

Cabinet



Date of meeting: 15 September 2020
 Title of Report: **“Planning for the Future” White Paper**
 Lead Member: Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member Strategic Planning and Infrastructure)
 Lead Strategic Director: Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
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 Your Reference: service management/government consultations/PWP/200915Final
 Key Decision: Yes
 Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The report summarises the Government’s proposals set out in the “Planning for the Future” White Paper published on 06 August 2020 which, if carried forward into the necessary primary and secondary legislation, alongside the required changes to accompanying national planning guidance, represent the most radical changes to the planning system since its creation in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The report summarises the implications of the 24 proposals set out in the White Paper for the future planning of Plymouth.

The report concludes that the proposed changes are, from a local authority perspective, profoundly undemocratic; seek to centralise more planning decisions, thereby severely limiting the ability of local people to effectively influence the planning of their city and neighbourhoods, and inappropriately continues to deregulate aspects of planning control which deliver important planning outcomes for the city. The report finds that the Planning White Paper misses a once-in-a-generation opportunity to place the climate emergency at the heart of the English planning system and are likely to lead to increased inequalities across the country through an unfair distribution of resources that favours London, the South East and other higher value areas. Furthermore, although the White Paper includes some interesting ideas, there is a dearth of information on key proposals and so it is unclear whether or not they are even achievable and at what cost. The report provides the framework for the City Council’s detailed response to the consultation on the Planning White Paper, the deadline for which is 29 October 2020.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Instruct the Service Director for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure to incorporate the concerns and objections to the Government's "Planning for the Future" White Paper as set out in the report, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure.

Reason: To ensure that the views of Cabinet are reflected in the final consultation response.

2. Instruct the Leader to raise the concerns and objections to the "Planning for the Future" White Paper set out in the report with local Members of Parliament.

Reason: Given the need for primary and secondary legislation to give effect to a number of proposals contained in the "Planning for the Future" White Paper, to ensure that local Members of Parliament are reflecting the City Council's concerns through any subsequent legislative processes that seek to give effect to the proposals.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Do nothing – this was rejected given the fundamental implications the proposals contained in the "Planning for the Future White Paper" will have on the future planning of Plymouth.

2. Respond differently to the Planning White Paper Proposals – this was rejected as all the proposals have been carefully assessed by officers and the key issues set out in this report reflect the concerns these proposals will have on the future planning of the city.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Several elements of the Planning White Paper are likely to mean that the delivery of the city's vision for Plymouth to be a vibrant waterfront city would be compromised. The proposals could lead to an unfair distribution of infrastructure and affordable housing funding across the country and remove the local tools such as Section 106 Agreements that can be used to support city objectives. Additionally, the proposed deregulation and centralised control which would follow from implementation of the new planning system would significantly erode the capacity of local authorities to determine their own future. Responding to the Planning White Paper gives effect to the City Council's values, most notably in relation to providing strong community leadership. In relation to the priorities of a "growing city" and a "caring council" and the vision and strategy set out in the Plymouth Plan, a number of aspects of the proposals set out in the Planning White Paper are likely to curtail the ability of the City Council and its partners to achieve these desired outcomes for the people of the city. At its meeting on 16 December 2019 the City Council resolved to: "Undertake an early review of the Plymouth Plan with city partners in order to ensure that the plan responds to the climate emergency and the commitments set out in the Climate Emergency Action Plan". That review work is well underway, and although this will be completed ahead of any legislative change that will be necessary to give effect to a number of the proposed reforms within the Planning White Paper, these changes are likely to result in a loss of control for how key local actions to deliver the climate emergency can be implemented. Nevertheless, there will be a continuing need for a single, integrated policy framework like the Plymouth Plan to achieve the desired decarbonisation outcomes for the city.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The Planning White Paper indicates that in developing the final proposals for the new system a “comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector” will be developed. The proposals set out in the Planning White Paper, if taken forward by the Government, are likely to have significant implications for how planning services are funded in the future. Given the significant increase in the scope and role of local plans and design in the planning process, alongside the implied reductions in the need to apply for planning permission arising from the hybrid zonal approach being advocated, it is unlikely that planning application fees will achieve the levels currently budgeted. Because the Planning White Paper has yet to set out the details of precisely how the proposed new system is to be funded, other than to say that planning fees will continue to be set nationally, alongside some other funding options, the longer term financial implications for the future delivery of planning and related functions remain unclear.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The proposals contained in the Planning White Paper are inconsistent with the declaration of a Climate Emergency by the City Council on 18 March 2019 and, due to the lack of detail regarding climate change it contains, are unlikely to therefore assist with the delivery of the existing commitments on moving towards net zero by 2030 set out in the Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan (2019 – 2021) and the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2019: Moving Towards Carbon Neutrality. The Planning White Paper proposals envisage a more targeted and limited role for “a reformed planning system in mitigating and adapting to climate change” – as opposed to addressing the root causes of climate change and proposing proactive measures and integrated policies to assist with decarbonising key areas of human activity; alongside further deregulatory measures to advance “changes with a simpler, effective approach to assessing environmental impacts” which may well constrain the existing low carbon policy framework already established in both the adopted Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan and the Plymouth Plan.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

None directly arising from the report.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Planning White Paper Briefing Report							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Paul Barnard, Service Director for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 09/09/2020											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Mark Coker, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure											
Date approved: 09/09/2020											