

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 8</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020</b>	<b>CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>ALLISON THOMAS, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – SERVICE DELIVERY</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS’ CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>STEFFAN SAUNDERS – HEAD OF PLANNING AND STRATEGIC HOUSING: 07971 604326</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>CONSULTATION ON PLANNING WHITE PAPER: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS03</b>

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## **1. Recommendations**

1.1 To seek approval to respond to the Government’s White Paper consultation “Planning for the Future” on the basis of the comments set out in Appendix 2 with the final response to be delegated to the Chairman of Environment and Development Services Committee in consultation with the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing.

## **2. Purpose of the Report**

2.1 To inform the Council of the Government’s consultation on its White Paper entitled ‘Planning for the Future’,

2.2 To consider the implications for South Derbyshire District Council and to seek approval to respond to the consultation.

## **3. Detail**

3.1 The Government’s White Paper on its proposed reform of the planning system was published in August 2020. The consultation proposes a fundamental shake-up and simplification of the planning system, re-writing primary and secondary legislation, which will replace the current planning system with a zoning system. However, there are indicators of much more detail to come, particularly through a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) within which ‘local plan policies’ will be set out. There is much in the White Paper that it to be welcomed and a summary together with implications for the Council is set out in Appendix 1. The beneficial reforms, at least in principle, are those that seek to enable more public participation in the plan making process thorough digital enhancements, the streamlining of plan making and decision making processes

through reducing burdens on local authorities and an aim to reduce the complexity of all aspects of planning so that all with an interest in the planning system can better anticipate the outcome of a development proposal.

- 3.2 However, there is also much to be concerned about. Although there is reference to adequate resourcing there is scant detail about how local authorities, many already overstretched, will be expected to produce new style Local Plans within 30 months, process planning applications within statutory timescales (with the extension of time process to be abolished), enforce breaches of planning control in a timely manner and continue to support Neighbourhood Plans, all with a potential significant fall in fee income.
- 3.3 The 'front loading' of major decision making into the Local Plan process will also significantly reduce the ability of the Council to consider the matters at the planning application stage. Although the intention to foster greater public participation at the plan making stage is most welcome, in practical terms the time many local residents really get involved is when there is a development proposal near to them that they object to. Under the proposed reforms this would be too late to meaningfully influence the process as the decision will effectively have been taken in the Local Plan.
- 3.4 The proposals for the delegation of detailed planning decisions to planning officers where the principle of development has been established [at the plan making stage] as detailed matters for consideration should be principally a matter for professional planning judgment. The goal should not be to disenfranchise local communities and remove the right of elected Councillors who are democratically accountable to the communities they represent to influence decisions. Instead the government should seek to establish a system which manages the uncertainty and the delays that can arise when complicated and often controversial decisions need taking. Local people should have a voice in shaping their communities and this should be heard, even if it is not possible to reflect the views of all. Moreover, decisions on delegation arrangements should be made locally and not by central government.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 This is difficult to assess as very few details are given. However, there is the potential for a significant loss of fee income to the Council due to loss of outline planning permission fees on allocated development sites.

#### **5. Corporate Implications**

##### **Employment Implications**

- 5.1 Not identified

##### **Legal Implications**

- 5.2 None as a result of responding to this consultation. However, the Government's reforms may well end up in the Courts causing significant delay to their implementation.

### **Corporate Plan Implications**

- 5.3 The proposed response to the White Paper is consistent with the delivery of a number of Corporate Plan themes. These include:
- to enhance biodiversity across the District (Our Environment).
  - to improve public spaces to create an environment for people to enjoy (Our Environment).
  - Promote health and wellbeing across the District (Our People).
  - To influence the improvement of infrastructure to meet the demands of growth (Our Future).
  - Enable the delivery of housing across all tenures to meet Local Plan targets (our Future)

### **Risk Impact**

- 5.4 None in relation to the consultation response. There are significant risks to the Council set out in the proposed response if the proposals are not amended.

## **6. Community Impact**

### **Consultation**

- 6.1 None.

### **Equality and Diversity Impact**

- 6.2 None in responding to the consultation.

### **Social Value Impact**

- 6.3 Beneficial: the proposed response if taken on board by the Government will provide the appropriate balance between speed of decision making and the delivery of much needed development but also appropriate protections for these locally valued green spaces and community facilities across the District.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

- 6.4 Beneficial: but again, on the basis of the comments in the appendix leading to changes to the White Paper. There is a risk if amendments are not made the environment in South Derbyshire will not be adequately protected.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 Planning White Paper: Planning for the future which is available to view at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>