

Ask for:

APPENDIX 2

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Your Ref:

Date: Planning for the Future Consultation
14th October 2020



**Broxtowe
Borough
COUNCIL**

Planning for the Future Consultation
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
3rd Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Sirs,

Broxtowe Borough Council ("The Council") is responding in respect of the Planning for the Future Consultation White Paper. The Council would like to raise a number of significant concerns regarding proposals contained within the White Paper.

Fundamentally, the Council considers that the White Paper fails to acknowledge that local democracy must underpin plan making and planning decisions. Local councils are in the best position to make these decisions and represent their local communities. The White Paper proposes to significantly reduce democratic controls at the planning application stage. This is the stage when most local communities engage in the planning process. Whilst greater engagement at the plan making stage is endorsed, this cannot be at the expense of engaging and consulting the public when proposals are submitted. Elected members must be able to consider these views and be able to make decisions to uphold the democratic process which is central to planning. Any extension to permitted development rights and amalgamation of the use classes order also undermines this process.

The Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development, recognising the wider benefits that development can bring. Despite being significantly constrained by Green Belt, the Council has taken difficult decisions to ensure sufficient land is allocated for housing within the Development Plan. However, the White Paper focuses on the failures of the planning system with limited acknowledgement of the importance of the development industry in ensuring allocated sites or those with planning permission are brought forward and built.



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There must be greater powers available to Councils to ensure sites are built in a timely manner to provide the housing local communities need.

The Council has a successful record of working jointly with neighbouring authorities through the Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership. It is unclear from the White Paper the implications of removing the duty-to-corporate. There must be clear mechanisms in place to ensure that Councils can continue to work cooperatively to address strategic cross-boundary issues, such as major infrastructure or strategic sites. The introduction of a standard housing need method to distribute housing also raises a number of significant questions regarding how the targets would be set and by whom and how constraints, such as the Green Belt, would be incorporated within the targets. Housing numbers must relate to local circumstances and it is considered that a target set by Government is unlikely to achieve this.

The proposal to refund planning fees if applications are not determined within the statutory timescales fails to acknowledge the reality of development management, where Councils work proactively to try to resolve issues and reach successful outcomes. The Council is reliant upon a number of external statutory consultees to provide expert advice. This can often lead to delay in making decisions which are outside of the Council's control. It would be irresponsible to make decisions in the absence of receiving this advice and a focus on timescales would increase the likelihood of applications being refused due to insufficient information.

The White Paper proposes ambitious timescales for preparing new Local Plans whilst requiring additional consultation and engagement and a greater focus on design codes. There must be adequate resourcing for Councils if these ambitions are to be realised. The Council does support an increased focus on design and 'beauty' but Councils must be provided with the necessary resources and expertise to ensure this is delivered.

The Council acknowledges that the planning system can be simplified and made more accessible. Providing high quality housing to meet local housing needs should be an absolute priority. However, locally elected members, representing their communities, must be central to the planning process and locally led democracy must continue to be at the heart of decision making.

Yours faithfully,