

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET**  
**26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2007****'Planning for a Sustainable Future' – White Paper Consultation**  
**by Department of Communities and Local Government**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:</b>	A Better Environment
<b>CORPORATE PLAN THEME:</b>	Managing The Local Environment
<b>KEY PRIORITY:</b>	Forward Planning
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Stephen Clee
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
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<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – Proposed response to consultation questions

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for a proposed response to the Communities and Local Government White Paper Consultation 'Planning for a Sustainable Future'

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE** to:

- 2.1 **Approve the proposed response to the White Paper**
- 2.2 **Authorise the Head of Planning, Health and Environment to submit the Council's response to Communities and Local Government by the closing date of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2007.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Communities and Local Government, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for

Transport have jointly issued a White Paper Consultation entitled 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' for which responses are required by 17<sup>th</sup> August 2007.

- 3.2 By way of background, the White Paper sets out the importance of good planning in 'building thriving, healthy, sustainable communities where people want to work, shop, live or visit'. Planning is seen as the means by which economic, social and environmental objectives can be met by development in an integrated and sustainable way.
- 3.2 The Communities and Local Government (CLG) vision of the Planning System is one which 'supports vibrant, healthy sustainable communities, promotes the U.K.'s international competitiveness, and enables the infrastructure which is vital to our quality of our life to be provided, in a way that is integrated with the delivery of other sustainable development objectives, and ensures that local communities and members of public can make their views heard'.
- 3.3 The White Paper highlights the improvements to the Planning System undertaken since 1997:
- Performance and the speed of handling planning applications has increased
  - Customer centred E- planning has been enabled
  - More planning graduates have been assisted through Government funded bursaries
  - More efficient use of brownfield land has been achieved
  - The housing supply across the country has been increased
  - Town centres have been revitalised
  - Improvements have been made to design and planning guidance.
- 3.3 However, there are still long term challenges facing the Planning System which needs to be addressed.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Government anticipates that over the next decades decisions about where development should take place are likely to become ever more difficult. In order to meet this challenge, the Planning System must be fit for purpose in the following areas:
- Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change – planning can help speed up the shift to renewable and low carbon forms of energy and is vital to ensure that new developments are sited in sustainable locations
  - Supporting Sustainable Economic Development – the Planning System needs to be responsive and efficient in supporting economic development in a way that is consistent with the Government's environmental and social objectives
  - Increasing the Supply of Housing – hand in hand with the Housing System, the Planning System is vital in ensuring that our rising, ageing and more prosperous population is suitably housed
  - Protecting and Enhancing the Environment and Natural Resources – continuing the economic growth and an increased house building programme places increasing pressure on the environment and natural resources and relies on the Planning System to protect and enhance the sensitive areas whilst contributing

to improving the quality of water, land and air and the conservation of renewable and non-renewable energy sources and to ensure we have a sustainable waste management system

- Improving Local and National Infrastructure – the continued growth and development places increasing demands on infrastructure and wider public and commercial services which need to be improved in order to support new development
- Maintaining Security of Energy Supply – the Planning System needs to support the investment in new electricity generation capacity as well as supporting the modernisation of existing infrastructure which enables the continued importation of energy from outside suppliers.

4.2 Despite improvements made since 1997, CLG has identified the following challenges:

- Lack of clarity and responsiveness of National Policy – national planning policy is seen as complex, unwieldy and too great making it difficult for Local Authorities and others to account for all the relevant policy considerations. Further there are no clear policy frameworks for dealing with nationally significant infrastructure
- The Planning System is too bureaucratic, takes too long and is unpredictable – the Planning System needs to be efficient, consistent and reliable. The System is still seen by some as taking too long, costing too much and in some cases not reflecting national policy
- Individuals and communities find it difficult to be heard – the Planning System is seen as too long and drawn out, complex and often adversarial, all of which makes it difficult for individuals and communities to feel that they have been fully engaged and heard by the System
- Planning Systems are confusing and unclear – the way that some developments require ‘multiple consents’ is confusing and adds to the cost of decision making
- Decisions are not always taken at the right level – some development proposals require decisions at a national level that could be taken at a local level and equally some are taken at a local level which are of such significance that ought to be taken at a national level

4.3 The CLG has already put in place some foundations for further reform including the Kate Barker review of the Planning System and the Rod Eddington review of the Transport System. The White Paper Consultation sets out detailed proposals for reform and response to the recommendations made by both Barker and Eddington in respect of Planning.

4.4 There are five core principles which underpin the White Paper proposals:

- Planning must be responsive, particularly to long term challenges such as increasing globalisation and climate change, and properly integrate economic, social and environmental objectives to deliver sustainable development
- The Planning System should be streamlined, efficient and predictable
- There should be full and fair opportunities for public consultation and community engagement
- The Planning System should be transparent and accountable
- Planning should be undertaken at the right level of Government - national, regional and local.

- 4.5 The White Paper puts a series of forty questions for response based around:
- Dealing with nationally significant infrastructure projects
  - Improving the Town and Country Planning System
  - Delivering sustainable development
  - Strengthening the role of Local Authorities in place shaping
  - Making the Planning System more efficient and effective
- 4.6 A review of these questions and the proposed Council response is included at *Appendix 1* to this report.

## 5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this consultation.

## 6. **LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Planning White Paper represents the most significant change to the System for some years and will be important for future policy shaping and legal procedures when implementing and assessing development proposals.

## 7. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising for the Council from this report.

## 8. **CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The CLG White paper 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' is an important watershed in the future delivery of a Planning System at a national level and by Local Planning Authorities. The responses proposed to the questions asked included at *Appendix 1* are commended to Cabinet.

## 9. **CONSULTEES**

- 9.1 None

## 10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 'Planning for a Sustainable Future – White Paper'