

PROPOSED DRAFT RESPONSE  
FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF CHELMONDISTON PARISH COUNCIL  
TO THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING'S WHITE PAPER  
'PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE' –AUGUST 2020

1. We agree that Local Plans take too long to complete and are complex and cumbersome. And we agree that they are out of date. Our LPA is currently engaged in completing a new Local Plan, which has to date taken several years, to supersede the current Plan which was adopted in 2006, so 14 years old and out of date. We also agree that Local Plans should provide certainty for development or protection, provide simplicity for planning applications, and allow local communities a genuine opportunity to shape those decisions (Paras 2.3, 2.4,2.5). We note your comments concerning too much duplication of planning policies in Local Plans and welcome any moves to simplify and to shorten the process for new Plans.
2. There is a strong streak running throughout this White Paper of impatience with delays. Some are bureaucratic and within the direct control of central government to do something about e.g. the length of time that LPAs take in putting together Local Plans. Others are the checks and balances inevitable and required in a democratic society, the whole purpose of which is to enable people (the governed) to exercise some power over whether and what type of development should take place. The whole thrust of this White Paper seems to us to enable more development to take place faster and to make it more difficult to oppose development. We are opposed to this aspect. The White Paper ignores the interests of villages, small communities, and the country side and fails to distinguish between the needs of urban populations, particularly large urban communities and conurbations and rural parishes.
3. There is, perhaps inevitably in a planning White Paper, less emphasis on the Protected zone as compared with the other two, particularly Growth. As a significant proportion of the area of this parish is Protected one way or another, we are naturally concerned with this aspect of the White Paper. We have not seen anything in it that would propose to lessen the protection of AONBs and other protected sites afforded through NPPF and on that basis we are happy to support the idea of the Protected Zone.
4. Answer to your question 4 'What are your top 3 priorities for planning in your local area?'
  1. To provide houses, including affordable housing for rent and purchase, for residents and their children so that the village remains alive and vibrant
  2. To protect the countryside, our green spaces, and the AONB, SSSI, Conservation Area, and RAMSAR in the parish.
  3. To improve the infrastructure in and through the parish for residents.
5. Answer to your question 5: 'Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals?'

We are broadly supportive in that we agree that Local Plans should identify types of land. We are however absolutely against any proposal to amalgamate the Growth and Renewal zones into one. There are clear divisions, which should be maintained between the Growth Zone, where outline planning consent is already a 'given', and the so-called Renewal Zone, which covers all built areas. To combine them would make a mockery of Neighbourhood Plans and lead to outright chaos in and

opposition to the planning process.

6. We strongly support the vision for the result of the planning process as outlined in the Introduction and particularly para 1.12 and the desire expressed in para 1.16 to increase the democratic voice at the plan making stage. However we are concerned that a centralised policy will fail to take into account the individual and different needs of village communities. And there does not seem to be any reference to village envelopes or boundaries. It should be clear that there is a planning difference between building within the boundaries of a village and extending its boundaries by allowing building, usually of a number of houses, to create a new boundary and a wider area.
7. We strongly support the retention of Neighbourhood Plans as your Proposal 9 (Question 13a) and we are particularly glad to see reference to the crucial role to be played by Neighbourhood Plans in Para 2.14. This parish is currently in process of developing a NP and as far as we can see at the moment it is very focussed and does not need to be more so to reflect any changes to Local Plans. We would welcome simplification of the process, for example we would suggest that two of the consultation processes could be conflated so that they run more or less simultaneously.  
We are not sure, in answer to your Question 13b, how this process can be made to meet your objectives for using more digital tools. We are already using electronic means for everything, quite literally, but we are mindful of not excluding those who are not computer literate or are otherwise unable to participate in 'hi-tech' solutions. And our draft NP already includes statements on Design.
8. Answer to your question 16:  
Our priorities for sustainability are twin ones: Energy efficiency of new buildings and protection of existing trees and more trees.
9. Answer to your question 17:  
We support your use and production of design guides and codes, with the proviso about over-centralisation and 'get outs' for local variances and design inspiration and innovation. So often design guides follow the fashions of the moment and it is essential to retain variety and not to be corralled into some low common denominator. People have very different ideas of what constitutes good design and it would be much more than a shame for good ideas to be shut out because its face does not fit.
10. Answer to your question 18:  
There is clearly huge scope for improving the design of housing estates, both large and small, much of which has demonstrably been lamentable. However we do not consider that the creation of yet another central body to 'help' LPAs would be likely to enhance this. The idea that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making is interesting and one which we feel should be explored further as to exactly what their on-going responsibilities should be.  
We agree your statement that development in recent years has been increasingly dominated by large companies and we strongly support the reference in Para 3.19 to the revival of smaller and therefore more local development companies.