

Portfolio Holder decision record sheet

Name of decision maker:

Portfolio: Planning and Infrastructure

Date of Portfolio Holder decision: October 2020

Title of decision:

Response to:

- 1. Government White Paper – Planning for the Future – August 2020; and**
- 2. Government Consultation on Changes to the Current Planning System – August 2020**

Part II:

Part II reason:

Background to report: (this will be sent to members in the initial notice email so they know the content of the decision)

1. The White Paper proposes the most radical and significant reforms to the existing planning system in over 70 years. The principal aim of the reforms is to provide more homes by introducing measures to simplify and speed up the planning process.

2. The measures proposed in the White Paper will take some time to implement. Therefore interim measures to modify aspects of the current planning system are proposed in the consultation on Changes to the current planning system whilst pending implementation of reforms proposed in the White Paper.

3. Both the plan making and development management processes would be significantly reformed. The reforms are largely based on the premise that the planning system is largely at fault in the failure to provide Government led targets on the provision of new homes. Proposed reforms include:

- Introduction of 3 new categorisations of land – Growth, Renewal and Protected
- Extension of the Planning in Principle (PiP) to major developments
- Creating a fast track system for “beautiful buildings” by greater use of design codes
- Sanctions against local planning authorities for failure to determine planning applications within time limits and where appeals are lost
- Tighter timescales for delivery of Local Plans (30 months)
- Replacement of the current s106 planning obligations and CIL with a new nationally set Infrastructure Charge to fund delivery of infrastructure and affordable homes. Also to change point of payment from grant of permission to point of occupation.
- Greater use of digital technology for sharing of information and community engagement.

Decision made and reasons:

To submit responses on behalf of the Council to the above mentioned Government Consultations. The responses are attached as Annex A.

Whilst many of the aims within the White Paper are laudable, such as simplified processes, desire to deliver more homes and greater use of digital technology there are a number significant and very serious concerns regarding the proposed reforms:

- The approach taken is too simplistic and unlikely to achieve stated aims. There are more significant reasons for failure to meet Government housing targets than failures or shortcomings in the planning system (many of which could be addressed by providing greater resources and capacity within the current system). The White Paper does not address more major dislocations in other parts of the delivery system to provide new homes including, operation of land market forces and driving efficiency and productivity

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across the construction sector.

- There is serious risk that local democracy will be curtailed, including the exclusion of local members from the decision making process. Input of the community into the plan making process will be only at two points. First at an initial “call for sites” stage before any meaningful plan is developed for comment and second, when the local plan has been submitted for examination.
- Not enough information has been provided to be confident that the new regime for delivery of infrastructure will deliver the desired objectives. Delivery of new infrastructure is a key priority for residents within the Borough.
- The abolition of s106 planning obligations allied to the requirement for First Homes as being the first 25% of affordable homes to be provided. This is an owner occupied element which does not meet the housing needs of those on very low incomes. It would likely result in a greatly diminished supply of genuinely affordable rented accommodation and will exacerbate an already crisis level shortage of affordable homes.
- That the proposed 30 month timescale for delivery of a new local plan is feasible given the proposed front end loaded detail that will be required, such as settling of Design Codes which will be an important (and possibly only) influence that local communities may have over new development in their areas.

Reports considered: (here reference can be made to specific documents)

1. Government White Paper – Planning for the Future – August 2020; and
2. Government Consultation on Changes to the Current Planning System – August 2020

Officers/Councillors/Ward Councillors/Stakeholders consulted:

Strategic Planning

Development Management

Housing Strategy

SPAEOSC considered the responses at its meeting on 23 September 2020.

Deputy Monitoring Officer comments:

Comments on the Consultation Paper must be submitted before the deadline of 29th October 2020

Deputy S151 Officer comments:

: No further comments to add to his report

Implications: No financial implications are directly associated with the responses.

The Consultation Papers are light in detail in a number of significant areas which makes a full risk assessment difficult at this point. A number of factors are apparent:

Risk: 1. This would be the most significant change to the planning system in over 70 years which potentially carries significant financial and human resources implications.

2. The proposals contained within the Consultation Papers if implemented

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Value for money:	<p>would limit local democracy at certain stages of the planning process.</p> <p>3. Potential delay to the current Local Plan making process as uncertainty is introduced as to future requirements and processes, including any transitional period.</p> <p>4. Uncertainty as to how infrastructure in the future will be funded and delivered.</p> <p>Proposals contained within the Consultation Papers would if implemented contain a significant financial implication on the delivery of services to the local community. The responses seek to ensure that “value for money” would continue to be delivered.</p>
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Options considered and reasons for rejection:

The principal choice is to offer comments or not.

However, the proposed reforms if implemented would have implications for the environment and community of Dacorum. It is therefore important to ensure that, even at this very early stage views are input.

Portfolio Holder's signature:

Date:

Details of any interests declared and any dispensations given by the Standards Committee:

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Date decision record sheet received from portfolio holder:

Date decision published:

Decision no:

Date of expiry of call-in period:

Date any call-in received or decision implemented:

Background