**White Paper: Planning for the Future**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

**The consultation ends at 11.45pm on 29th October 2020**

**NPN notes** of group discussion with Cllr Nicola Beech, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning and City Design, Zoe Willcox Director, Development of Place and Sarah O’Driscoll Strategic City Planning Service Manager, Bristol at the NPN/BCC quarterly meeting 20-10-20. Members from 12 NPN groups were represented at the meeting.

**Responses**

Responses to the consultation are invited through the online questionnaire. Responses can be submitted by email but it is advisable to use the online questionnaire to ensure that responses are logged and recorded.

BCC will be submitting a response from the Bristol City Council administration. BCC have also been in discussion with the other Core Cities and are contributing to a combined response.

NPN will respond on the aspects of how to involve communities in planning policy and development based on the experience over the past 14 years of NPN admin and groups, who have engaged with Bristol City Council Planning Policy consultation and with developers, including BCC, in the pre-application community involvement discussion process.

All groups are encouraged to feed in their views; it will be helpful to explain your previous experience of CI in planning in your responses. It appears that the government is looking for responses that will help them successfully develop the proposed planning reform. Examples of best practice and good case histories will therefore be helpful; responses that do not include suggestions about good/ better ways of doing things may be less effective.

**Housing delivery:**

It was noted that the paper is predicated on the view that the planning process is responsible on the failure of the building industry to keep up with housing demand. It was noted that there are many schemes which are already approved, both in Bristol and nationally, which could be built out now.

**Programme:**

the government aim is to pass the Act into law before the end of parliament ie 2024

Work on Design Codes is already underway and a consultation is expected in November 2020.

Proposals for changes to Community Infrastructure/ s106 are also likely to come forward soon.

**Community Involvement in Planning:**

At the meeting, concerns were shared about how communities will be able to engage with drawing up policy and of the loss of opportunity to respond at planning application stage. Of particular concern, was the impact on communities already excluded from being able to influence the way their community develops, due to poor access to resources including to the internet, technical skills and language, time etc. It was also suggested that many of the places where ‘Growth’ areas may be likely to be designated are close to or in areas of multiple deprivation; ‘Growth’ areas are expected to have a greater reliance on community involvement at planning policy drafting stage, being then given outline planning approval for the principle of development, rather than at planning application stage. Our experience is that this is when it is more likely that communities become interested in engaging with development proposals.

**Use of Digital Media:**

Although there are concerns about universal access to online resources, the use of 3-dimensional representation to help explain development proposals will allow for a better assessment of the impact. BCC already has use of 3D mapping for central city developments. Additional resources will be needed for both technical and planning input.

**Area Designations: Growth: Renewal: Protection**

As yet, it is not clear what the grain of Growth, Renewal and Protections sites is likely to be. Eg whether it is site by site, so, similar to Site Allocations under the current Local Plan, or whether a larger area might be designated. It is also possible that a mixed ‘Growth and Renewal’ area could be designated.

**Design Codes:**

It is not possible at this stage to be clear about what exactly is meant by this term.

It could be what is normally thought of as Design Codes eg height of buildings/ style of building/ size and type of residential uses. Or it could be what we are used to seeing as Masterplans or Frameworks. BCC experience on eg the Temple Quarter Masterplan is that they can be overtaken by events such as the displacement of the Arena and the University of Bristol expansion.

Design codes for areas could also be something like Character Assessments as many communities in Conservation Areas in Bristol have been involved in, or Local Distinctiveness Studies.

Design codes may be most effective when they are set when sites are coming forward for development rather than when areas are designated for Growth etc.

**Infrastructure:**

There was concern that the White Paper did not give sufficient attention to how infrastructure was to be provided. The concentration on housing delivery meant there was insufficient consideration of ensuring hard infrastructure like roads/ internet access etc was in place and that community amenities like schools and doctors surgeries were provided before housing was occupied.

**Affordable housing:**

The ‘Changes to the Current Planning System’ consultation, which is now closed, proposes removing the requirement to provide affordable housing on sites with less than 40-50 residential units. This would mean a significant reduction in affordable housing provided in Bristol where housing development is currently most frequently on sites which are smaller than 40 units. The proportion of other affordable housing eg social rent housing would also be reduced by the requirement to make 25% of the affordable housing First Homes. This would lead to approx 1/3 fewer social rent units. BCC has responded with concerns. Proposals in the White Paper to move affordable housing provision to become a CILevy do not address the problem of land provision/allocation. Concerns about standards of accommodation were also raised.

**CIL/s106 developer contributions**

Concerns were raised about the loss of specific infrastructure provision to mitigate the impact of development. Although these were negotiable, which the White Paper considers one of the elements which is slowing down the planning application process, in Bristol s106 still covers eg tree protection and replacement/ green infrastructure/ fire hydrant provision. Changing developer contributions to non-negotiable CI Levy removes the opportunity to negotiate in-kind contributions. The lack of capacity to bring forward infrastructure projects has led to a backlog in Bristol and elsewhere.

**Bristol planning programme:**

The West of England is bringing forward the SDS Spatial Development Strategy covering WECA = Bristol Bath and North East Somerset and S Glos + North Somerset. Preliminary engagement is due in November with formal consultation programmed for June 2021 with examination in Sept 2022 and adoption in June 2023.

Bristol’s Local Plan will feed in the housing numbers from the SDS and come forward with a new plan for consultation in February 2022.

*Lastly, a query was raised about what point the illustration of a Cotswold village was intended to make! See page 55. Can you suggest a caption?*

AB 24 Oct 2020