

Report to the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration

Subject: Response to Government White Paper – ‘Planning For The Future’

Date: 13th October 2020

Author: Service Manager – Planning Policy

Wards Affected

Borough-wide

Purpose

To gain portfolio holder endorsement of Gedling Borough Council’s proposed response attached as Appendix A to the Government consultation on the White Paper ‘Planning For The Future’ on changes to the planning system.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) The Portfolio Holder endorses the proposed response to the consultation attached as Appendix A.**

1 Background

- 1.1 The Government is consulting on fundamental reforms to the Planning System. The White Paper is open for comments until Thursday 29 October. The White Paper is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future

The Council’s proposed response is attached as **Appendix A**. A joint response on behalf of the Greater Nottingham Joint Planning Advisory Board is being prepared and will be sent separately in time to meet the

deadline. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have also made comments on the White Paper which will be forwarded separately to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

- 1.2 This is in addition to consulting on four associated measures: changes to the standard methodology for calculating housing requirement; First Homes; temporarily lifting the small sites threshold for affordable housing; and extending the current permission-in-principle to major development in relation to which Gedling Borough has responded by the deadline of 1st October 2020.
- 1.2 The Secretary of State supports the need for a simpler, faster, more predictable system that builds more homes, bridges the current generational divide of home ownership. A system that creates a more competitive housing industry ensures everyone pays a fair share of the costs of infrastructure and affordable housing, cuts red tape but not standards, with a higher regard on quality, design and local vernacular. More emphasis is placed on interactive and accessible map-based online systems.
- 1.3 It is structured around 3 pillars and 24 proposals:
 - Pillar one - planning for development;
 - Pillar two - planning for sustainable and beautiful places; and
 - Pillar three - planning for infrastructure and connected places.

The 24 proposals and related questions are set out in Appendix A with a proposed response. Briefly, the main proposals are as follows:

- Local Plans to have three types of designation: growth areas (suitable for substantial growth); renewal areas (suitable for development); and protected areas to be prepared to a statutory timetable with the local plan complete within 30 months of enactment;
- Public engagement to be front-loaded into the plan making process. Local plans are to be map based visual, standardised and based on the latest digital technology;
- Green Belt to remain protected;
- Streamlined development management process through the greater digitalisation of the application process, validation as part of the submission process, standard national planning conditions to cover common themes, increased officer delegation,

standardisation of supporting documents and possibly standardised decision notices; and

- Section 106 Agreements to be superseded and implemented alongside a consolidated flat rate Infrastructure Levy.

- 1.4 The White Paper includes relatively little detail on the operation and implementation of the new system, which makes commenting difficult. The reforms are intended to achieve a simpler, clearer and quicker to navigate system in which the public has more say.
- 1.5 There is relatively little evidence that the planning system is holding back house building given that around 90 per cent of planning applications are approved in England, and consent has been granted for up to one million homes that are yet to be built. A major concern is that there is too much focus on delivering homes and insufficient attention and analysis of how the reformed system will help achieving “levelling up” the nation as Government housing targets are likely to continue current trends in growth. Similarly, there is little detail on how the planning system will address urgent issues such as climate change.
- 1.6 The commitment to retaining local plans is welcome although the timetable for preparation appears unrealistically short for a yet untried system (30 months). In addition, the intention to facilitate greater public involvement in the plan making process adds pressure on the 30 month timeframe and the proposals also suggest less scope for public engagement at the planning application stage which may reduce local democratic accountability and legitimacy of decision making in the public eye. The timing of the White Paper and likely legislation is not ideal given the need for the country to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic and there is a worry that radical changes to the planning system can lead to uncertainty and delay in the delivery of much needed development.
- 1.7 Whilst there are concerns as outlined above, many of the proposals are positive proposals and to be welcomed. Given that many of the proposals will probably be implemented in the near future, a practical response is recommended in order to positively influence the content of the forthcoming primary and secondary legislation.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Council responds to the Government consultation with the response attached as **Appendix A** in advance of the consultation deadline of 29th. October 2020.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative options are for Gedling Borough Council to not respond to the consultation or to amend the drafted response. There is no requirement for the Council to respond to this public consultation but doing so will inform the Government's planning reform proposals from the Council's perspective. The response has been informed by the relevant Council Officers and can be amended if the Portfolio Holder considers it necessary to do so.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 No financial implications. Cost of officer time drafting the response is met from existing budgets.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None. This is an opportunity to comment on potential planning reforms which have not yet come into force.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 None. This is an opportunity to comment on potential planning reforms which have not yet come into force. The consultation questions include an opportunity to comment on the potential equalities implications of the proposals.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 None. This is an opportunity to comment on potential planning reforms which have not yet come into force. There is an opportunity, through comments on the consultation questions, to comment on the potential carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications of the proposals.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 **Appendix A** – Proposed consultation response

9 Background Papers

- 9.2 'White Paper: Planning for the Future – consultation on proposals for reform of the planning system in England' (MHCLG, August 2020)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To inform the Government of the Council's perspective on proposed planning reforms.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer