



CORFE MULLEN TOWN COUNCIL – REPORT

Meeting Date: 27 October 2020

Agenda Item: TC 20/84

Paper: F

Subject:	Planning White Paper 2020 Response
Purpose of Report:	To establish and approve a response to the Planning White Paper consultation.
Background:	<p>Planning Committee received a report on the Planning White Paper which has been brought by Government and is required to be responded to by 11.45pm on 29 October 2020.</p> <p>The government debated the possible changes to the planning process in March 2020 and the debate pack can be found here.</p> <p>The consultation document can be found here.</p> <p>A detailed summary of the paper can be found here.</p>
Key Points:	<p>The implications of the changes to planning are significant to Corfe Mullen if not addressed and could potentially see a large proportion of the green belt taken to facilitate building of new homes.</p> <p>For those who are not members of the Planning Committee, the following 10 items are highlighted for information on the proposed changes, but it is recommended to view the detailed summary paper which can be accessed via the link above.</p> <p>1. Zoning Under the new system, local authorities will have to bring forward stripped back local plans zoning all land in their areas for “growth”, “renewal” or “protection”. Areas zoned for growth will accommodate “substantial development” and will benefit from outline permission, but developers will still need to secure reserved matters permission in accordance with a locally drawn up design codes – though councils won’t be able to debate the principle of the scheme</p> <p>2. Renewal Areas zoned for renewal will be seen as suitable for some development, such as densification and infill development, and will benefit from a statutory “presumption in favour” of development. Schemes that accord with locally drawn up design codes will benefit from a “fast-track for beauty” recommended by the government’s Building Better Building Beautiful Commission.</p> <p>3.Stripped back local plans Local authorities will have 30 months to produce a new style stripped back local plan, down from a current average of seven years. While the new plans will be more powerful in that they will confer planning permission to “growth” sites, councils will lose the ability to set local policies. Instead, all planning policy will be set nationally with local plans restricted to development allocation and the specific codes and standards to be applied to projects in the development zones. The plan should include “an interactive web-based map of the administrative area where data and policies are easily searchable”, with colour-coded maps reflecting the zoning, key and accompanying</p>

text setting out “suitable development uses, as well as limitations on height and/or density as relevant” within the zones.

4. Section 106 scrapped

The existing system of developer contributions is to end. Section 106 agreements will be scrapped, while the existing Community Infrastructure Levy will be morphed into a nationally-set levy on development value that the government says will bring in at least as more or more in the way of developer contributions as the existing system. The levy will be paid at the point of occupation, leaving councils to pay for and deliver any infrastructure needed up front. Councils will be allowed to borrow against future levy receipts to fund this.

5. Top down housing targets

The government plans to reimpose top-down housing targets on local authorities, a decade after the coalition government’s first community’s secretary, Eric Pickles removed them, deriding them as “soviet-style tractor targets”. The government now envisages that every local authority will be bound by targets set by a renewed “standard method” for calculating housing need. The standard method will be based on how many existing homes are in an area, the projected rise in households, and changes in affordability.

6. “Duty to co-operate” ditched

Given the imposition of a top-down target, councils will no longer have a duty to co-operate with each other over the drawing up of local plans, as the numbers will be set by government. Numbers will take into account the presence of constraints on growth, such as green belt, but the White Paper didn’t say how this will be done.

7. Protection

Areas zoned as “protected” will essentially continue with the existing planning process, with all existing Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and similar such designations remaining in force. Importantly, areas of open countryside with no specific wildlife or landscape protections currently can be designated “protected”.

8. New design code body

A new body is to be set up to be given the role of supporting local authorities in the creation of local design codes, and each local authority will be expected to employ a chief officer for design and place-making to oversee quality. Local design codes must have community input to be valid.

9. More permitted development

Within the “renewal” areas, certain pre-approved development types – such as the densification of suburban semis – will be given automatic pre-approval via new permitted development rights. These new PD rights will also have to take account of local design codes.

10. Digital planning

Public involvement in local planning is to be hugely expanded by digitising the service, to allow much easier public access to planning documents. These will be published online in standardised formats with “digitally consumable rules and data”, allowing people to respond to consultations on their smartphones. Authorities will be

asked to use an “open data” approach, with the aim being to move the system from one based on documents to one based on data.

Issues which have been raised by Dorset Council are:

- That delays in house building nationally are not all due to the planning system – local planning authorities do not build houses. In the last decade, 2.5 million homes were granted planning permission but only 1.5 million were delivered;
- That binding national housing targets and removal of the chance to comment at outline planning application stage on sites allocated for growth will reduce the ability of communities to have input into proposals affecting their local areas, and reduce local democracy;
- That greater detail is required on how the national housing targets would be derived, including how environmental constraints will be taken into account, and that this must include an element of national planning strategy;
- That the proposed timescale for the adoption of new style plans is very ambitious bearing in mind the need for the introduction of new primary legislation, the proposed ‘front loading’ of community engagement and the greater level of technical work necessary if growth areas will receive automatic outline planning permission;
- That there is significant risk to the progress of currently emerging local plans due to the uncertainty around, and scale of, these changes;
- That while the support for good design and the publication of a national design code are welcomed, it is important that these focus not only on what places look like, but how they work for those living and working in them – including infrastructure provision and mitigation of impacts on habitats, flood risk, heritage and landscape.
- That the replacement of the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning agreements with a single levy is not likely to generate sufficient funding for the infrastructure and affordable housing that is needed, and funding for affordable housing will need to be ring-fenced;
- That while an increased reliance on digital methods of engagement and involvement may well attract a wider audience to comment on planning proposals, it will potentially disadvantage older people and those in more deprived areas who may have less access to digital means of communication.

A draft response can be found at Appendix 1.

A letter has also been drafted to send to the local MP Michael Tomlinson and can be found at Appendix 2.

Implications:	<p>A lack of response to the consultation will not assist with ensuring local councils views are heard and considered in respect of planning applications.</p> <p>Potential eradication of the green belt surrounding Corfe Mullen.</p> <p>Areas of the village possibly zoned and where outline permission is automatically granted as part of that zoning, the Town Council would not be a part of the consultation for what is built within those zones.</p> <p>The lack of consideration of local need for housing could potentially leave properties empty and unsold within the village and groups who require housing still left wanting.</p>
Recommendation:	<p>To recommend the attached draft response to the consultation of the Planning White Paper be approved and submitted and approve the letter to MP Michael Tomlinson.</p>

Nicola Gray
Town Clerk

DRAFT RESPONSE TO PLANNING WHITE PAPER

[Date]

CONSULTATION ON GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Changes in the current planning system / White Paper: Planning for the future.

Response by Corfe Mullen Town Council

(Principal Authority: Dorset Council)

The planning system in England is developer led, imposed and top down already. The White Paper centralises the system even more and is obviously undemocratic. The proposals remove the right for local citizens and their democratically elected representatives at Town/Parish and Unitary level to influence how and where housing should be built. As a Town Council we would like to set up a Community Land Trust to provide some affordable housing for local people but most of the Green Belt around our town has been bought by developers.

We support the retention of Neighbourhood Plans but they should fully reflect the aspirations of the local communities rather than being designed to meet arbitrary national objectives.

The delays in house building are not due to local councils but to market absorption and other factors identified in the Letwin review. Many areas of land in Dorset have planning permission but no houses have been built. Setting aside even more land for development, largely from so called protected areas, is not sustainable and does not make sense.

The zones of Growth, Renewal and Protection are simplistic. Corfe Mullen has no areas for growth or renewal and is surrounded by protected areas: heathland, SSSIs and Green Belt. Much of Dorset is like this but setting nationally binding housing targets as proposed takes no account of this.

In fact the White Paper purports to continue to protect Green Belt, but a brief examination of the small print reveals that this is not so. Green Belts can be redrawn and withdrawn to meet these national targets, which will require even more so-called protected areas to be concreted over.

The central control of house building ignores local need. Provision of housing should follow demonstrated need. The housing provided by developers is out of the reach of local people as Dorset's levels of pay are low. The developers will still charge high prices as long as there are people moving in from London and other places with even higher house prices, so providing more houses in Dorset will not bring prices down. Requiring developers to provide affordable houses on only larger sites will make the situation worse.

Furthermore, the replacement of the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements with a single levy is not going to generate sufficient funding for infrastructure and the affordable housing needed. We would support the ring fencing of funding for affordable housing.

Design improvement is always welcome but master planning needs to consider infrastructure and mitigation of impacts on habitats, flood risk, heritage and landscape. Climate change is the most important issue facing the world but there is little mention of new homes being built to the highest environmental standards without the need for retrofitting in the future. New

housing being built in Corfe Mullen at this moment is being built to our outdated building regulations and is far from being sustainable in the future.

Our road infrastructure is at capacity and if we are to protect the health of our community we cannot cope with an increase in housing and the cars they bring. Pollution levels on our main road which is C class are high now. Tree lined avenues sound lovely but all roads in Dorset are narrow and, with no motorways and very few dual carriageways, main roads are often gridlocked.

Developers would much rather build on green fields because building on brown field sites costs more. Thus, there are significant consequences from the Paper's proposals. Even more so-called protected zones will be lost and little built in renewal zones. There are large parts of England, especially in the North where there are opportunities for housing renewal and provision of new employment, but the Paper will massively increase the population densities of rural counties in the South and decrease housing in the North. This does not fit in with the government's levelling up agenda.

Locally the consequences are dire. Corfe Mullen is on the north edge of Poole and, if nearly all our Green Belt is built on to provide for these national targets we will merge into the conurbation and our identity and valued green spaces for our community will be lost and local people will have no say at all.

CORFE MULLEN TOWN COUNCIL

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28 October 2020

Dear Mr Tomlinson

PLANNING WHITE PAPER 2020

As a Town Council within your constituency, the Council are compelled to write to you in respect of the proposed changes to the Planning System, for which consultation is due to close on 29 October 2020.

In general terms, the proposals are very obviously anti- democratic. They remove the right of local citizens and their representatives at Town /Parish and at County level to decide on how and where housing should be built and pass that decision to an ill-defined central authority in the DOE. It removes all appeal processes, and imposes central directives for house building, without any input from those who know local areas and needs.

It purports to protect Green Belt areas, but a brief examination of the small print reveals that this is not so. Green Belts can be redrawn and withdrawn without local consultation, and at the behest of central Government.

The central control of house building seems to ignore local need. There is no analysis anywhere in the White Paper of how local need for housing is to be analysed or measured. Provision of housing should follow demonstrated need, but the White Paper reverses this, and dictates centrally directed house building, in the hope that the population the new houses attract will find jobs.

The proposed changes in the infrastructure levy are dysfunctional, to say the least. Nowhere is there clarity about how local roads, schools, hospitals, and service infrastructure will feed into the rush to build houses. This is so at present, with a few rare exceptions, but the White Paper makes this much worse, with no attempt to identify these consequences of building, or to address them.

The consequences of the White paper will be a massive increase of population density in the South, and a decrease in the North, exactly the opposite of stated Government policy. All sensible people know that areas such as ours have reached a limit of population unless very large infrastructure projects take place. The roads, schools and hospitals are saturated. This will add to this hugely. The North, the area which the Government seemed so keen in levelling up to the South, will see a reduction in housebuilding, and prosperity will consequently decline.

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On a local level, there are significant consequences. Corfe Mullen is the only area north of Poole where there is land on which to build. With Wimborne, it is, in effect, becoming a suburb of Poole, and the changes in planning proposed will encourage and speed up this process. The

changes will double the number of houses planned per 10 years for Corfe Mullen. There is almost nowhere to build except on Green Belt land. So, there is no doubt that the

DOE will simply redesignate areas from 'Protected' to 'Suitable'. Locally valued rural areas will become, by default, potential sites for building, and the local community will have had no say at all.

Corfe Mullen Town Council strongly objects to these changes and hope that you will carefully consider the Town Council's views when the matter is brought before Parliament.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "N Gray". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Nicola Gray
Town Clerk
Corfe Mullen Town Council