



**CORNWALL
COUNCIL**

one and all • onen hag oll

Planning for the Future

Robert Lacey
Planning Policy Group Leader

“Planning for the Future” Government ‘White Paper’



- Two consultations – short term change and fundamental change to planning system
- Wide-ranging changes to streamline and modernise the system
- Short term proposals consultation paper closed 1st October
- Planning system white paper closes 29th October

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

Short-term changes to the current planning system

Consultation on four interim changes to the planning system, including:

1. changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need (to apply from November 2021)
2. temporarily lifting the small sites threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing in urban areas from 10 to 40 or 50 dwellings
3. securing First Homes as part of affordable housing requirements through developer contributions in the short term until the transition to a new system
4. extending the current Permission in Principle to major development

All to be put in place until the new planning system is brought into force

Short-term changes to the current planning system – our response

- Proposals could potentially delay development and will result in renegotiations and uncertainty
- The proposals for increasing housing numbers do not reflect local circumstances and the reality of the local market
- Further positive support required for build out rather than increasing supply
- Increases in the threshold will reduce affordable housing delivery and could reduce opportunities for SMEs and registered providers – other positive methods could support delivery and affordable housing
- Support first homes in principle, but greater discount is needed
- PIPs do not provide clarity and could increase land values artificially
- Transition arrangements for all changes are vital, particularly for NDPs

Planning for the Future – responding to the paper

- This is not a classic white paper
- Some significant gaps
- There are a mix of concerns and opportunity
- A shift of focus for engagement and challenge
- We want to have a positive conversation about delivery and barriers
- We encourage you to contribute your ideas
- We all need to make Government aware of what is missing

Please take opportunities to shape the system

Planning for the Future – unknowns

- What the system will actually look like and what will survive the consultation process!
- Timetable for production
- Transition arrangements and regulation
- Many elements are deferred for separate consultation
- Interplay with other legislation (including Environment Bill, Building Regulations and new environmental standards)
- The exact role of Neighbourhood Plans
- How climate change and other aspects will be reflected
- It is almost impossible to leave behind the existing system

Planning for the Future – main proposals

A new planning system based on a 'land classification' approach designed to speed up plan making and planning decisions:

- New Local Plan process, required to be completed within 30 months of commencement – growth sites granted automatic permission
- Planning decisions must be made within statutory time periods
- Increased national control of planning policies, housing numbers and standards
- Design and masterplanning given increased importance
- S.106 and CIL replaced by new 'Infrastructure Fund'
- Role of Neighbourhood Plans remain important but exact role unclear in the paper. Will continue to receive infrastructure fund share

Local Plans

- A new nationally set housing requirement
- 30 month process end to end - classifying land, allocate sites and set out only site specific design requirements
- The need to classify land as three types is potentially very restrictive – potential for a hierarchy?
- No time included for creation of a spatial strategy or wider debate
- 6 months engagement will be insufficient
- National policies need to be supplemented by local policies and to be aspirational
- Replacement system for testing local plans needs to be clear and transparent
- Housing requirement methodology too high and process of adjustment unclear

Design coding and beauty

- Model design codes through new national approach
- Creation of a body to support local design codes and a 'chief officer for design'
- Role for Council, NDPS or developers - Precedence for national guide and code until replaced locally
- Design guide becomes more important, but bar for engagement is also raised – this needs to be clarified to avoid challenges
- Considerable scale of work across Cornwall
- National pattern book of popular design could reduce distinctiveness
- Resources and training are required to improve design and provide required guidance and confidence

Decision making

- Deadlines enforced and lost appeals subject to refund
- Template for submissions
- Member role reduced at planning application stage
- Decision taking concentrated at plan making stage
- Automatic permissions for growth sites and extended permitted development
- Potentially multiple planning routes
- Less opportunity for S.106 to resolve issues?



Environment

- Reduction in the number of assessments undertaken
- Continued commitment to Biodiversity Net Gain and street trees
- One stop environmental assessment process to replace existing regimes
- Protection allocation and links to Nature Recovery Networks
- Protection allocation and local green space
- Fundamentally important climate change mitigation actions yet to be unveiled



Neighbourhood Planning

- The future role is unclear, but still viewed as important
- Importance of role in explaining local character increases
- Potentially less room for creating policies and allocating sites
- Greater positive role in design and patterns of development?
- Support needed for greater digitisation
- Templates to be welcomed?
- Can greater consistency be achieved?



Digitisation

- Visual and map based
- Machine readable plans – national database
- Plans (and potentially applications) based on a template
- Plans are simplified to interactive maps
- Greater emphasis on digital presentation
- Accessible by smartphone
- Greater sharing of data

Combined infrastructure levy

- Combination of S.106 and Community Infrastructure Levy
- Proportion set nationally and payment at occupation, set at levy rate in force at the time of grant based on final value
- Authorities can borrow against expected levy to front load infrastructure
- Affordable housing to be provided from levy
- Up to 25% top slice to be retained for parishes
- Will a nationally set levy provide the same funding?
- Impact on land prices and deliverability?

Climate Change and the white paper

Climate change has little detailed reference but questions around:

- Climate Change Act and 2050 commitment
- Layouts contributing to active travel and wellbeing
- Speeding up transition to Future Homes Standard
- Policy for renewable energy (and suitable areas)?
- Biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks
- Tree planting and canopy cover

Summary of our response

- More focus is needed on the future and how key issues are responded to – particularly climate change
- Plan-making is the focus –so significant resources are required to identify different areas for growth, renewal and protection against a challenging Local Plan statutory timetable
- Master plans and design codes – clarity required and resources to develop these alongside a Local Plan
- Clarity needed on the continued role of Neighbourhood Plans and support for them
- Unclear what the national development management policies will cover and the impact on local discretion
- Clarity needed on proposals for reducing duplication in environmental assessment

Summary of our response

- Housing numbers need to be balanced with incentivising and supporting build out
- Detail needed around the role of communities, committees and members in the determination of planning applications
- Stricter deadlines and refunds for applications and appeals could impact on confidence for decisions
- Increased permitted development and Permission in Principle potentially reduces control, public confidence and benefit
- Concern around popular ‘anywhere’ design – limited reflection of local context and potentially stifling innovation

Summary of our response

- Single Infrastructure Levy welcomed but need to retain other aspects of s106 – legal agreements
- How will the Levy rate be set nationally – will this mean less funding for Cornwall?
- No guarantee that the new Infrastructure Levy will deliver affordable housing and same levels of infrastructure
- Less complexity and more power and resources needed for enforcement
- Stricter deadlines and refunds for applications and appeals could impact on confidence for decisions



Any Questions?