularly important now given the experience with the national and local lockdowns associated with the pandemic. Residents have felt trapped and isolated in their homes where there has been little opportunity to access open spaces and recreation opportunities nearby. Masterplan approaches are often worthwhile but these need time and skills to develop which the proposals do not support.

Proposal 15: We intend to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that it targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and maximising environmental benefits.

- Strengthen consideration of environmental issues/impacts through a simpler, effective approach.

Proposal 16: We intend to design a quicker, simpler framework for assessing environmental impacts and enhancement opportunities, that speeds up the process while protecting and enhancing the most valuable and important habitats and species in England.

- Requirements for environmental assessment and mitigation need to be simpler to understand;
- Any new system will need to ensure that we take advantage of opportunities for environmental improvements while also meeting our domestic and international obligations for environmental protection.

Proposal 17: Conserving and enhancing our historic buildings and areas in the 21st century

- Will review and update the planning framework for listed buildings and conservation areas.
- Explore whether there are new and better ways of securing consent for routine works

Proposal 18: To complement our planning reforms, we will facilitate ambitious improvements in the energy efficiency standards for buildings to help deliver our world-leading commitment to net-zero by 2050.

- From 2025 new homes to produce 75-80% lower CO2 emissions compared to current levels
- Future Homes Standard roadmap to be reviewed

Pillar Three - Planning for infrastructure and connected places

Proposing reforms to make sure that developer contributions are:

- responsive to local needs, to ensure a fairer contribution from developers for local communities so that the right infrastructure and affordable housing is delivered;
- transparent, so it is clear to existing and new residents what new infrastructure will accompany development;
- consistent and simplified, to remove unnecessary delay and support competition in the housebuilding industry;
- buoyant, so that when prices go up the benefits are shared fairly between developers and the local community, and when prices go down there is no need to re-negotiate agreements.

Question

21. When new development happens in your area, what is your priority for what comes with it?

[More affordable housing / More or better infrastructure (such as transport, schools, health provision) / Design of new buildings / More shops and/or employment space / Green space / Don't know / Other – please specify]

Response: All of the above including mitigating impacts of climate change. There is however an increasing need for affordable housing. There is not sufficient infrastructure to support the growth ambitions of the authority let alone the inflated standard methodology requirements. There are

already constraints in terms of school places and health provision in a district with poor health and educational attainment.

All of the proposals above are ideals and concepts but must move quickly to deliverable actions that can be tested and proven and then adopted.

The White Paper is almost silent on Town Centres and employment areas. These areas are also seeing significant change that need to be planned for during the plan period. Employment land demand is likely to increase as a consequence of delivering increased housing numbers.

Proposal 19: The Community Infrastructure Levy should be reformed to be charged as a fixed proportion of the development value above a threshold, with a mandatory nationally-set rate or rates and the current system of planning obligations abolished.

- be charged on the final value of a development;
- be levied at point of occupation;
- include a value-based minimum threshold below which the levy is not charged;
- provide greater certainty for communities and developers.
- The single rate, or area-specific rates, would be set nationally. It would aim to increase revenue levels nationally when compared to the current system. Revenues would continue to be collected and spent locally.
- More sensitive to economic downturns, reduce risk and assist SME developers.
- Allow LA's to borrow against IL to forward fund infrastructure and enable faster delivery.

Questions

22(a). Should the Government replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning obligations with a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy, which is charged as a fixed proportion of development value above a set threshold?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

22(b). Should the Infrastructure Levy rates be set nationally at a single rate, set nationally at an area-specific rate, or set locally?

[Nationally at a single rate / Nationally at an area-specific rate / Locally]

22(c). Should the Infrastructure Levy aim to capture the same amount of value overall, or more value, to support greater investment in infrastructure, affordable housing and local communities?

[Same amount overall / More value / Less value / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

22(d). Should we allow local authorities to borrow against the Infrastructure Levy, to support infrastructure delivery in their area?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Further consideration required.

22 (a) Not sure. In principle support for consolidation and simplification, but support will be dependent on the details of the revised system. Section 106 has been successful in securing obligations, replacement should be just as effective. A locally set Infrastructure Levy would be preferred to reflect local circumstances and ensuring that development is viable and deliverable.

22 (b) There should be local discretion.

22 (c) There should be local discretion and flexibility to change priorities over time. There is a shortfall in infrastructure investment and capacity. These deficiencies will need to be addressed and levels of investment need to increase to support local priorities.

22 (d) In principle yes however, LA's are almost forced into this role with the deferment of obligations until development is occupied. Often mitigation is required at the start of development such as a new service road or education provision and current arrangements ensure that these obligations can be secured and delivered in a timely fashion. Similar experience of potentially borrowing against business rates would deter LA's.

Proposal 20: The scope of the Infrastructure Levy could be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development rights

Question

23. Do you agree that the scope of the reformed Infrastructure Levy should capture changes of use through permitted development rights?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Yes, however opportunities have been missed with some commercial to residential conversions that have delivered compromised living environments.

Proposal 21: The reformed Infrastructure Levy should deliver affordable housing provision

- Propose that under the Infrastructure Levy, authorities would be able to use funds raised through the levy to secure affordable housing.
- Local authorities could have an option to revert back to cash contributions if no provider was willing to buy the homes due to their poor quality.

Questions

24(a). Do you agree that we should aim to secure at least the same amount of affordable housing under the Infrastructure Levy, and as much on-site affordable provision, as at present?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

24(b). Should affordable housing be secured as in-kind payment towards the Infrastructure Levy, or as a 'right to purchase' at discounted rates for local authorities?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

24(c). If an in-kind delivery approach is taken, should we mitigate against local authority overpayment risk?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

24(d). If an in-kind delivery approach is taken, are there additional steps that would need to be taken to support affordable housing quality?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Section 106 has been successful particularly in securing affordable housing and replacement should be as effective.

24(a) There should be a decrease in affordable housing but where possible this should be increased.

24(b) not sure

24(c) Yes

24(d) no comment

Proposal 22: More freedom could be given to local authorities over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy

Question

25. Should local authorities have fewer restrictions over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

25(a). If yes, should an affordable housing 'ring-fence' be developed?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Response: Not all infrastructure can be funded and therefore funds should be restricted to infrastructure delivery only.

Delivering change

Also publishing a consultation on four shorter-term measures which will improve the immediate effectiveness of the current system:

- changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need
- securing of First Homes, sold at a discount to market price for first time buyers, including key workers, through developer contributions in the short term until the transition to a new system;
- temporarily lifting the small sites threshold, below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing, to up to 40 or 50 units;
- extending the current Permission in Principle to major development so landowners and developers now have a fast route to secure the principle of development for housing on sites without having to work up detailed plans first;

Public assets and investment

- Ensuring investment in new public buildings supports renewal and regeneration of town and city centres across the country (via the Government Estate Strategy);
- Exploring how disposal of publicly-owned land can support the SME and self-build sectors.

Supporting innovation in delivery

- Delivery mechanisms and modern delivery models to be put in place.

Making sure the system has the right people and skills

- Advocate fundamental cultural change on how planning departments operate. They need to be more outward looking, proactively engaging with developers, businesses, architects and designers, as well as a wider cross-section of their local communities.
- Focus of local planning authorities to shift towards the development of clear Local Plans and high-quality design codes which set the parameters for development.

Proposal 23: As we develop our final proposals for this new planning system, we will develop a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of our reforms. In doing so, we propose this strategy will be developed including the following key elements:

- The cost of operating the new planning system should be principally funded by the beneficiaries of planning gain – landowners and developers– rather than the national or local taxpayer.
- If a new approach to development contributions is implemented, a small proportion of the income should be earmarked to local planning authorities to cover their overall planning costs, including the preparation and review of Local Plans and design codes and enforcement activities.
- The Planning Inspectorate and statutory consultees should become more self-financing through new charging mechanisms and be subject to new performance targets to improve their performance.

Proposal 24: We will seek to strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions

- Review and strengthening of existing planning enforcement powers and sanctions to support new system.
- Potential higher fines and supporting more enforcement

<p>Question</p> <p>26. Do you have any views on the potential impact of the proposals raised in this consultation on people with protected characteristics as defined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010?</p>
<p>Response: No</p>