

Residents Consultative Panel Workshop on:

The Government's White Paper 'Planning for The Future'

Date: 8th October 2020; Venue: Zoom



FEEDBACK

Questions:

The following questions were asked during the Q & A session and in the breakout sessions.

Question	Answer
What is meant by front ended consultation in the context of The White Paper?	The proposal is that most consultation will occur when a Local Plan is written, rather than when a planning application is submitted. If the application meets the Local Plan policies, it will receive outline permission - with only detailed issued being considered (and with reduced consultation).
Will the new system allow for Local Planning Authorities to determine the zonal areas - having regard to local context - or is that set?	Yes - the Local Plan will identify the zones but will be guided by national policy on the types of land which should be in each.
Will planning within growth areas, if falling within a predefined design of the building/code, be given automatic permission unless an objection is received?	That is broadly the proposal; developments will be given outline permission (for land use, height, density) and the detailed elements will then be subject to more scrutiny. Objections won't prevent the outline permission, if it is in accordance with the adopted Plan.

Question	Answer
How often do Local Plans get updated?	The current requirement is that they should be reviewed every 5 years (Councils can conclude, following the review, that no update is required and publish their reasons). The Consultation proposes this approach continues.
With Royal Docks likely being predominantly within the 'Growth' zone, and in the absence of neighbourhood plans, how does the authority propose to obtain/encourage the input of those most likely to be affected?	<p>The White Paper emphasises that Neighbourhood Plans will still have an important role in planning policy and it is suggested they could also help develop design codes for local areas.</p> <p>As well as supporting Neighbourhood Plans, the Council is committed to working with all areas and neighbourhoods to develop planning policy for their area – through future Local Plans and through supplementary planning documents like the Opportunity Area Planning Framework that is being written for the Royal Docks and Becton by the Mayor of London, alongside the Council.</p>
There has been a lot of concern in the press and from professionals that this is a charter for poor standards of building. Where in the plans allows that – i.e. what has been removed?	<p>We are also concerned that proposals in the White Paper may amount to a watering down of the importance of professional and community scrutiny of development proposals at the application stage, and that a more centralised national policy framework may not allow for more ambitious local policies to take shape (e.g. energy efficiency standards above those imposed nationally).</p> <p>There is also concern about the implied potential for design codes and/or pattern books to become a new form of permitted development right. There is substantial critical evidence of the poor outcomes resulting from the current residential permitted development rights and we would not want to see an expansion of this. Further, officers' experience with use of design codes indicates that, while there is positive potential for these to transparently lay out key local design requirements, they cannot cover all possible development scenarios and there is an ongoing need to flexibly assess proposals on a case by case basis.</p>
Is there something about Viability in the white paper?	<p>The White Paper suggests that viability assessments for individual schemes as all developments will pay the same Infrastructure Levy.</p> <p>They also suggest that testing viability of policies should be removed and replaced by a simplified 'sustainable development' test. It says that Local Plans will still need to prove they are deliverable and won't prevent housing targets from being met. In the current system viability assessments are one way this is demonstrated. It is unclear how the Government proposes that this is replaced.</p>
With the 106, would it be good to review the amount after say 2 years? To ensure a fair amount is paid.	In London, in the current planning system, if a housing scheme cannot provide the required level of affordable housing when it is permitted, there is a review of the contributions as it is built out. If the value of the development has increased from the value estimated at permission stage, the developer must contribute more towards affordable housing.

Question	Answer
	In the system proposed under the White Paper, the required Infrastructure Payment will be calculated after the development is completed and based on final values.
Does the White Paper prevent schemes under 40/50 units from providing affordable housing?	This proposal was included in a separate Government consultation which was launched at the same time as the White Paper but closed at the end of September. The Council has responded to this consultation stating our strong objection to this proposal due to the impact this would have to reduce the amount of affordable housing (including social housing) delivered in the borough.
Specific request on Regeneration scheme in Canning Town and Custom House.	Query directed to the Regeneration team – noting that any future proposal would have to meet the criteria in the adopted Local Plan.
Can planning policies require the use of solar panels?	Yes, our current planning policies require developments to either generate as much energy as they will use by on-site renewable forms (solar panels, air source heat pumps etc.) or provide a payment towards a project which will reduce carbon emissions elsewhere in the borough. This is included in the White Paper but the standards in Newham (and across London) are already higher than those proposed in the White Paper.

Feedback from Presentation Q&A session:

Discussion 1: What is your current experience of the planning system and how could it be improved?	Discussion 2: What is positive and negative about the proposals under Pillar 1?	Discussion 3: What is positive and negative about the proposals under Pillar 2?	Discussion 4: What is positive and negative about the proposals under Pillar 3?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations fail because of the method of consultation. The regular use of remote consultation e.g. notices leaflets etc. is always destined to fail due to a variety of factors; the only consultation that gets a truly accurate figure is boots on the ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning applications need to be swift, and within the local street scene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautification and street scene, often the designers have a very different idea on usable space than residents, perfect example is the royal docks quay side, which are fantastic open spaces but not very usable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rule of thumb, any affordable house built elsewhere, needs to be built before the main development (there is a history of these not being built). This can apply on

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<p>door knocking and explaining the proposal and taking direct feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of big developments have limited consultation, we need an honest and open consultation that might need a code of practice. • Mutual aid groups worked really well as part of the Covid response – can we use those groups to engage with residents? • We should ask the Council planners (those working for the council looking to build in Newham) what they need and how to change the planning process for the better. 			<p>site or offsite but bigger risk if offsite or only provide money.</p>

Feedback from breakout sessions:

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<p>Breakout group 1</p> <p>Facilitators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor Fiaz • Ellie Kuper • Thomas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need a mixture of consultation methods – lampposts and digital methods – can't replace one with the other. Need to be cautious, as online can be a minefield (and misleading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: I think the front-loaded consultation on zones would be good and I think residents would feel involved. Trade-off to get a simpler planning process - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative: Need to acknowledge the gap between ideas to what happens when we start building. What is decided at plan making stage may not come out in reality on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: A single levy could benefit development certainty and this will benefit Newham as it can be spent on infrastructure

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naomi Pomfret 	<p>information can spread fast). Not everyone has access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need a mix of digital and face to face. Consultation is the biggest issue and potentially the easiest to fix. Pre-engaged plan will be key. People only realise a change because of a lamp post note. Letters go in the bin. If frontloaded, there are potentially huge advantage. If not done properly there will be protests. People will feel left out. Consultation needs to be done right first time. Improve: Someone to talk to. Currently it is difficult to access the Council. Lack of knowledge or interest or consultation around planning. Local Plan consultation - people glaze over. Need to widen participation - move away from niche of the usual people who get involved - everyone needs to be able to understand and be excited. 	<p>but we need to deliver the homes we need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive: Zones a good idea - could increase community engagement. One big hit to engage. Details need to be dealt with still on a case by case basis. I think the consultation process should be Councillor-led as they are the eyes and ears on the street and engage with the residents in their own areas. Negative: Mandatory huge housing targets and reduced consultation at application stage – is scary! Loss of local democracy and local input and oversight. Negative: The zones lack subtlety - categorisation in blocks. Built environment is complex – can't neatly put places in different zones. The categories are too rigid 	<p>the ground (trees example given).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative: Who will set the criteria for beauty? Negative: I find the concept of 'beauty' very odd in this context. It's a very subjective concept - famously in the eye of the beholder. 'Well -designed' would hopefully have more consensus. Concern - uniform street - where does it allow for creativity and flexibility. Yes to beauty, but will it stifle creativity? Negative: There won't be universal agreement on what design codes should be - especially if very detailed and for people's existing homes. Positive: 'Tree lined' is obviously highly desirable, but needs very careful detail paid to suitable paving, or there are 	<p>and development will happen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive: It will benefit smaller developers as simpler - easier to calculate and for developers to comply with Positive: could mean more homes and money for affordable housing – as no threshold (e.g. 10 homes), won't have developers building up to the threshold. Positive: more flexibility, including to secure loans and what it can be spent on. Affordable housing / social housing - not the same. Need more social housing. Need to make sure social housing is developed. Negative: The infrastructure spending may not occur where development is

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning language is impenetrable. Needs translating – can we learn from Public Health and provide clear, understandable communication so everyone can understand and get involved? • Neighbourhood Planning: The time this takes needs to be acknowledged – for residents and the Council. Needs to be a partnership, collaboration between residents and the Council – i.e. residents’ views and experience, but based on Local Plan. Missed opportunity when neighbourhood planning not seen as a partnership. • Need to make the Local Plan process inventive and come alive for residents and speak to their lives and experiences. Need to be creatively in our methods, for example use cultural projects. Planning and design - exciting interface. Needs to value our heritage and the lived experience of our diverse resident population. Recognise cultural 	<p>- can an area ever be more than one thing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative: Need to plan for the future, not for current circumstances. i.e. might want to protect some greenspace within a growth zone. • I think there needs to be a mix between categories, case by case means the developers will dodge them. • Positive: I agree there needs to be a big push on getting rid of the three-year period following planning permission where developers can just sit on land or sell it on so that communities have boarded up areas for long periods. 	<p>accidents waiting to happen.</p>	<p>happening. These reforms make it even more difficult to see where the funds spent. S106 you knew spend was in the area / was to offset the impact of development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative: there is limited oversight to make sure money is spent where it is needed / in local areas where growth happens.

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	richness - how we think about our spaces.			
Breakout group 2 Facilitators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Blaney • Nick Fenwick • James Scantlebury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: Likes aspect that change can occur at planning stage. • No experience of the planning system - first time with it. • Policy can sometimes be against what residents want to see in their local area (increased parking for example). • Positive: Good that residents can submit feedback on current "live" applications - and improve them. • Improvement: People feeding early on - more consultation at the beginning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: Right approach with zoning. • Positive: Agree with existing consultation process – good experience with Local Plan. • What will be great will be for the residents/ local people to consult on what are needed, and then the proposals/whatever that are democratically decided are put out to developers. • Digital processes can be good and bad - can disenfranchise poorest residents without technology. As with “internet school” with Covid19. • Digital consultation process - a lot of interested people are excluded. I see the same happening with post-Covid engagements. • Negative: If ‘Renewal’ would represent most of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity in existing neighbourhoods character is definitely a positive with design • Negative: Not in favour of a National Design Code – what another area in the UK wants might not be what Newham wants. • Will design codes become stale and inhibit creativity and progressive, interesting and imaginative design? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: On face of it, looks good – simple to understand. • Query about pot of money - where does it get spent? Visibility of where the money goes. • Negative: Worried about effect on affordable housing numbers without a requirement to deliver on site. • Will a national rate it affect the negotiation of levies at local level? If yes, it's problematic. • Officers are very good at extracting contributions from developers (affordable housing/infrastructure etc.). Current system is bargaining chip - worried about losing out without ability to negotiate.

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		<p>borough - anxiety and concern for residents regarding development occurring through the "prior approval" process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative: Plan "set in stone" (i.e. rules based) – events like Covid19, Grenfell etc. impact and change things. Currently Councillors and residents can input at application stage to depart from Plan on case by case basis. • Unable to modify/change things when Plan is stuck? • No neighbourhood plans yet - where will be the input from residents? Especially in new areas of Royal Docks where no residents currently reside. • Would rather have Councillors have a say in a local matter at application stage – can currently lobby local representatives for/against proposals. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative: Affordable housing threshold (from 10 to 50) - less affordable housing as a result?

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<p>Breakout group 3</p> <p>Facilitators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Tripp • Hannah Richards • Matt Newby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities are not clear on what is being built or proposed to be built in their area. More publicly available access to data around scheme status and progress (including after consent). • Notification process currently not hugely effective - Improve processes around notification – better local information (from Council and applicants) both physically and digitally. • Engagement methods to reflect what has worked well before with communities – not just digital. • To build local confidence and continuity in the planning system ensure Planning [DM] and Enforcement work effectively together. • Not confident the planning system is delivering genuinely affordable housing for local residents. Current products are excluding communities’ ability to get a home. Needs to reflect local incomes/circumstance (emphasis on local need). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: General support for more accessible and digital maps – helpful if it can present data following consent [better understanding of what's going up and where] • Positive: Housing targets are a good idea but being able to achieve the targets is more important • Positive: Fast track system would help small businesses get to consent • Negative: Zonal approach raised concerns around lack of engagement at application stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: Historically, resident input on drawing up design guides to reflect local character/ context has been positive (e.g. Woodgrange) and would be welcomed. • Local design guides are positive, but concern over imposing blanket design guides and losing ability to respond to local context (history, local opinion, surroundings, changes in environment). • Danger that design codes would reduce innovation and ability to absorb particular area’s uniqueness/architecture. • Heritage is seen as a key priority for the community as it gives people a sense of place/belonging - a balance is required in reform between innovation and recognition of heritage, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community benefits from existing as well as the proposed Infrastructure Levy should be more clearly communicated or illustrated on map – lack of knowledge/access to information around how developer money is spent locally for individual schemes. • Negative: A National rate would be more challenging and not reflect London/LBN context - can’t just be rolled out. • What is the process for showing communities where Infrastructure Levy is spent? Propose to increase the accountability for how developers spend their money – more upfront about where the money from development is spent.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents aware of tight resources/funding in the Council and for LPAs in present climate - can the community provide supporting info about area. • Public Access (website) application information hard to find/read and very difficult to obtain key information – more upfront, simpler layout, and clarity around key topics from emerging and consented schemes. • Engagement at application stage is really important to scrutinise development and take residents on the planning ‘journey’ and should be maintained in the system. Engagement at the Local Plan stage is also welcomed to help shape policy and plans. • Resident comments on plans and applications is important. If engagement is to be frontloaded to Local Plan stage, plans need to be reviewed more regularly for resident input and updates to reflect recent issues/shape area. 		<p>including those outside of ‘Protect’ areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the reform seeks to ensure affordable housing is delivered through the levy and/or onsite is critical and a priority for the community. • Negative: A higher threshold for requiring affordable housing delivery onsite (40-50 units) would create a culture of threshold ‘ducking’ – off-site payment is not the answer.