



The countryside charity
Leicestershire

PROPOSED GOVERNMENT CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

The Government is proposing changes to the Planning system in England that it claims will modernise and simplify it and ensure that more homes are built. These are set out in two documents: *White Paper: Planning for the Future* and a technical document, *Changes to the current planning system*.

GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS INCLUDE:

- Changing the planning process to focus local participation at the plan-making stage and limit objection and comment in subsequent decision processes.
- Simplifying the role of Local Plan by classifying all land into 'Growth', 'Renewal' and 'Protected' Areas (zones).
- Less constrained routes for approving development details in 'Growth' and 'Renewal' areas, but with local development controls in 'Protected' areas similar to the existing ones.
- Reducing the content of Local Plans, in particular the deletion of development management policies and enhanced reliance on the NPPF as the primary source for local development management decisions.
- Shortening the local plan process to 30 months involving a statutory timetable for 5 key stages, and limiting 'meaningful' public engagement to two stages.
- A national target of 300,000 homes per annum, a new method for calculating the housing requirements, and mandatory nationally set housing targets for each authority to achieve.
- Emphasis on high quality development based on pattern books and national design codes together with local design codes prepared with community involvement.
- Increased use of new digital technology to produce visual and map-based local plans, to enable access to planning data and to create 'new digital civic engagement processes'.
- The retention of Neighbourhood Plans as an important means of community input.
- Replacement of Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as methods for securing contributions to infrastructure and essential services with new nationally set Infrastructure Levy based on the final value of development.
- Roles for planning system in mitigating and adapting to climate change, maximising environmental benefits, improving energy efficiency standards of buildings and conserving heritage and a simpler environmental and sustainability assessment framework.

CPRE CONCERNS INCLUDE:

- The extent to which the proposals view planning system as a 'housebuilding delivery system'. The major role it could play with regard to Climate Change, as well as Environmental, Biodiversity and Energy concerns is substantially neglected.

- Loss of local democracy and reduced opportunities for communities to feed into Local Plans and planning decisions, including a reduction of ‘meaningful’ engagement in Local Plan making, despite statements about encouraging greater participation.
- Setting of development management policies nationally and imposing nationally determined housing targets will give local authorities very little room for manoeuvre to respond to local circumstances.
- The new standard methodology for calculating housing requirements has produced numerous anomalous outcomes, including the dramatic increase in housing allocated to rural Leicestershire.
- The degree of protection afforded by the ‘Protected Area’ is unclear and it appears to be a residual category, rather than a positive designation, particularly with regard to Leicestershire which has no Green Belt or national designated countryside protection.
- Without national protective designations, which will act as constraints to the inclusion of sites in the ‘Growth Area’, Leicestershire’s undesignated countryside will remain very vulnerable to large-scale development.
- While CPRE supports the Government’s aspirations to improve design standards, it is sceptical about the extent to which its proposals will achieve the desired improvement. Community involvement has always been an ‘undersubscribed’ constituent of Local Plan making and these proposals will encourage the imposition of top down standards.
- Proposals to raise the threshold for requiring affordable housing on small sites and to prioritise First Homes home ownership tenure will undermine the delivery new affordable housing. The funding for it could be affected by the creation of the new Infrastructure Levy.
- CPRE welcomes the better access to information, data, plans and mapping that can come with enhanced online systems. However site notices should be retained and digital communications must not exclude those who lack the skills or equipment.
- The continuation of Neighbourhood Planning is very welcome but CPRE has concerns about how it will fit into the reformed system.

WHAT HAS CPRE LEICESTERSHIRE BEEN DOING?

- Produced and circulated report on housing figures which can be viewed at: <http://www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk/resources/cpre/item/2306-report-new-standard-methodology-and-leicestershire>.
- Contact (emails) with MPs, Council Leaders and other leading Councillors.
- Contributions to the development of CPRE’s national consultation responses.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Write to your MP and contact your local Councillors.
- Respond to the consultation by 29 October – details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>.

HOW YOU CAN HELP – JOIN CPRE

If you are interested in helping us, please email: info@cpreleicestershire.org.uk

If you want to join CPRE go to: <https://www.cpre.org.uk/get-involved/donations-and-membership/become-a-member/>