

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

NOTICE OF MOTION – CLLR A-M BARKER – THE PLANNING PROCESS

Executive Summary

The following Notice of Motion was received before the deadline following the publication of the Council agenda. This supplementary report sets out the Officer response in respect of the Motion, noting that, given the consultation closes on 29 October 2020, consideration of the Notice of Motion cannot be delayed until the next Council meeting.

Councillor A-M Barker

“Protecting the public’s say in the planning process

This Council notes:

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.

That the vast majority of planning applications are given the go ahead by local authority planning committees, with permission granted to around 9 out of 10 applications.

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.

This Council is concerned that proposals in the White Paper seek to:

1. Reduce or remove the right of residents to object to applications near them.
2. Grant automatic rights for developers to build on land identified as ‘for growth’.
3. Remove section 106 payments for infrastructure replace these payments with a national levy.

This Council Further Notes:

1. The Royal Institute for British Architects has said that the Government proposals are ‘shameful and which will do almost nothing to guarantee delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes’. RIBA also said that proposals in the White Paper could lead to the next generation of slum housing.
2. The reforms are opposed by the all-party Local Government Association, currently led by Conservative Councillors.

This Council Believes:

That existing planning procedures, as currently administered in Woking, allow for local democratic control over future development, and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them.

That proposals for automatic rights to build in ‘growth’ areas, and increased permitted development rights, risk unregulated growth and unsustainable communities.

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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.

This Council resolves to:

- Take part in the consultation in the planning proposals, and to make representations against the proposals as outlined in this motion.
- Write to and lobby our Member of Parliament, urging him to oppose these proposals and to circulate his reply to the Council.
- Highlight its concerns over these proposals with local residents.”

The motion will be seconded by Councillor Forster.

Given that the consultation closes on 29 October 2020, the Notice of Motion cannot be delayed until the next Council meeting.

Officer response

Officers are already aware of the consultation on Planning for the Future (Planning White Paper), and in accordance with normal Council procedure, the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning was already preparing to submit a comprehensive response on behalf of the Council. This matter was therefore already in hand. The draft response was considered by the Corporate Management Group (CMG) at its meeting on 12 October 2020. It was already being reviewed by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and his comments will be taken into account before the draft is finalised for submission.

The principles of the concerns raised in the Notice of Motion have already been identified and covered in the draft response. Therefore, it is recommended that Council supports the Notice of Motion. The consultation seeks answers to a number of specific questions, which Officers have been concerned to address in full. As such, the draft response is lengthy and not appropriate to attach to this response. However, as previously promised at the weekly Group Leaders’ meetings, the response will be shared with the Group Leaders before it is submitted.

The Portfolio Holder has already lobbied the local Member of Parliament (MP) Jonathan Lord and as planned will also be writing to him when the Council’s response has been finalised.

The Planning for the future consultation document can be accessed by this link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907647/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf. The following is a summary of the key proposals, and Members should note that this is not exhaustive.

Summary

- Support for the primacy of development plans as basis for decision taking.
- A zoning system of local plans with areas allocated as Growth Areas, Renewal Areas and Protected Areas. It appears outline planning permission will automatically be allowed in Growth Areas.
- Abolition of CIL and S106 to be replaced with a new infrastructure levy to capture land value uplift generated by planning approval. The new levy is likely to include contributions towards Affordable Housing provision.
- Plans will be subject to a single sustainability test.

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- A nationally prepared Development Management Policies Plan. Local Plans should set clear rules for development.
- Focus on design.
- Beautiful buildings/schemes for fast track determination.
- Set time to prepare plans – with local authorities having up to date local plans by 2023. Plans should take 30 months to prepare.
- Frontloading public consultations in planning to local plan consultations.
- A revised standard methodology for calculating housing need.
- Priority for first homes.
- Digitisation of the planning system.
- Planning permission should follow clearly and directly from designations made in local plans.
- Extension of permitted development rights.
- A new study to support the delivery of design code.
- A brownfield first approach to development.
- Appointment of Chief Officer for Place Making.
- Continuous support for Neighbourhood Plans.

Background Papers: None.

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