

Planning White Paper Motion

Proposer – Councillor Andrew Brown

Seconder – Councillor Liz Withington

This Council notes:

1. The publication by Government of the White Paper, 'Planning for the Future' on 6 August 2020, which set out proposals on reforms to the planning process for the future.
2. That currently the vast majority of planning applications are given the go ahead by local authority planning officers and committees, with permission granted to around 9 out of 10 applications across the UK.
3. While some of the analysis of the problems existing within the planning service are accepted, too many of the solutions put forward will not help the situation but may worsen it.
4. That research by the Local Government Association has said that there are existing planning permissions for more than one million homes that have not yet been started. (We should be clear that the proportion of unbuilt homes with extant permission in North Norfolk is below the national average).
5. While the current planning system is not perfect this is at least in part due to reductions in central government funding to local planning authorities which have, in turn, led to local authorities reducing expenditure on planning services. Such reductions have affected both the processing of planning applications and enforcement activities.

This Council also notes:

1. The Royal Institute for British Architects called the proposals 'shameful and which will do almost nothing to guarantee delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes'. RIBA also said that proposals could lead to the next generation of slum housing.

This Council is concerned that the proposals seek to:

1. Reduce or remove the right of residents to object to applications near them. Over use of electronic systems will prevent some members of the public their democratic rights to express their views.
2. Grant automatic rights for developers to build on land identified as 'for growth'.

3. Remove section 106 payments for infrastructure and their replacement with a national levy.
4. Diminish the role of planning authorities, planning committee members and ward councillors. Contact with the public suggests that what is more often desired is an enhanced role for these bodies and individuals. If these proposals are enacted, local councillors and planning officers are likely to attract more blame for developments beyond their control, thereby adversely affecting the standing of local government in the eyes of those people it is designed to serve.
5. Exacerbate the trend of recent years making planning more of a technical exercise, increasingly divorced from the needs and desires of local communities.
6. Do nothing to address the critical need for young people to find affordable housing in their local rural communities.
7. Do nothing to address the impact of second home owners in areas of the country that have become highly desirable holiday and retirement areas.

This Council Believes:

1. That existing planning procedures, as currently administered by our own team in North Norfolk, allow for local democratic control over future development, and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them.
2. That proposals for automatic rights to build in 'growth' areas, and increased permitted development rights, risk unregulated growth and unsustainable communities.
3. That local communities must be in the driving seat on shaping the future of their communities, and local determination of the planning framework and planning applications play an important part in this process.
4. Changes to the planning process must address the need for young people to live and work in the community's within which they were raised.
5. That second home ownership is a real threat to village communities in some areas, and government need to address this issue in some rural and coastal communities for them to have a sustainable future.

This Council resolves to:

1. Take part in the consultation in the planning proposals, and to make representations against the proposals as outlined in this motion.
2. Write to and lobby both of our Members of Parliament, urging them to oppose these proposals and to circulate their replies to members.
3. Highlight its concerns over these proposals with Local Town and Parish Councils the public and local residents.