

Government White Paper: Planning for the Future, August 2020

Response from Monks Kirby Parish Council – 18th September 2020

Monks Kirby Parish Council has reviewed this document and would like to make the following initial points:

- We acknowledge the need to update the current planning system to meet the requirements of the 21st century; however, we are not convinced of the need for the wholesale change proposed in this white paper. The current system does not seem so broken as to need a complete revolution
- We acknowledge that the current 'case by case' judgement used to determine planning applications has some flaws but we struggle to see (without the necessary detail) how a rule based system would operate without having a very complex (and therefore unwieldy) set of rules that actually serve to centralise the system
- As a Parish Council we are extremely concerned that the local input to planning, including consultation at all levels of local government, as determined by the 2012 Localism Bill must be maintained to ensure a significant level of local democracy and that, whilst in places the white paper does acknowledge Neighbourhood Plans etc, the direction of travel is towards centralisation, not localism. It is crucial to maintain local input by full consultation on planning applications
- We are concerned that the three new categories of Growth, Renewal and Protected, need much more detail before we can make an informed judgement, for example it is not stated what sort of proportions of the country would be allocated to each category and urban/sub-urban sprawl must be avoided. It is vital that these categories are not further collapsed at any stage as insufficient planning control could lead to insufficiently controlled development. It will also be vital that the Protected category has sufficient control/governance to look after the interests of rural areas (eg green belt, green spaces) and that changes cannot be made without full community and local Government involvement ie localism, not central control
- We would support the aim of 'beauty and building design codes' but are concerned that this section is largely aspirational and lacks both definition and objectivity. It could lead towards more standardisation and less local input to meet local needs
- We support the transition to a planning system based on up to date digital systems/platforms but have concerns that this level of technology is not accessible to all and its exclusive use would therefore deprive some sections of the population of participation. The current broader forms of communication must continue.
- We support the need for speed and consistency in the planning system but strongly believe this must not compromise the consultation fundamental to democracy that underpins what is 'special' in local communities

In summary, we are very concerned that whilst it is a significant sized document, it contains little detail of how the new system will really work. The devil is in the detail and until that detail is available, it is difficult to comment further on the White Paper. However, Monks Kirby Parish Council also notes that the associated White Paper: *Changes to the Current Planning System*, provides some additional detail on several points and urges that these details be carried over beyond the interim period and into *Planning for the Future*.