



Planning for the Future Consultation
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government,
3rd Floor, South East Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

Xx October 2020

Consultation: Planning for the Future

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute the views of Felixstowe Town Council to this consultation. Please find my Council's responses to the questions posed on the following pages.

My Council agrees that there is a need to speed up the process around the creation of Local Plans but is concerned that this should not be at the cost of local consultation. For meaningful public consultation on Local Plans to take place, this should remain programmed into the process at key stages before final submission to the Planning Inspector. It is unrealistic to expect this to occur if limited to post-submission consultation only.

Overall, however, my Council is concerned that, if the proposals are introduced as described in the white paper, the Government's aspiration to build more houses will be delivered in a manner that will lead to adverse outcomes due to:

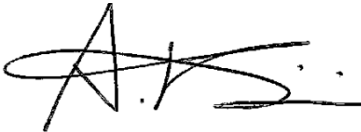
1. The diminution of democratic engagement into the planning process and a reduction of number of planning applications considered by committee. We were surprised by the lack of reference to local engagement and require confirmation that town and parish councils will retain the opportunity for consultation on planning applications.
2. National planning policy in place of locally-developed policies will lead to 'planning by algorithm' in place of carefully planned development informed with the benefit of local knowledge of an areas unique circumstances, complexities and identity.
3. A national Infrastructure Levy replacing S106/CIL. An alternative approach could be to develop a central fund for local infrastructure on the basis of Local Plan allocations, paid up-front once the Local Plan has been approved, with developer contributions being recouped by the government.
4. Extension of Planning in Principle and the inherent risks of poor and inappropriate development.

5. Division of planning areas in Local Plans in to three 'zones' (Growth, Renewal, Areas to be Protected) and the loss of local control as to what happens within these areas once a designation is made is a gross over-simplification of the planning process. In any case, it is essential that the types and mixes of use in 'Growth' and 'Renewal' areas are well-defined in the Local Plan given that it is proposed that outline planning permission for development within those parameters could be automatically granted.

As it stands, therefore, we do not believe that the White Paper is viable.

Notwithstanding our concerns, we hope that our response to the consultation and answers to the questions on the following pages will help inform the Government's proposals.

Yours faithfully,



Ash Tadjirishi
Town Clerk

Planning for the Future Consultation

Consultation Questions:

1. What three words do you associate most with the planning system in England?

**Democratic
Cumbersome
Opaque to the Public**

2. Do you get involved with planning decisions in your local area?

Yes

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]

Whilst we support the increasing use of digital technology as a tool to engage with the planning process, we would caution against wholesale reliance on online notifications and ask that the use of local notices be retained as part of comprehensive process which is accessible to all.

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 infrastructure / Protection of existing heritage buildings or areas / Other – please specify]

All the above are equally important; as is democratic involvement at local level.

5. Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals?

No, we are very concerned these proposals will diminish local involvement, but plans do need to be simplified.

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

No. We believe that proposals to set development management policies nationally will undermine and contradict the ambition to improve outcomes through local design codes.

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.]

No. The introduction of a ‘Sustainable Development’ test in favour of important established legal and planning policy risks important issues being missed or overlooked especially in regard to local circumstances.

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

We believe in a Duty to Cooperate but are divided on the issue of urban sprawl which makes town boundaries irrelevant in urban situations.

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.]

No, the method proposed would involve housing requirements in southern county areas being of a totally unsustainable scale. Housing numbers should be based on local geographical needs.

(b). Do you agree that affordability and the extent of existing urban areas are appropriate indicators of the quantity of development to be accommodated?

No. There are other social and economic factors to be considered when determining where housing should be allocated.

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.]

No, we reject the concept of automatic outline permission as proposals for these growth areas.

(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.]

No. Allocation for growth areas are unclear. It is not clear where the growth areas will be specified in areas. Renewal – development areas have a general presumption of development – expanded planning development within renewal areas should be guided by our local policy development in our local plan and by the characteristics of the immediate neighbourhood.

(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.]

No. Local involvement by the Secretary of State in this way would be a fundamental misuse of the National Significant Infrastructure Projects regime.

10. Do you agree with our proposals to make decision-making faster and more certain?

No, we do not agree with the proposals to make decision-making faster and more certain. We believe that a hard 13-week deadline could be seriously damaging.

11. Do you agree with our proposals for accessible, web-based Local Plans?

(as per Q2.) Whilst we support the increasing use of digital technology as a tool to engage with the planning process, we would caution against wholesale reliance on online notifications and ask that the use of local notices be retained as part of comprehensive process which is accessible to all.

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

We would welcome the proposed streamlining of the production of land but need to ensure that the public has involvement. We believe the Planning Inspectorate's examination of Local Plans should be limited to 6 months, rather than 9 months.

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

Yes.

(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?

We believe that Local Planning Authorities should be appropriately resourced to assist with the digital development of Neighbourhood Plans at a local level. It must be recognised that significant technical infrastructure and process would be needed to be set up to support many parish councils to develop their use of digital tools; currently there is very little direct support available.

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, there should be an agreed time limit to complete developments. Local Planning Authorities should have stronger powers to agree phasing plans, revisit planning applications and have appropriate sanctions available for enforcement, if necessary.

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]

We recognise that many recent developments are ugly and of poor design, with emphasis on achieving housing numbers rather than focusing on design and materials used. Policy in Local Plans could address this issue and result in more characterful and attractive developments.

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]

All of the above should be priorities, subject to genuine affordability. Currently, there is a failure to provide adequate infrastructure as each development is viewed on an individual basis and not for the future area development as a whole.

17. Do you agree with our proposals for improving the production and use of design guides and codes?

No. Local Authority should retain its right to locally agree the appropriate design for its area, supported by a Conservation and Design Officer. A centrally controlled code of design could hamper design and development by being too proscriptive and could prohibit innovative design.

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?

No. Given that the Local Planning Authority already has a Conservation and Design Officer, we see no need to change the status quo. The Local Authority is well-aware of local design styles.

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

No.

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

No. Decisions around design and beauty should be made locally by the Local Authority. What is suitable for (e.g.) Salisbury may not be appropriate for Suffolk.

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]

All of the above.

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.]

No, and contributions should be paid by the developer at the start and not at the end of the build. There needs to be a fundamentally new approach to infrastructure, with Government funding infrastructure before development commences.

- (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]

We do not support the introduction of the Infrastructure Levy.

(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.]

We do not support the introduction of the Infrastructure Levy.

(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.]

We do not support the introduction of the Infrastructure Levy.

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

(as per Q.22) We do not support the introduction of the Infrastructure Levy.

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.]

Affordable housing should not be linked to the Infrastructure Levy. Moreover, we do not agree in principle to the premise of an Infrastructure Levy. We believe that funding for social housing should be provided independently by government.

(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.]

(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.]

(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.]

25. Should local authorities have fewer restrictions over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes.

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

No.

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?

Other than expecting that the impact on people with protected characteristics should be appropriately assessed, no.