

**South Cambridgeshire District Council  
Record of Executive Decision**

This form should be used to record key and other decisions made by individual Lead Cabinet members. The contact officer will ensure that the signed and completed form is given to Democratic Services as soon as reasonably practicable after the decision has been taken.

A key decision shall not be taken unless notice of the item has been published at least 28 days before the decision is to be taken except where:

- a General Exception notice has been published under Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and the Chairman of Scrutiny and Overview Committee has been informed in writing; or
- a Special Urgency notice has been published under Rule 16 of those Rules and the Chairman of Scrutiny and Overview Committee has agreed the decision is urgent.

Unless permission has been obtained from the Chairman of Council and the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee that this decision may be treated as a matter of urgency under Rule 12.19 of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules, this decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of five working days after the publication of the decision, unless called in under Rule 7 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules or Rule 12 of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules. Where consent has been obtained to exempt the decision from call-in, this will be specified below.

<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	Lead Cabinet member for Planning
<b>Subject Matter</b>	Response to Government consultation: Changes to the Current Planning System
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Date Taken</b>	Monday, 21 September 2020
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Jonathan Dixon, Planning Policy Manager 07514 925952 jonathan.dixon@greatercambridgeplanning.org (jonathan.dixon@scambs.gov.uk)
<b>Date Published</b>	Monday, 21 September 2020
<b>Call-In Expiry/Exempt from call-in</b>	Monday, 28 September 2020
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>In Forward Plan?</b>	No
<b>Urgent?</b>	No

<b>Purpose / Background</b>
The Government is also consulting on <a href="#">changes to the current planning system</a> between 6 August and 1 October 2020. The four main proposals are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need, which as well as being a proposal to change guidance in the short term has relevance to proposals for land supply reforms set out in 'Planning for the Future' consultation paper;</li> <li>• Securing of First Homes, sold at a discount to market price for first time buyers, including key workers, through developer contributions in the short term until the transition to a new system;</li> <li>• Temporarily lifting the small sites threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing, to up to 40 or 50 units to support SME builders as the economy recovers from the impact of Covid-19;</li> </ul>

- Extending the current Permission in Principle to major development so landowners and developers now have a fast route to secure the principle of development for housing on sites without having to work up detailed plans first.

A summary of the consultation proposals, and the proposed response is included below. The detailed response which is proposed to be submitted is included as appendix 1 to this decision. The response has been drafted as a joint response with Cambridge City Council. Cambridge City Council will be considering the consultation response at their Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee (PTSC) on 29 September, and confirm if they support submission as a joint response. If they do not, minor amendments would be required prior to submission. There may also be a need to consider any changes arising from PTSC and whether to include them in the joint response. If so this may require an urgent decision to be made to amend.

#### **Proposed changes to the methodology for calculating the standard method housing requirement**

**Consultation Proposals:** sets out a revised methodology for calculating the standard method minimum housing requirement which it intends will be used as the basis for plans created prior to any wider reforms being introduced. It proposes changes to the baseline data used, and the approach to how market signals are used to adjust for affordability.

Changes to the standard method would slightly reduce the minimum housing need for the Greater Cambridge area to 1,518 dwellings per annum, compared with 1,748 under the current standard method (and 1,675 in the 2018 Local Plans). It is slightly higher for Cambridge and lower for South Cambridgeshire. The consultation is clear this remains a minimum and that other factors may need to be taken into account as is currently the case.

**Summary of Proposed Response:** Support the principles on which the proposed changes to the Standard Method are aimed, but the volatility in the figures is likely to remain. It is noted that the standard method provides the starting point and not the final housing requirement. Implications would be more significant if the proposals in the white paper are implemented.

#### **Securing of First Homes**

**Consultation Proposals:** 'First Homes' are flats and houses built on new developments, sold with a discount of at least 30 percent. Through the current consultation, the government proposes a national threshold requiring a minimum of 25 per cent of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions to be First Homes. First Homes will take precedence over other affordable housing tenures.

**Summary of Proposed Response:** Replacing shared ownership with First Homes would also impact on providers' ability to deliver social/affordable rent, as shared ownership is often used as cross-subsidy. Also, as it is likely to be the Councils who will oversee the allocations of First Homes, this process will create a huge burden.

#### **Supporting small and medium-sized developers – raising the affordable housing threshold**

**Consultation Proposals:** Current national policy is that affordable housing contributions should not be sought for developments of fewer than 10 units. The consultation proposes to raise the threshold to either 40 or 50 dwellings, to 'stimulate economic recovery with a particular focus on SMEs'. This would be for an initial period of 18 months.

**Summary of Proposed Response:** Increasing the threshold, even for a temporary period, is not supported. Again, it will reduce the Councils ability to deliver affordable housing in an area where there is a high level of need. It is particularly concerning for rural areas, where in many villages few schemes reach this scale. There is no evidence locally that schemes below 40 or 50 homes are not viable, or that developers are being put off by the affordable housing requirement. There is a risk of schemes being resubmitted in the period this applies, to avoid the affordable housing

requirements.

### **Extension of the Permission in Principle consent regime**

**Consultation Proposals:** 'Permission in Principle' (PiP) is comparable to outline planning permission, in so far that PiP establishes that development of the site is appropriate, with technical details reserved for a future application. At present, PiP applies only to sites for minor development of less than 10 dwellings. Through the consultation, the government proposes extending this to include major developments (up to 150 dwellings).

**Summary of Proposed Response:** The changes are not supported. They would mean a significant scale of site to go through this process, where many issues of technical detail would not be explored until after the principle has been established.

### **Declaration(s) of Interest**

**Record below any relevant interest declared by any executive Member consulted or by an officer present in relation to the decision.**

None

### **Dispensation(s)**

**In respect of any conflict(s) of interest declared above, record below any dispensation(s) granted by the Council's Standards Committee.**

None

### **Consultation**

**Record below all parties consulted in relation to the decision.**

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### **Other Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection**

Option 1: To not agree the proposed response to the consultation.

Option 2: to not seek a joint response with Cambridge City Council

Reason for rejection: the consultation offers an opportunity to feedback on proposals which could have significant impacts on planning in the Greater Cambridge area.

<b>Final decision</b>	<b>Reason(s)</b>
To confirm that the response set out in Appendix 1 of this decision should be made to the government consultation on Changes to the Current Planning System.	To provide the views of South Cambridgeshire District Council on the consultation.

<b>Signed</b>	<b>Name (CAPITALS)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
Lead Cabinet Member	Signed copy available upon request from Democratic Services (democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk)		
Chief Officer			

### **Further Information**

Further information on the consultation can be found on the [changes to the current planning system consultation webpage](#).