**White Paper: Planning for the Future**

**Hawthorn Parish Council’s response as agreed at the Monthly Meeting held on October 19th, 2020**

The Planning for the Future White Paper is proposing far-reaching changes to the existing planning system. Whilst it includes some positive ideas such as streamlining applications, developer contributions and improving access to decision-making by the community with more digitisation and in addition reducing the current drawn-out Local Plan process, these are completely offset by the following, as shown below which will have a detrimental effect on local communities.

1. **Housing targets**

The imposition of housing targets by central government removes decision-making from local authorities and reduces the role and influence of locally elected members and their communities.

1. **Approval system**

The reforms whilst facilitating a much simpler and quicker approval system heavily favours the developer. The current requirements for reports and assessments which are currently required to ensure the site is appropriate, that the NPPF is followed and full consultation has taken place are essential. Hawthorn Parish Council strongly oppose these changes.

1. **S106**

A key proposal of the paper is in simplifying the collection of developer contributions. Section 106 agreements will be abandoned whilst the existing Community Infrastructure Levy will become a nationally set levy on development value. This is not appropriate when the amount of infrastructure needed for different developments can vary considerably throughout the country and does not take into account the different needs of different regions and areas.

In summary Hawthorn Parish Council feels that these proposals contained in the White Paper are significantly worse than the existing system. They will impose top-down government targets, alienate local involvement and participation, and sacrifice proper planning controls simply to speed up housing development.

A great many planning applications will be automatically granted and therefore areas such as "protected" and "green belt" will fall under the heading of "growth area".  Consequently because of the so-called need for many more houses to be built, smaller villages will eventually lose their identity because the green belt and protected areas will become eradicated.

It is essential that the views and opinions of Town and Parish Councils are heard in any planning applications which could affect their immediate area.

**Questions : Those which the Parish Council had views are included.**

1. **What three words do you associate most with the planning system in England?**

Not community led

**2. Do you get involved with planning decisions in your local area?**

Yes, we are a Parish Council and are consulted on planning applications in our parish by Durham County Council. We follow the weekly lists of new applications, conduct site visits and discuss every month.

**3. Our proposals will make it much easier to access plans and contribute your views to planning decisions. How would you like to find out about plans and planning proposals in the future?**

We already receive details of planning applications through Durham County Council and on wider planning issues from the County Durham Association of Local Councils. We find this to be satisfactory.

**4. What are your top three priorities for planning in your local area?**

1. Ensuring all development is sympathetic and in keeping with a small, rural village.
2. Ensuring any future development is ‘infill’ rather than new , large estates
3. Ensuring the character of the village is retained.

**5. Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals?**

Yes, Local Plans should be simplified and completed in a short timeframe.

**22(a). Should the Government replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning obligations with a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy, which is charged as a fixed proportion of development value above a set threshold?**

Yes: There should be a simplification of developer contributions. It should be fixed at the value at the point of sale value not from the date of planning approval, otherwise developers have no incentive to deliver in a falling market and an option to delay in a rising market.

**22(b). Should the Infrastructure Levy rates be set nationally at a single rate, set nationally at an area-specific rate, or set locally?**

Locally, with reference to a national scale