



Planning for the Future Consultation  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
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2 Marsham Street  
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27<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### **Planning for the Future Consultation – response from East Hunsbury Parish Council**

East Hunsbury Parish Council discussed the Planning for the Future White Paper at their council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

#### Background

East Hunsbury is a large suburban parish which lies within the Borough of Northampton. The area was developed over 30 years ago and is popular with young families and older people due to the good range of properties and large amount of open space within the parish.

Historically Northamptonshire, and the edges of Northampton Borough in particular, have seen mass development which leads to social issues and a dilution of local values and culture. East Hunsbury's location near to major traffic routes (A45 and M1) makes it a popular area for development.

In recent years, a planning application for over 1,000 homes has been agreed for our parish, with work just starting on the site this year. Whilst the parish council recognises the need for new homes in Northampton, it has reservations about the pressures on existing infrastructure and the mitigations agreed for this. While issues raised by a previous parish council were taken into account by the Section 106 agreement, they are not necessarily relevant now the building work is starting.

We are concerned that the proposals contained in the White Paper will diminish local input into planning.

#### Response to Consultation

We respond to the questions most relevant to us as follows:

**Q2a. Do you get involved with planning decisions in your local area?**

Yes – as the first tier of local government we have the most local knowledge.

**Q4. What are your top three priorities for planning in your local area?**

Protection of green spaces  
Better local infrastructure  
The design of new homes and places



**Q5. Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals?**

We welcome the shortening of the time to produce a Local Plan to 30 months, together with greater transparency and easy access to data and policies. However, we have reservations about the Design Code without yet knowing what the Code will be.

We would support locally generated design guidance and coding so that Local Plans are relevant to the area and would supersede National Policies where appropriate.

Local communities should be consulted early on in the process to allow for their views to be factored into the plans.

Experience shows that community engagement currently crystallises around detailed proposals. Engaging people earlier on for something they cannot yet envisage is a challenge.

The proposals feel like a centralisation of power with less discretion locally. It will feel to Local authorities and communities that choice is being taken away, with a loss of distinctiveness.

**Q8a. Do you agree that a standard method for establishing housing requirements should be introduced?**

No. What is appropriate in one area will not be in another. Northampton Borough has historically struggled to demonstrate a five-year land supply, leading to developments on the edge of the Borough boundary which are not necessarily appropriate for the local area.

**Q9a. Do you agree that there should be automatic outline permission for areas for substantial development with fast routes for detailed consent?**

No. It will feel to Local Authorities and communities that choice is being taken away, with a loss of distinctiveness.

**Q9b. Do you agree with our proposals above for the consent arrangements for Renewal and Protected areas?**

We are concerned about the loss of green space with the benefits to health and well-being that they bring if densification and infill of residential areas is a priority.

We welcome the proposals on streamlining the assessment of environmental effects, securing environmental benefits and the move towards zero carbon.

**Q12. Do you agree with our proposal for a 30 month statutory timescale for the production of Local Plans.**

Yes. We welcome the shortening of the time to produce a Local Plan to 30 months, together with greater transparency and easy access to data and policies. However, this should be subject to statutory community engagement and not acceptable to agree a Local Plan without a suitable level of engagement.

Parish council engagement should be integral from the beginning of the process.



**Q13.a Do you agree that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system?**

Neighbourhood Planning relies on local engagement and knowledge, and a considerable amount of input from usually a limited number of local people, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the views of the wider community. It may work in a small rural village, but not in an urban area.

**Q13.b How can the neighbourhood planning process be developed to meet our objectives, such as in the use of digital tools and reflecting community preferences about design?**

It would be useful to have a template neighbourhood plan document with the facility to complete options to reflect community preference. This would enable Neighbourhood plans to be established more quickly and with less cost which is a barrier to many communities.

**Q16. Sustainability is at the heart of our proposals. What is your priority for sustainability in your area?**

Reliable and sustainable traffic management and public transport. Increase of environmentally friendly transport options – public transport/cycling/walking. More green and open space, more trees, and the creation of biodiverse areas within developments.

**Q21. When new development happens in your area, what is your priority for what comes with it?**

New development should have better infrastructure placed at the heart of development plans and built in beforehand. Key workers should be the priority for affordable housing, rather than social housing shoe-horned in to meet criteria. Seeking local knowledge beforehand and using that to shape developments at the planning stage.

**Q22a. Should the Government replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning obligations with a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy, which is charged as a fixed proportion of development value above a set threshold?**

In principle we support the proposal, but transparency will be key. It gives local authority greater freedom on how it is spent, but this must reflect local views.

**Q22b. Should the Infrastructure Levy rates be set nationally at a single rate, set nationally at an area-specific rate, or set locally?**

Set nationally at a single rate.

**Q22c. Should the Infrastructure Levy aim to capture the same amount of value overall, or more value, to support greater investment in infrastructure, affordable housing, and local communities?**

More value to support local infrastructure and local communities, to ensure developments are sustainable in the future.

**Q23 Do you agree that the scope of the reformed Infrastructure Levy should capture changes of use through permitted development rights?**



East Hunsbury  
Parish Council

Permitted development rights should be regulations to ensure quality and to avoid the social issues that follow from poor quality and inadequate conversions. There should not be a presumption in favour of development if it will not work, for example conversion of an office building to housing.

**Q24a. Do you agree that we should aim to secure at least the same amount of affordable housing under the Infrastructure Levy, and as much on-site affordable provision, as at present?**

Affordable housing should be specific for the needs of the local area.