



**Winnersh
Parish
Council**

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister for Housing, Communities
& Local Government
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By email to Robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk

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Dear Sir,

Planning for the Future White Paper consultation

Winnersh Parish Council has considered the white paper about ‘Planning for the Future’ and whilst a collective response was made in September on behalf of all 17 Town and Parish Council’s in the Wokingham area, we make the following additional comments.

The aforementioned letter only focused on one issue that the proposals, if adopted by government, would impact on the area by doubling the number of houses built per annum across the area covered by Wokingham Borough. That would see the number of houses built per year increase from circa 800 to 1,600.

Winnersh Parish Council believes that the people living in the local area are best placed to make sure planning decisions shape our communities for the better. The planning reforms will strip away local people’s ability to shape those decisions and these proposals could be seen as a developer’s charter.

Around nine out of ten planning proposals are approved nationwide, and 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. Therefore, it appears not to be the planning system that is causing problems.

Areas of land would be placed into one of three zones, ‘Growth areas’, ‘renewal areas’ and ‘protected areas’ such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and Local Wildlife sites. To incorporate the housing numbers that have been calculated for Wokingham Borough, large areas will be designated as ‘Growth areas’ within these proposals as they cannot be protected under the proposals designation. This will mean that these areas are given presumed outline planning permission for development. Therefore, there would be no say for residents, the Parish Council, or the Planning Authority.

The existing planning procedures, as currently administered by our local Planning Authority, Wokingham Borough Council, allow for local democratic control over future development, and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them. Some of this should still be available when Wokingham decide what they want in the Growth, Renewal and Protected areas for which Local

Design Codes would apply. Some parish councils that already have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan are now writing Local Design Codes for their area. Compliance with these codes will give detailed consent in Growth Areas and could lead to consent in Renewal Areas. What people will not have a say in is housing numbers.

The proposals allow for automatic planning permission for two-storey extensions on houses under the permitted development rule. The government is requested to rule that any extensions must comply with the Local Design Codes otherwise the whole drive of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission will be undermined.

Across the whole of England these proposals would reduce the ability to provide affordable and social housing as well as the inability to fund new infrastructure.

The Planning White Paper will do nothing to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing. The LGA has estimated that it would reduce the amount of affordable housing by 50%. This has been partly done by taking 25% of the allocation as subsidised housing to buy, taking them out of the reach of many people, but also by raising the threshold for the size of site on which affordable housing can be required to 40 or 50 houses (both figures are used), meaning that many small sites will no longer provide any affordable housing or financial contribution. It is claimed to be improving affordability but in fact it is reducing it.

The changes weaken our ability to tackle the climate emergency that we are now in. The proposals will undermine the Climate Emergency that we all now face and put further pressure on green fields and wildlife that will be at risk, as much of the area is not designated as 'protected' in the proposals. The creation of Growth Areas, which will be previously undeveloped, will indeed take up land which is essential for future food production and for combating global warming. It would be far more sensible to concentrate on brownfield sites. In addition, the increased permitted development rights risk unregulated growth and unsustainable communities. We need to ensure that permitted developments comply with local design codes that could be an improvement over the present situation.

The removal of section 106 payments for infrastructure and their replacement with a national levy, and the timing for that funding, is of considerable concern as this could lead to many areas being unfairly treated and there is no guidance on how this will work for large sites that are built in phases and over several years.

In conclusion, Winnersh Parish Council strongly objects to the proposals which do nothing to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing, undermine our ability to tackle the Climate Emergency and remove the local community from shaping the future of their area.

Yours faithfully

Philip Stoneman
Clerk to Winnersh Parish Council