

Council
23 November 2020

Amendment: Response to Planning Reform Government White Paper

Proposer: Councillor Catherine Gray

Seconder: Councillor Holly Ramsey

Note: Deletions are indicated with a strikethrough and insertions with an underline

Council notes:

- The Government's extension of Permitted Development Rights and the recent publication of a white paper, Planning for the Future, on 6 August 2020, which set out proposals to reform the planning process.
- That the vast majority of planning applications are given the go-ahead by local authority planning committees, with Sutton granting on average 79% of applications.
- That research by the Local Government Association has said that there are existing planning permissions for more than one million homes that have not yet been started.

Council further notes:

- The Royal Institute for British Architects called the proposals 'shameful and which will do almost nothing to guarantee delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes'. RIBA also said that proposals could lead to the next generation of slum housing.
- The reforms are opposed by the all-party Local Government Association.

Council is concerned that the proposals seek to:

1. Reduce or remove the right of Sutton residents to object to applications near them.
2. Grant automatic rights for developers to build on land areas allocated as 'for growth'.
3. Remove section 106 payments for infrastructure in Sutton and their replacement with a national levy.
4. Override our current resident-supported Local Plan that seeks to protect the local suburban character and green space in Sutton whilst directing additional growth to town and district centres.
5. Impose top-down housing targets calculated by an arbitrary algorithm requiring a 263% increase on Sutton's Local Plan annual housing delivery targets
6. Raise the threshold for affordable housing resulting in fewer affordable homes being delivered.
7. Diminish the role of Local Planning Authorities, planning committee members and ward councillors.

Council believes:

1. We need housing for local people, especially affordable housing.
2. That existing planning procedures allow for local democratic control over future development and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them.
3. That proposals for automatic rights to build in 'growth' areas and increased permitted development rights risk unregulated growth and unsustainable communities.
4. That local communities must be in the driving seat on shaping the future of their communities and local determination of the planning framework, and that planning applications play an important part in this process.
5. In the principles behind the 2011 Localism Act and the importance of Neighbourhood Plans.
6. Top-down imposed housing targets will fail to address local need, take no account of the supporting infrastructure requirements and will require concreting over the majority of our borough resulting in the character of individual neighbourhoods - which is the reason many residents live in Sutton - being lost forever.

Council calls on the Government to reform its current rules on development to give local authorities more powers to:

- Challenge unrealistic targets.
- Insist on improved infrastructure with new developments.
- Challenge viability assessments that allow developers to get away without providing adequate affordable housing for local people.
- Scrap permitted development rights that lead to substandard homes being built.
- Require new development to meet high sustainability standards.
- Prevent loss of biodiversity, threatening species of fauna, insects and other wildlife.

Council recognises:

1. The representations already made by Elliot Colburn MP and Paul Scully MP in numerous meetings with and in writing to MHCLG ministers, conveying concerns of both borough's Members of Parliament and urging the government to consider changes to planning legislation that could reduce the quality of housing and the local community's ability to influence the outcome of planning applications.
2. That the legislation is in early stages, as evidenced by the Statutory Instrument that was voted on in Parliament on 30th September, and that it will continue to evolve as a result of the ongoing legislative process.

Council resolves to:

1. Highlight its concerns over these proposals with the public and local residents.
2. Write to Support both of the Borough's Members of Parliament, in their representations to Government in expressing concerns with the current proposals, urging them to oppose these proposals and to circulate their replies to all councillors.
3. Discuss and debate further the finalised Government proposals at the appropriate Council committee following the presentation of a bill before Parliament.