
Report to: Place Panel

Date: 14 October 2020

Subject: **Planning Consultations**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides information relating to the government consultations on changes to the Planning System.

2. Information

- 2.1 There are 2 consultations running in parallel:

1. Consultation on a document '[Changes to the Current Planning System](#)' (August 2020). This document sets out proposals for measures to improve the effectiveness of the current planning system in the shorter term. This includes changes to the Standard Method for calculating housing need, delivering First Homes, support for small and medium sized builders and extension of the permission in principle consent regime to major development. The consultation on these changes ended on 1st October 2020.
2. Consultation on the White Paper '[Planning for the Future](#)' (August 2020) – this outlines major proposals to reform the statutory planning system in England. The proposals cover plan-making, development management, development contributions and other related proposals. The consultation ends on the 29th October 2020. It is intended that these proposals be further developed as feedback and views are gathered. The proposed changes would require primary legislation followed by secondary legislation.

Consultation responses

- 2.2 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is coordinating joint responses to these two consultations with the support of partner councils. Partner Councils

are also submitting individual responses. The joint responses focus on strategic matters and matters where there is a strong consensus either in support or concern regarding the proposals.

2.3 The joint response to the consultation on the document '**Changes to the Current Planning System**' has now been approved in consultation with the Chair of the Place Panel and submitted to Government. **Appendix 1** provides a full copy of the consultation response, the key matters addressed are:

- We have concerns about the proposed changes to the methodology for calculating housing need. The changes see a drop in the housing requirement for all West Yorkshire districts except Wakefield where there is a significant increase. This does not support our wider growth agenda and for Wakefield the near double figures would cause deliverability issues.
- We have concerns over the proposals relating to First Homes (current scheme to provide homes for first time buyers – at 30% discount against market value). We don't think that First Homes will be affordable for most buyers in West Yorkshire and the proposal to require affordable provision to deliver 25% of affordable housing as First Homes is not supported. The emphasis should be on local evidence to inform the approach to delivery of affordable homes.
- We have concerns with the proposal to temporarily lift the threshold for affordable housing contributions to 40 or 50 units (currently 10 units), it is acknowledged that this change is intended to support SME housebuilders however small sites in West Yorkshire make a significant contribution to our affordable housing supply and we believe this proposal will undermine building mixed communities.

2.4 Our joint response to the consultation on the White Paper '**Planning for the Future**' is currently being finalised. It is suggested that the Combined Authority supports many of the aspirations of the White Paper including the use of digital methodologies and common data standards to improve accessibility and visibility of plans and streamlining and speeding up the local plan process to make it more responsive whilst still delivering high quality development. However there are also concerns with some of the proposals and it is proposed that the response addresses the following matters:

- It is not clear to what extent local democracy (as a well-embedded part of the current plan making system) will be retained under the new proposals.
- Public engagement opportunities will be required to change to ensure that communities are still able to engage in plans for places, it is not clear how this will work.
- Design codes are a helpful proposal if they go beyond aesthetics – we are interested in how places function, health and well-being, inclusive growth and tackling the climate emergency.
- There is little in the proposals to encourage implementation of existing permissions or to support accelerated delivery on brownfield land.

- Abolition of the Duty to Cooperate should only take place if a clear replacement is proposed to address strategic issues. We note that the White Paper is silent on strategic planning and we are concerned that Government's policy position on strategic planning is not clear.
- We have concerns about the proposals to abolish the current system of planning obligations and replace with a Community Infrastructure Levy. It is not clear that the proposals will ensure delivery of basic infrastructure (including transport infrastructure) and affordable housing in our region.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The consultation responses are being prepared internally by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Policy, Strategy and Communications Directorate.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5. Staffing Implications

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

6. External Consultees

- 6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Panel notes and comments on the content of the report and endorses the direction of travel on the Planning White Paper consultation response subject to views.

8. Background Documents

None.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Joint response to the planning consultation 'Changes to the Current Planning System'.