



Sustainable Growth Board
Planning White Paper Workshop, 8 July 2020
Meeting notes

Purpose of the workshop: to share perspectives around the potential themes of the Planning White Paper (as outlined in [Planning for the Future](#)), overlaid with existing ADEPT policy positions to help inform the ADEPT response.

Theme 1: Supporting communities to deliver more homes for local people

- How will the Planning White Paper reflect the 'new normal' in terms of spatial patterns of distribution?
- In general, the norm for planned growth seems to follow a pattern of extension to settlements. Could a more dispersed pattern of growth be considered post-COVID?
- Will COVID-19 impacts result in a new era for place-making?
- There is going to be a transformational change in how we work and travel in post-COVID world needs to be considered by Government. We need a holistic, place-based approach. The changes being mooted are in danger of undermining further trust in the planning system as what people see on the ground is different due to PDR. The future reputation of the planning system should be paramount.
- New housing standards and what to expect in relation to live/workspace.
- Time to revisit the greenbelt – perhaps look at these as useable green space / parks for people rather than areas which constrain development. Or link to the PROW to create walk, cycle, commuter routes.
- Retrofitting office/workspace in existing housing stock. Do we have an under occupancy crisis?
- Digital connectivity will be key.
- Land issues around viability and deliverability - Trust in planning eroded by concessions to S106 etc and residents then not getting the scheme they expected.
- The transfer of commercial space to residential (i.e. permitted development) conflicts with the notion of well-designed homes / places. Concerns over lack of control, all our fault and still left bearing the brunt of making quick decisions with insufficient funds.
- No clarity from DfT on infrastructure – and yet transport and connectivity is key. COVID-19 has brought forward the demise of bus public transport by 10 years – what does this mean for mass, sustainable travel to work / school, etc?
- Nervousness around role of private sector in processing planning applications conflicting with the democratic nature of planning.
- Reforming / increasing planning fees does not increase the number of town planners – recruitment is a significant issue for LPAs. Developers really appreciate a good service which can only be provided if resource is there.
- Need to be careful the reforms don't lead to LPAs losing significant statutory fees.
- There is a real tension within the emerging Government thinking and so any response needs to seek to address those concerns about the role of the planning system, but in more a more democratic, place-based way rather than further deregulation.

Theme 2: Helping first time buyers onto the housing ladder

- How will First Homes Scheme to assist first time buyers affect viability? A new product in the market will create uncertainty for investors as occurred with Starter Homes.
- What is the model and how will it work? Is the product capable of receiving mortgage lender support?
- Danger that social rented products will be squeezed out for funding.
- Potential to add another complication, particularly where sites have already been through a Local Plan process. Puts all other mitigations at risk.
- Previous schemes have often been complex and difficult for public to understand.
- Definitions of 'affordable housing' too diverse.
- Issues around climate change not highlighted.

Theme 3: Creating beautiful, sustainable places

- General comment that achieving net zero doesn't jump out across the 5 themes.
- Why are there are no 'net zero' requirements attached to HIF / infrastructure budgets?
- Proposed Future Homes Standard will potentially remove local variation in house standards, but it's too late to wait until 2025 for implementation – by then another 1 million homes will have been built. The Future Homes Standard is already very weak in terms of the wider climate emergency agenda.
- Links to local energy generation / decentralised (energy networks).
- Don't need any more pilots (ref to net zero development proposed for Toton, E Midlands) – need to crack on.
- Design process – initiatives soon tarnish, future maintenance is an issue that needs consideration. As much effort needs to be focused on place keeping as it is place making.
- No mention of new technologies - off site construction etc.
- Need for a radical review of funding models e.g. WebTag to reflect design and net zero considerations.
- Town planning is a key part of the development process - key profession providing land supply and shaping the quality of what gets built. And protects society against inappropriate development.
- Potential for greater use of development corporations.
- Need a multi-benefit approach to Natural infrastructure which should be seen as a key part of whole systems approach (it's not just about tree-lined streets). Where does adaptation and resilience occur - flood, heat, drought - natural shading, orientation etc - this is where good use of natural capital could provide multiple benefits.
- Integrated Natural Capital Plans are needed to understand how the environment needs to be managed and developed. Management of water flows through a catchment are key. Consultees will respond from their perspective but there needs to be integrated.
- Nature based solutions - for flood management and env management - wider than trees. And engineering and locally maintaining them definitely need to be part of design.
- Stat cons - EA, NE etc - part of capacity. Good engagement across whole planning community with communities can help de-risk and speed up process. Helps if feels to communities the development will contribute to beautiful places.
- Govt needs to sort out part L of the Building Regs as a priority and get a grip of the carbon factor used in the calcs and allow LPAs to require on site or near site renewables based on kWh not CO2 as it has less currency as the grid is decarbonised.
- We need to use highways adoption standards to drive the right behaviour, commuted sums need to incentivise good rather than bad. We have to find ways to make our streets greener.

- Trees can be designed in, but they need to be designed by designers that understand how to do this - strengthened building foundations, appropriate tree species, service trenches etc.
- Engagement with Public Health to improve green infrastructure and access to green space to improve mental and physical health. In dense urban areas, we need to be building more green space in to counter air quality issues and making sure health and well-being is seen as a priority.

Theme 4: Ensuring affordable, safe, and secure housing for all

- Basic need of public health is to have access to decent housing.
- Government needs to change view of social housing and local authority housing.
- Older persons housing – should provide choice and meet needs / be adaptable.
- Build it ourselves. Encourage/provide a much enhanced rented sector with safe, secure tenancies and controlled rents.
- The Livewell Accreditation scheme will be launched in Chelmsford on 22 July. This is something all the Essex local authorities are supporting – see <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/supplementary-guidance/livewell-development-accreditation/>
- Public health concerned about fuel poverty/ cold damp homes - need to support retro fitting/ good design of new homes for low carbon.
- Providing affordable housing is as important as other forms of infrastructure to meet local needs so should be included as part of CIL to cut the time and money spent negotiating to provide a realistic contribution from each site.
- Challenge back into the planning profession – how to join it all up, it's not just about building houses, it's about building places. There is an opportunity to reimagine the role of housing which is decent, digital, decarbonised and dynamic.

Theme 5: Laying the foundations for affordable, green and beautiful homes for everyone

- There is a fundamental omission from the emerging thinking about the central role local authorities can and should play with regard to the leadership of place.
- What is Government's view on provision of local housing?
- S151 risk appetite can be a factor.
- Bringing together all areas and functions should be clear.
- Focus on delivery of joined up solutions.

AOB

- ADEPT need to form a stance on:
 - philosophy of Planning White Paper
 - the green belt
 - Further role out of permitted development (also prior notification)
 - Zonal planning
 - Land value capture
- Zoning need taxation to work to deliver infrastructure, if not done properly could represent worst possible scenario. Zoning also runs counter to providing flexibility of having different land uses within areas. It would run counter to creating vibrant multiple land uses in town centres for example.
- If Government does de-regulate – how can we make it work best to deliver sustainable places? Role of Local Plan to shape places will be critical - perhaps we need to emphasise spatial plans across strategic boundaries
- ADEPT needs to think about language used in response
- Further work needed on the role of town centres post-COVID.