

## Billesdon Parish Council submission on the Planning White Paper, 2020

Billesdon Parish Council covers a rural Parish in East Leicestershire with a population of approximately 1,000. Billesdon is a strong community with many activities and services that support residents and make it an attractive and popular place to live. Billesdon is proud to be one of the early locations to adopt a Neighbourhood Development Plan in 2014 with strong community support illustrated by a 84% vote in favour of the plan. There is good community interest in planning matters.

Billesdon Parish Council is concerned that the proposals in the Planning White Paper and the related recent consultation on the planning system will be detrimental to this future level of community involvement resulting in development that will damage the balance and character of the Parish.

The Parish Council responds to specific questions in the White Paper:

*8(a). Do you agree that a standard method for establishing housing requirements (that takes into account constraints) should be introduced?*

Yes. The Parish Council agrees that it will be beneficial to have a standard method for establishing housing requirements but this should be further refined to ensure that it reflects the housing needs within each area including the need for affordable housing and the needs of specific groups such as older people. The estimated additional housing requirements for Harborough District Council are unacceptable and are likely to have a very negative impact on many rural communities such as Billesdon.

*8(b). Do you agree that affordability and the extent of existing urban areas are appropriate indicators of the quantity of development to be accommodated?*

No. The Parish Council disagrees with the proposed formula to calculate the housing requirements. Less weight should be given to affordability. Housing supply may be insufficient to meet demand because of the relative economic prosperity of an area. This does not mean that additional homes should be built in that area. It would be better for the country if economic wellbeing should be extended to more areas of the country, following the Government's 'levelling up' agenda. Indeed, the provision of new, good quality housing could act as a stimulus to economic growth.

*9(a). Do you agree that there should be automatic outline permission for areas for substantial development (Growth areas) with faster routes for detailed consent?*

No. The Parish Council believes the proposed approach to growth areas and the methods to gain consent will damage the community input to planning decisions, leading to damage to the environments in which we live. To successfully influence plan making in growth areas communities will need to be very well organised and understand the process and the plan making stage. Realistically, most parish councils will not be prepared to contribute sufficiently at the right time.

*9(b). Do you agree with our proposals above for the consent arrangements for Renewal and Protected areas?*

No. The Parish Council disagrees with any automatic consent process because this is very likely to significantly reduce the level of community input to the planning process.

*12. Do you agree with our proposals for a 30 month statutory timescale for the production of Local Plans?*

Yes. It will be beneficial if the production of local plans is a quicker process than currently. This will help local communities to understand the position of the local plan and which policies apply at any one time. However, reducing the timescales for producing a plan should not be at the expense of

communities input. There need to be requirements for effective community engagement built on a very transparent process and real, meaningful efforts to gain feedback rather relying on adverts in newspapers or information on websites.

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

Yes, the Parish Council supports the continued use of Neighbourhood Plans. However, they need to be given sufficient emphasis when planning decisions are being made. There is the risk that they are seen as out of date if Local Plans are updated more frequently. Communities should be able to plan over a reasonable period without the need to frequently review the plan to protect its weight in planning considerations when very little has changed.

*13(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?*

The neighbourhood planning process is not easy for local communities to complete without significant expert support from planning consultants. Tools and methods that would place the process more in the hands of local people, still with support, would make such plans easier to produce and bring them closer to the community.

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

Affordable housing is important within the Billesdon Neighbourhood Development Plan. We need to ensure that a suitable mix of people can live in our community so the affordable housing should respond to this including homes for families and older people. It is also important that our existing community facilities and services such as our village hall, GPs surgery and play areas have sufficient capacity as the population of the parish increases. We are also very concerned about the increase in traffic flows through residential areas so there needs to be good design in new developments and appropriate road and travel improvements to minimise the impact of the additional households.