

Planning for the Future White Paper

Eaton Bishop Parish Council has submitted responses to the government consultation on the above. The proposed changes are significant and could make a big difference to how development is planned and how we are able to have our views taken into account. All parishioners are encouraged to respond to the consultation as individuals. Consultation closes at 11:45pm on 29th October 2020.

We present here the responses that the Parish Council has submitted. The main consideration in drafting these responses, was the likely impact on Neighbourhood Development Plan and opportunities to strengthen local influence on development proposals.

Eaton Bishop Parish published its NDP in 2017 following a parish referendum in which over 59% of the electorate participated, and in which the NDP received a 93.5% acceptance vote. The Plan was subsequently adopted by Herefordshire Council. We believe that supporting and reinforcing this kind of local democracy is important to our community.

Not all questions were responded to as some were felt to be of less direct relevance to the Parish or to be narrowly technical. The responses are listed below with the consultation questions in **bold**

1. What three words do you associate most with the planning system in England?

Slow, complex, non-transparent

2(a). Do you get involved with planning decisions in your local area? [Yes / No]

YES

3. Our proposals will make it much easier to access plans and contribute your views to planning decisions. How would you like to find out about plans and planning proposals in the future? [Social media / Online news / Newspaper / By post / Other – please specify]

Public Announcement through multiple media including digital

4. What are your top three priorities for planning in your local area? [Building homes for young people / building homes for the homeless / Protection of green spaces / The environment, biodiversity and action on climate change / Increasing the affordability of housing / The design of new homes and places / Supporting the high street / Supporting the local economy / More or better local infrastructure / Protection of existing heritage buildings or areas / Other – please specify]

Supporting the local economy

The design of new homes and places

The environment, biodiversity and action on climate change

5. Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

YES

In principle 'Proposal 1' to categorize land in one of the three categories would bring greater transparency to where and how development will happen. That said what is critical is how this categorization is done. The idea that it be determined centrally by a Whitehall Planning inspector is deeply unappealing. We recognize and understand that land needs to be identified in sufficient quantity to allow for the building of much needed housing in the country. This is best done locally by those who understand the area and will live with the outcome. The proposals do not make clear how NDPs can inform or build into the creation of Local Plans. Setting out clearly how this can happen is critical to attracting broad support for the proposals.

6. Do you agree with our proposals for streamlining the development management content of Local Plans, and setting out general development management policies nationally? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

NOT SURE

It is not clear what space there is in the proposals for local planning authorities and neighbourhoods (NDPs) in producing design codes and how far this would be constrained by the National Planning Policy Framework. For example we would expect NDPs to be able to determine the type (eg house vs apartment) and style (eg estate vs individual) and appearance (eg traditional vs contemporary, external materials used). We understand that there could be national codes to determine issues such as energy efficiency, balance of affordable housing etc

8(a). Do you agree that a standard method for establishing housing requirements (that takes into account constraints) should be introduced? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

NOT SURE

If a new standard method results in a 33% increase in target house building for Herefordshire (as would appear to be the case) then clearly not. This is a rural county with weak links to major urban centres and low population growth ; it is unclear where the occupants of this many houses would come from.

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? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

NOT SURE

We are supportive of this idea subject to their being proper and effective local involvement in the determination of Growth Areas in the Local Plan.

9(b). Do you agree with our proposals above for the consent arrangements for Renewal and Protected areas? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

NOT SURE

We are supportive of this idea subject to their being proper involvement of local communities (through the NDP) in determining the type, style and appearance of development.

10. Do you agree with our proposals to make decision-making faster and more certain? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

YES

Providing clear timescales and transparent rules against which planning decision are made would be an improvement

11. Do you agree with our proposals for accessible, web-based Local Plans? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

YES

Providing transparent and accessible plans must be matched with a clear and impactful process for local communities (through their NDPs) and individuals to shape the local plan. Without this, such transparency will breed frustration and cynicism rather than engagement and ownership of Local Plans.

12. Do you agree with our proposals for a 30 month statutory timescale for the production of Local Plans? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

YES

Ensuring speedy production of local plans will help make sure they are relevant. Having said this, there are important provisos. Firstly, local councils need to be equipped and funded to manage such a process and Secondly there needs to be adequate time and resource for local communities and individuals to review and contribute constructively to the Local Plan. Time for community consultation should be extended significantly to create the opportunity for proper engagement and ensure the resulting plan has broad support. Making the time too short is likely to produce little proper consideration, cynicism and knee-jerk rejection of plans.

13(a). Do you agree that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

YES

We have a positive experience of developing an NDP and feel very strongly that this needs to remain and be strengthened as a key component of the revised arrangements. This reinforces the government's stated objective of democratizing the planning process, i.e implementing change *'That gives you a greater say over what gets built in your community'*.

Eaton Bishop Parish published its NDP in 2017 following a parish referendum in which over 59% of the electorate participated, and in which the NDP received a 93.5% acceptance vote.

The Plan was subsequently adopted by Herefordshire Council. Supporting and reinforcing this kind of local democracy is critical to creating and maintaining confidence in the planning process.

Our NDP is comprehensive, identifying clear settlement boundaries and sites for development within the Parish as well as sites of historical importance to be preserved and green spaces to be protected. It covers both the development of housing and the encouragement of rural business. It provides design guidance, flood risk management guidance and environmental protection guidance.

We believe that its thoroughness and widespread acceptance by parishioners make it a good model for engaging all people locally in the development of our built environment.

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 process of developing the NDP was lengthy, time consuming and expensive. Had we been provided with user friendly and effective digital tools, no doubt these important practicalities could have been improved, including making it easier for parishioners to access information and input during the development of the plan. That said, we need to ensure that technology is the tool to enable a democratic process and not an end in its own right or simply to facilitate data collection and comparison.

Ensuring a democratic process in the development of NDPs and subsequently Local Plans is critical to representing community preferences and ensuring '*local democracy will now be enhanced by technology and transparency*'.

15. What do you think about the design of new development that has happened recently in your area? [Not sure or indifferent / Beautiful and/or well-designed / Ugly and/ or poorly-designed / There hasn't been any / Other – please specify]

Well designed

16. Sustainability is at the heart of our proposals. What is your priority for sustainability in your area? [Less reliance on cars / More green and open spaces / Energy efficiency of new buildings / More trees / Other – please specify]

Energy efficiency of new buildings

Improvement of local infrastructure ; waste water treatment, Schools, Doctor's surgeries, public transport

21. When new development happens in your area, what is your priority for what comes with it? [More affordable housing / More or better infrastructure (such as transport, schools, health provision) / Design of new buildings / More shops and/or employment space / Green space / Don't know / Other – please specify]

Design of new buildings

Better infrastructure; waste water treatment, Schools, Doctor's surgeries, public transport

22(c). 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? [Same amount overall / More value / Less value / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

MORE VALUE

As a small rural community, we have little local infrastructure. This is exacerbated by a lack of affordable public transport. Use of existing infrastructure levies is not transparent to us and any change in approach to infrastructure levies should include enabling local communities to understand how much is raised from each development and how the funds are being deployed.

15th October 2020.