

Motion on Notice - Reforms to the Planning System (Motion 1)

Proposer Councillor Matthews, Seconder Councillor Dant.

The Government has published highly controversial proposals to reform the planning system.

One aspect that has raised particular concern for local authorities is the proposal to remove local residents' right to object to individual planning applications in their own neighbourhood if the area is zoned for growth or renewal.

Last month, the House of Commons called on the Government to protect residents' rights to retain a voice over planning applications, recognising that the best way to get necessary new homes built is to support communities, councils, and developers to work in partnership.

A motion was passed by the House of Commons, with support from MPs of all political parties, supporting the principle of protecting residents' right to a say over individual planning applications in their own area.

Many local people have already expressed anger that this long-established democratic right is under threat.

Lancaster City Council believes:

That planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; and therefore, calls on the Government to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning applications.

The City Council therefore resolves:

To write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to ask the Government to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning applications, expressing the concerns above.

Officer Briefing note:

The motion reflects a view the Council has already expressed to Government.

When the White Paper was out for consultation in 2020, planners took a draft response to the Local Plan Review Group (10 Sept); then circulated the draft to Cabinet Members (18 Sept); then on 15 October the response was approved by Council Business Committee. It was submitted to Government on 27 October 2020.

In that response was the following answer to one of the questions:

Do you agree that there should be automatic permission for areas for substantial development (growth areas) with faster routes for detailed consent?

No.

Please provide a supporting statement:

The Council does not support the approach that there should be automatic permission granted in areas zoned for growth in the Local Plan. The proposed approach results in no ability for the council to consider whether the locally derived design codes have been appropriately

applied to new development nor whether the development proposals are consistent with national planning policy. The approach seems to seek to exclude input from local communities, elected members and professional officers.

To simply rely on the development industry to build out to the requirements of the local plan without any form of check and assessment procedure is not considered realistic or appropriate. It is not clear how any development proposals which seek to defer from adopted national or local planning policy will be managed or considered (for instance in the context of changing viability).

The Council believes that the likely outcome of the approach described in the White Paper will be development which deviates from either national or local planning policy (or both) and cannot be brought into line due to the lack of scrutiny at a local level. Should development come forward which does not reflect local or national policy and does not have any form of local scrutiny this will lead to a further erosion of public trust in the planning process.

So an objection has been raised to the loss of input from local communities.

Details of the proposed Planning Bill are awaited. There was some suggestion that this would be laid before parliamentary recess but it is more likely that the draft will appear in the Autumn.

The s151 Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer have been consulted and have no comments to add.