



Waldringfield Parish Council

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Consultation on Changes to Planning Policy and Regulations, Sept. 2020 Response by Waldringfield Parish Council

The standard method for assessing housing numbers in strategic plans

Q1: Do you agree that planning practice guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is *whichever is the higher of* the level of 0.5% of housing stock in each local authority area OR the latest household projections averaged over a 10-year period?

No. The appropriate base line should be the latest household projections averaged over a 10 year period. The base line should not include an arbitrary percentage of the existing housing stock. Clearly the existing housing stock should be one of the elements taken into account when calculating the residual housing need to be planned for, but not as a simple percentage. The housing stock figure used in the calculations should include such data as size of dwellings, occupation levels etc. The housing stock would be one of the several factors in the calculation of residual housing need such as taking account of infrastructure projects, employment opportunities etc.

Q2: In the stock element of the baseline, do you agree that 0.5% of existing stock for the standard method is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

No. The 0.5% figure is entirely arbitrary. Paragraph 1 of this document states that last year's (i.e. 2018/19) housing delivery was the highest level for over 30 years. In other words, 2018/9 was an exceptional year. Paragraph 26 states that this exceptional year represented an increase of approximately 1% on the previous dwelling stock. The argument that therefore "0.5% represents a basic level of increase in all areas without putting a disproportionate emphasis on existing stock levels" is not valid.

Q3: Do you agree that using the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio from the most recent year for which data is available to adjust the standard method's baseline is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

No. The ratio should be averaged over three years to take account of short-term anomalies, both up and down e.g. local large employer re-locating etc.

Q4: Do you agree that incorporating an adjustment for the change of affordability over 10 years is a positive way to look at whether affordability has improved? If not, please explain why.

Yes

Q5: Do you agree that affordability is given an appropriate weighting within the standard method? If not, please explain why.

No. This proposed standard method appears to focus only on affordable housing to buy to the exclusion of affordable housing to rent.

Q6: Authorities which are already at the second stage of the strategic plan consultation process (Regulation 19), which should be given 6 months to submit their plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination?

No opinion

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Q7: Authorities close to publishing their second stage consultation (Regulation 19), which should be given 3 months from the publication date of the revised guidance to publish their Regulation 19 plan, and a further 6 months to submit their plan to the Planning Inspectorate?

Yes

Delivering First Homes

Q8: The Government is proposing policy compliant planning applications will deliver a minimum of 25% of onsite affordable housing as First Homes, and a minimum of 25% of offsite contributions towards First Homes where appropriate. Which do you think is the most appropriate option for the remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions? Please provide reasons and / or evidence for your views (if possible):

- i. **Prioritising the replacement of affordable home ownership tenures, and delivering rental tenures in the ratio set out in the local plan policy.**
- ii. **Negotiation between a local authority and developer.**
- iii. **Other (please specify)**

Option i is the best because the local policy plan is subject to public consultation and is examined by a Planning Inspector. Negotiations under Option ii are unlikely to be transparent, and the public will have no control over the outcome.

With regards to current exemptions from delivery of affordable home ownership products:

Q9: Should the existing exemptions from the requirement for affordable home ownership products (e.g. for build to rent) also apply to apply to this First Homes requirement?

No. We see no reason why *build to rent* should have an affordable homes exemption, whether for first homes or not.

Q10: Are any existing exemptions not required? If not, please set out which exemptions and why.

No. The exemption for *build to rent* makes no sense and should be scrapped. If it is necessary for new builds in an area to contain a certain proportion of affordable houses, why should that not apply to rented houses as much as to ones owned by the occupiers?

Q11: Are any other exemptions needed? If so, please provide reasons and /or evidence for your views.

No.

Local plans and transitional arrangements

Q12: Do you agree with the proposed approach to transitional arrangements set out above?

Yes

Level of discount

Q13: Do you agree with the proposed approach to different levels of discount?

No opinion

Exception sites

Q14: Do you agree with the approach of allowing a small proportion of market housing on First Homes exception sites, in order to ensure site viability?

No. Exception sites are supposed to be to meet local needs for affordable housing. Allowing market housing undermines this and is likely to be the thin end of the wedge.

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Q15: Do you agree with the removal of the site size threshold set out in the National Planning Policy Framework?

No. This is referring to paragraph 73, Footnote 33 in the NPPF: “Entry-level exception sites should not be larger than one hectare in size or exceed 5% of the size of the existing settlement”. The consultation document says “We intend to ... retain the requirement that First Homes exception sites should be proportionate in size to the existing settlement.” Which we assume to mean the 5% criteria is unchanged. However, the one hectare figure does seem a bit arbitrary.

Q16: Do you agree that the First Homes exception sites policy should not apply in designated rural areas?

Yes. Paragraph 66 of the consultation documents says “We intend to protect the important role that rural exception sites play in delivering affordable homes in rural areas, with rural exception sites being retained as a vehicle for delivering affordable housing in designated rural areas” We agree with this - the exception sites policy should still apply in designated rural areas.

Supporting small and medium-sized developers

Q17: Do you agree with the proposed approach to raise the small sites threshold for a time-limited period?

No.

Q18: What is the appropriate level of small sites threshold?

I. **Up to 40 homes**

II. **Up to 50 homes**

III. **Other (please specify)**

iii. The current threshold is 10 units (5 or fewer in designated rural areas), and this should be retained. We see no reason why this should be changed, and certainly a 400% or 500% increase would be absurd. The main housing need in the UK is for affordable housing, this proposal would encourage developers to avoid their obligation to meet this need by proposing developments just below the 40 (or 50) units threshold.

Q19: Do you agree with the proposed approach to the site size threshold?

No – see above.

Q20: Do you agree with linking the time-limited period to economic recovery and raising the threshold for an initial period of 18 months?

Yes. We disagree that the threshold should be raised, but if the government decides to raise it, then the proposed time-limit is reasonable, assuming it is strictly adhered to, and that the change doesn't become permanent by default.

Q21. Do you agree with the proposed approach to minimising threshold effects?

Yes. However, the “...planning guidance how local planning authorities can secure contributions for affordable housing where it is apparent that a larger site is being brought forward” is not defined. The measures touched on in paragraph 81 are extremely vague and contain no detail of what the approach might be and therefore cannot be considered a serious and robust approach. We hope that whatever is eventually proposed will be effective, but are worried that there could be loopholes.

Q22: Do you agree with the Government's proposed approach to setting thresholds in rural areas?

Yes, there is no good reason to change the current policy.

Q23: Are there any other ways in which the Government can support SME builders to deliver new homes during the economic recovery period?

- Improved subsidies for clearing up pollution and debris in brownfield sites to make them suitable for housing.

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- Encouragements for the provision of more housing in town and city centres (with appropriate planning controls).
- No post-Brexit restrictions on the use of EU labour in the construction sector.
- Subsidies for housing and associated infrastructure built to high environmental standards, e.g. green roofs, high insulation standards, pedestrian and cycle friendly streets, etc).
- Improved broadband, so that the demand for housing becomes less confined to city commuter belts.
- Clamp down on developers' widespread practice of 'land-banking' – failing to promptly build on land that has obtained planning permission, in the expectation that it will increase in value.

Extension of the Permission in Principle consent regime

Q24: Do you agree that the new Permission in Principle should remove the restriction on major development?

No. Permission in Principle gives developers carte blanche to pursue whatever kind of development they want, without any ability of local people to object or influence the plans. When the local planning authority allocates a certain number of dwellings to a piece of land it does not consider the design, layout, facilities, appearance or other aspects of the development. Permission in Principle would remove the LPA's (and local people's) ability to influence these important features of the development, and would be fundamentally undemocratic.

Q25: Should the new Permission in Principle for major development set any limit on the amount of commercial development (providing housing still occupies the majority of the floorspace of the overall scheme)? Please provide any comments in support of your views.

Yes. If there is no limit on floorspace the ability of LPAs (and local people) to control the mix of housing and commercial space would be removed. This would give unacceptable weight to developers' commercial priorities, at the expense of the priorities of local people.

Q26: Do you agree with our proposal that information requirements for Permission in Principle by application for major development should broadly remain unchanged? If you disagree, what changes would you suggest and why?

No. The information required is far too vague, and in effect allows developers to do whatever they like. Paragraph 101 of the consultation document says "[Permission in Principle must be followed by an application for technical details consent to agree the details of the scheme before the applicant obtains full planning permission and can start work on site](#)", but this reduces important basic decisions about the nature of the development to mere 'technical details' over which local people will have no control, as the developers will already have obtained their permission in principle.

Q27: Should there be an additional height parameter for Permission in Principle? Please provide comments in support of your views.

Yes. Paragraph 106 of the consultation document says "[This would provide greater clarity to the applicant and local planning authority about the scale of housing development that is acceptable for the site,](#)". Without this constraint developers would be free to impose visually obtrusive and inappropriate high-rise blocks on the local residents, without any opportunity for them to object.

Q28: Do you agree that publicity arrangements for Permission in Principle by application should be extended for large developments? If so, should local planning authorities be:

- I. **required to publish a notice in a local newspaper?**
- II. **subject to a general requirement to publicise the application or**
- III. **both?**
- IV. **disagree**

Yes, they should be extended. We agree with **iii**.

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Q29: Do you agree with our proposal for a banded fee structure based on a flat fee per hectare, with a maximum fee cap?

No opinion

Q30: What level of flat fee do you consider appropriate, and why?

No opinion

Q31: Do you agree that any brownfield site that is granted Permission in Principle through the application process should be included in Part 2 of the Brownfield Land Register? If you disagree, please state why.

No opinion

Q32: What guidance would help support applicants and local planning authorities to make decisions about Permission in Principle? Where possible, please set out any areas of guidance you consider are currently lacking and would assist stakeholders.

Not applicable, as we object to the extension of Permission in Principle. If it were to be extended the guidance should be as close to the current requirements for Outline Planning Permission as possible.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

Q33: What costs and benefits do you envisage the proposed scheme would cause? Where you have identified drawbacks, how might these be overcome?

No opinion

Q34: To what extent do you consider landowners and developers are likely to use the proposed measure? Please provide evidence where possible.

Landowners and developers are likely to use the proposed measures in order to increase the value of their land. There is nothing in the proposed measure to ensure that building actually takes place rather than the land being 'banked' by the developer and added to the very substantial land bank already held by developers. The high level of unbuilt planning permissions will not be rectified by the proposed measures.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Q35: In light of the proposals set out in this consultation, are there any direct or indirect impacts in terms of eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations on people who share characteristics protected under the Public Sector Equality Duty?

No opinion