

Q5 – No

The proposed changes will remove the ability for local people to make their voices heard when responding to local development that affects their communities and will remove transparency and accountability from the process. The changes will remove nuance, flexibility and the very specific needs of local areas from planning decisions. The proposed changes to the local plan process risk residents voices being ignored or disregarded, whilst the increased imposition of central housing targets risks moving the system to one of development -led planning rather than the current system of plan-led development.

Q6 – No

The proposed changes will remove the ability for development to take account of local constraints and circumstances – for example lack of foul water and sewage treatment facilities, capacities of local roads, public transport infrastructure and barriers to use (e.g. frequency or cost) that the current Local Plan based approach affords. It is also unclear how development management policies will be reviewed or updated in order to reflect changing circumstances and policy imperatives (e.g. impacts of climate change) and how this will be reflected in both the allocation of housing targets and the classification of development zones.

Q7 (a) – No

The proposed changes do not explain how sustainable development will be defined or how it will be reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis. There is no definition of the scope of the assessment process when reaching a decision on what sustainable development consists of, or how it will sit within the local democratic process – for example, if a council has declared a climate emergency and adopted a specific set of actions and policies to mitigate this, how will these be reflected in national planning policy. Imposing centrally defined tests of ‘sustainable development’ could disenfranchise local voters by stripping their elected local authorities of their ability to develop policies that deliver their own elected mandates.

Q7 (b)

Without a formal duty to cooperate it is hard to see how essential infrastructure can be effectively planned – even simple items such as ensuring that there are adequate cycle and footpath link between developments in adjacent local authorities risks becoming impossible if there is no formal mechanism to ensure that authorities cooperate with each other in planning their developments and allocations. This is even more important in authorities where administrative boundaries also overlap with National Parks.

Q8 (a)

No

It would be impossible to design a standard method/algorithm for allocating housing targets that was sufficiently sensitive to all of the myriad local constraints and considerations affecting the limits of development that would work for the whole country. How could you include sufficient allowance to assess capacity between an isolated rural hamlet in Cornwall, a world UNESCO heritage site such as Bath, a Northern Powerhouse city like Manchester and a prosperous market town in the home counties. The last few years have demonstrated very well the unintended consequences of moving to this kind of system – be it exam results, social media feeds or credit scoring, algorithm based decision making always leads to outliers, statistical anomalies and unexpected and unfair allocations.

How would appeals be handled, what would be the appeal thresholds, what level of leeway would be built in to the model? Moving to such a system would make decisions and housing allocations opaque and undemocratic and would leave the system open to abuse and lead to a lack of accountability or oversight.

Q8 (b)

No

This will just increase the demand for housing in areas where there is already high demand and place further pressure on 'honeypot' areas such as the South East, London and a small number of urban areas in Northern cities. It will not help to deliver new housing in neglected areas of the country or to address inequalities in areas. The kind of spatial policies developed in the local plan process, which can effectively designate areas for new housing and new employment land are a far better means of delivering regeneration and affordable housing where it is needed.

Q9 (a)

No

As a parish council we have the best understanding of what local residents require in order to receive the maximum benefits from a development. Often this is simple things that do not affect the costs of the development, such as ensuring that footpaths and cycle paths are located in the best place. It is also the only chance we have to engage with developers to ensure that improvements such as safe street lighting on approach roads or dedicated bus pull-ins are provided. It is not appropriate to leave these items to reserved matters or highways officers, particularly when much of their advice is based upon desk-top studies. The granting of automatic permission in principle for growth areas would remove the statutory requirement for developers to engage with parish councils for the outset of the design and development process and would lead to less well integrated and designed developments.

Q9 (b)

No – for the reasons outlined above. It is also unclear how the designations would be allocated, how they would be monitored and surveyed to check on the environmental/ecological health of an area, how they would be reviewed and how they would adapt to changing circumstances (e.g. responding to climate change threats, species and habitat loss, etc.)

Q9 (c)

No – this feels like it would bypass normal local democratic planning systems and controls and lead to communities feeling that development is being done to them rather than reflecting genuine local needs and concerns.

Q10

No

The vast majority of planning applications are already permitted and are decided within 12 weeks, so it is inaccurate to imply that the system is somehow unresponsive or unduly slow in determining planning applications. In addition, the government already has considerable powers to intervene when a local authority is not permitting enough developments and is losing too many planning appeals due to unsound decision making. It is not clear how the proposed changes in the planning paper will improve the speed of housing delivery, when the problem is clearly developers land

banking and choosing not to bring schemes forward rather than local authorities dragging their heels in granting timely planning approvals.

Q11

No

This is a highly problematic proposal and risks locking large parts of the population out of the planning process. Many older members of the community are not comfortable accessing web-based systems and do not have the skills, equipment or connectivity to view plans online. In addition, for families on low incomes, accessing plans via web-based services would be impossible – many do not have broadband connections or pc's, relying instead on Pay As You Go mobile phones. It is genuinely not possible to view detailed planning documents on a mobile phone. Moving local plans on to digital-only service platforms risks excluding people from accessing information of planning matters that directly affect their communities and would be highly likely to meet legal challenge under equalities legislation.

Q12

No

The new timescale is too compressed to allow for a genuinely consultative approach to plan development. It does not allow for enough time for environmental data to be gathered across a full range of seasons and then interpreted and acted upon. It also does not allow sufficient time for residents to have input into the plan as it is developed and for their comments to be incorporated and then reflected in the final plan. There is insufficient contingency in the proposed timescale to allow for re-working the plan if there are changes in the fundamental assumptions underpinning it – for example, the Local Plan in our district was prepared assuming the delivery of a major infrastructure project by Highways England, upgrading a trunk road which would have enabled more development in certain areas. After the project was abandoned by HE, the entire basis of the previous site allocations had to be reviewed and new HEELA reports compiled. There is not time for this kind of work to be done within the proposed 30-month timescale and it is unclear what the consequences would be for authorities that fail to produce a Local Plan within the proposed timescale.

Q13 (a)

Yes

It is unclear from the white paper how Neighbourhood Plans would fit in to the revised planning system – will they become more like the old village design statements, focusing on items such as design standards, materials and finishes or are they envisaged as in their current format as land and site allocation schemes? More detail needs to be provided on the purpose of Neighbourhood Plans and how they would sit in the hierarchy of development zones, housing delivery targets and the new Local Plans.

Q 13 (b)

It is not possible to comment on this question as the white paper contains insufficient detail on the proposed purpose and uses of Neighbourhood Plans.

Q14

Yes

It is unclear how the proposed changes will improve the build out rate of developments, as the housing market is essentially a cartel that is entirely dis-functional and subject to market control and price fixing – developers have land banked around the country and only bring sites forward in an area at a controlled rate so that they can avoid flooding the market and bringing down the value of their investments. If the aim of the planning white paper is to genuinely increase housing delivery and affordability, then a fundamental disruption of the status quo is required, with new housing brought forward at scale by organisations who are not one of the big 5 property developers. The only landowner with holdings and resources on the scale needed to deliver this market disruption is the public sector via the public and local authority estates. Removing the right to buy from local authority properties and allowing local councils to borrow so that they can build significant quantities of genuinely affordable homes for people would deliver the scale of disruption needed. The current proposals amount to little more than a developers charter and will exacerbate rather than alleviate the existing problem with housing supply and market prices.

Q15 Ugly/poorly designed

Q16 All of the above plus climate change resilience

Q17 No

The proposed approach places too much reliance on having to think of every possible circumstance or permutation up front and risks becoming either too inflexible or impenetrably complex and would therefore risk excluding smaller developers and self builders who did not have armies of planning consultants to interpret the rules for them. It is unclear from the white paper how the design codes would be monitored, reviewed or rewritten to ensure that they remain fit for purpose into the future of how breaches of the code would be reported and more importantly enforced.

Q18

No

Powers should not be centralised as this does not reflect regional and local variations, development constraints and local vernacular styles. By taking this approach development risks become either generic leading to homogenous design tropes throughout the UK or so unwieldy that public cannot navigate its labyrinthine codes and structures. Design coding should be a locally devolved power rooted in the community.

Q 19

Yes

But only if it is locally led in terms of design input and responsiveness. Not if it is nationally or centrally imposed.

Q 20

No

It is unclear how this will be arbitrated, assessed or monitored or how it will reflect local desires, needs, wishes and codes.

Q21

Infrastructure, affordability, green space

Q22 (a)

No

It is hard to see how a joined up approach to creating the necessary supporting infrastructure and services can be provided if this model is adopted. The proposal that the levy will be paid at the point of occupation will place all of the infrastructure development costs on to stretched local councils up-front. This will result in councils having to borrow to fund the development of infrastructure specifically related to commercial developments, essentially transferring the borrowing costs and the risks from the private sector to the public sector. It is hard to see how this will benefit anyone except private developers and would be to the detriment of local taxpayers and communities.

Q22 (b) Locally

Q22 (c) More Value

Local authorities need to be able to set levies at an appropriate rate that reflects their genuine needs – for example the building of significant new link roads to enable development or major upgrades to area wide flood defences or sewage network capacity issues. At present there is not way of accurately reflecting these costs in development proposals. The move to wards local setting of levy rates would make this possible.

Q22 (d)

Yes

Any borrowing should be underwritten by the treasury and if the borrowing is to finance delivery of essential infrastructure associated with a specific development, then the developer should pay the borrowing costs for the local authority (i.e. the interest charges) to avoid the public purse picking up private developer costs.

Q23

Yes

At present too many developments (such as conversion of office/retail to residential) are exempt from CIL obligations, even though they place significant demands upon the local community infrastructure and services. They should be subject to the levy in the same way that new developments are. In addition, a higher rate should be charged on conversions that are deliver substandard accommodation that does not meet minimum design guidelines to reflect the fact that it will probably place greater demands upon local services due to its disproportionate use as hostel/emergency housing.

Q24 (a)

No

The current provision of affordable housing is insufficient, so maintaining current standards is inadequate. The proposals should include a greater requirement for affordable housing delivery on developments, with more of it ring-fenced for affordable rental through the development of community land trusts or other such scheme that can guarantee that the housing stock can be held in perpetuity for long term affordable tenancies.

Q24 (b)

Not Sure

This would need to be developed further in the proposals to explain how delivery of housing using in-kind payments could be guaranteed versus how the ability of local authorities to borrow money to purchase the discounted properties and protect their housing stock investments would be delivered. The detail on this is not clear in the white paper and it is hard to see how the second option could sit alongside the current tenant 'right to buy' laws unless they were reformed.

Q24 (c)

No

Levy rates should be locally set and paid – but there does need to be a clear understanding of the circumstances in which in-kind payment would be the appropriate route for delivery of affordable housing and when local authority right to buy would be appropriate.

Q24 (d)

Yes

Affordable housing delivery should be prioritised to support affordable rental properties, held on long term tenancies by groups that are not subject to right to buy legislation. Therefore, investment should be made in helping local communities to set up and manage community land trusts and other suitable housing delivery organisations to genuinely impact local market affordability.

Q25 (a)

Yes

Authorities should have the ability to spend the infrastructure levy on revenue as well as capital projects – for example, the money should be available for funding community development or youth workers, or rent for community facilities or other similar expenses vital to supporting integrated and community-led development.

Q25 (b)

Yes

In order to ensure that money intended for affordable housing delivery genuinely supports this.

Q26

Yes

The proposals to move local plans on line could have significant impacts on disabled people as they may find it hard to access fully access the proposed formats. Disabled people are also far more likely to suffer financial hardship and so be excluded from participation due to lack of broadband/mobile phone connectivity.

The proposals also risk excluding elderly residents from the planning process as they are far less likely to have internet access or the skills and capability to navigate web based information or consultation.