

This is the response of Claygate Parish Council to the MHCLG August 2020 Consultation ‘Changes to the current planning system’

Q1: Do you agree that planning practice guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is whichever is the higher of the level of 0.5% of housing stock in each local authority area OR the latest household projections averaged over a 10-year period

Claygate Parish Council strongly disagrees with the proposed amendment to the standard method. We do not understand why the use of 0.5% housing stock levels is proposed as a new element for calculating housing need. The latest household projections averaged over a ten year period should be used.

The proposed new standard methodology, based on calculations by Litchfields, indicate that the housing target in Elmbridge (58% Green Belt) would increase the annual target to 774 homes pa versus 623 homes pa on the current standard method.

Far from a policy of levelling up the UK, this is a policy that would require concreting over our Green Belt. It removes the critical principle of local communities determining where housing goes.

Moreover, planning permissions increase the value of land and confer rights on developers to build but there are no corresponding requirements on developers to build what they have applied for - developers should be held accountable to build what they apply for.

Q2: In the stock element of the baseline, do you agree that 0.5% of existing stock for the standard method is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

No. Why has 0.5% been chosen as an appropriate proportion? Why has this been justified as a relevant factor for calculating housing need?. The latest household projections averaged over a ten year period should be used.

Q3: Do you agree that using the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio from the most recent year for which data is available to adjust the standard method’s baseline is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

Claygate Parish Council does not agree. The median house price is calculated on the entire housing stock across the borough but the median salary is calculated only on those people in a workplace in that same borough. It ignores the fact that in areas such as Elmbridge many resident earnings are higher due to accessibility to and employment in London. At the very least it should be considered based on average household earnings as opposed to taking into account the earnings of an individual.

Q4: Do you agree that incorporating an adjustment for the change of affordability over 10 years is a positive way to look at whether affordability has improved? If not, please explain why.

No. This adjustment is not based on affordability or how this has changed over time. There may be a number of reasons why affordability has changed in recent years and it fails to take into account other social and environmental matters.

Q5: Do you agree that affordability is given an appropriate weighting within the standard method? If not, please explain why.

No. We consider that the weighting given to affordability is too high. The focus should be shifted to realistic methods of delivery, it fails to take into account other social and environmental matters such as levels of deprivation and/or homelessness

Moreover the Government’s proposals continue, we assert, to incorrectly assume an unproven/outdated link that by simply boosting housing land supply, affordability in the market will be improved. There appears to be no evidence that releasing additional land will result in accelerated delivery or a significant reduction in the cost of new housing.

Do you agree that authorities should be planning having regard to their revised standard method need figure, from the publication date of the revised guidance, with the exception of:

Q6: Authorities which are already at the second stage of the strategic plan consultation process (Regulation 19), which should be given 6 months to submit their plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination?

Q7: Authorities close to publishing their second stage consultation (Regulation 19), which should be given 3 months from the publication date of the revised guidance to publish their Regulation 19 plan, and a further 6 months to submit their plan to the Planning Inspectorate?

If not please explain why. Are there particular circumstances which need to be catered for?

Claygate Parish Council does not agree that the LPA should be preparing a local plan having regard to the revised standard method need figure from the publication of the revised guidance. Certainty is needed to ensure progress

on local plans underway and interim changes should not be imposed ahead of the White Paper. Those LPA's approaching regulation 19 should be given the opportunity to have their plans examined within a reasonable time period without having to apply the revised method.

Q8: The Government is proposing policy compliant planning applications will deliver a minimum of 25% of onsite affordable housing as First Homes, and a minimum of 25% of offsite contributions towards First Homes where appropriate. Which do you think is the most appropriate option for the remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions? Please provide reasons and / or evidence for your views (if possible):
i) Prioritising the replacement of affordable home ownership tenures, and delivering rental tenures in the ratio set out in the local plan policy
ii) Negotiation between a local authority and developer
iii) Other (please specify)

Claygate Parish Council strongly supports initiatives to increase the delivery of affordable housing. Developers should deliver all affordable homes onsite unless there are truly exceptional circumstances.

Q9: Should the existing exemptions from the requirement for affordable home ownership products (e.g. for build to rent) also apply to this First Homes requirement?

There should be no exemptions from requirements for affordable homes or First Homes if this proposal is introduced.

Q10: Are any existing exemptions not required? If not, please set out which exemptions and why.

No additional comments (See Q 9).

Q11: Are any other exemptions needed? If so, please provide reasons and /or evidence for your views)

No additional comments (See Q 9).

Q12: Do you agree with the proposed approach to transitional arrangements set out above?

Clarify as to whether the transitional period will start from the the date of the new planning policy or relevant legislation

Q13: Do you agree with the proposed approach to different levels of discount?

All such discounts can serve to drive up house prices. LPA's should be able to determine based on local circumstances.

Q14: Do you agree with the approach of allowing a small proportion of market housing on First Homes exception sites, in order to ensure site viability?

To maximise affordable housing a proportion of market housing should only be allowed where it can demonstrated that the site is not viable without it.

Q15: Do you agree with the removal of the site size threshold set out in the National Planning Policy Framework

Local plans should define what is proportionate to any removal of the site size threshold.

Q16: Do you agree that the First Homes exception sites policy should not apply in designated rural areas?

No comment

Q17: Do you agree with the proposed approach to raise the small sites threshold for a time-limited period? (see question 18 for comments on level of threshold)

Claygate Parish Council disagrees. Raising the threshold in Elmbridge would deprive those in housing need of a means of accessing the housing market.

Q18: What is the appropriate level of small sites threshold?

- i) Up to 40 homes
- ii) Up to 50 homes
- iii) Other (please specify)

The present level should be retained, any changes will significantly reduce the ability to provide affordable homes.

Q19: Do you agree with the proposed approach to the site size threshold?

No - we believe it will reduce the delivery of affordable housing.

Q20: Do you agree with linking the time-limited period to economic recovery and raising the threshold for an initial period of 18 months?

No - What does this mean? At what point will it be decided and by whom that the economy has recovered? Pressure needs to be maintained to provide affordable homes.

Q21: Do you agree with the proposed approach to minimising threshold effects?

Developers must not be able to break up sites or phase them to avoid the need for affordable housing.

Q22: Do you agree with the Government's proposed approach to setting thresholds in rural areas?

We note the reliance on small sites is not unique to rural areas and while Elmbridge is deemed urban it relies upon small sites for housing given Green Belt restrictions.

Q23: Are there any other ways in which the Government can support SME builders to deliver new homes during the economic recovery period?

No comment

Q24: Do you agree that the new Permission in Principle should remove the restriction on major development?

Claygate Parish Council strongly disagrees. The five week period for determination and fourteen day period for statutory consultations is unrealistic and residents will be very concerned about their ability to be involved in the process.

Q25: Should the new Permission in Principle for major development set any limit on the amount of commercial development (providing housing still occupies the majority of the floorspace of the overall scheme)? Please provide any comments in support of your views.

Claygate Parish Council is strongly opposed to the proposed new permission in principle (See Q24) . We believe it will have significant adverse impacts on our Village.

Q26: Do you agree with our proposal that information requirements for Permission in Principle by application for major development should broadly remain unchanged? If you disagree, what changes would you suggest and why?

No. Claygate Parish Council is strongly opposed to the proposed new permission in principle (See Q24) . It will have significant adverse impacts on our Village. It is impossible to determine the principle of the location given the minimal information currently required for a PiP.

Q27: Should there be an additional height parameter for Permission in Principle? Please provide comments in support of your views.

Yes, so there is certainty and as this will be a key factor on what may be able to be built on a site.

Q28: Do you agree that publicity arrangements for Permission in Principle by application should be extended for large developments? If so, should local planning authorities be

- i) required to publish a notice in a local newspaper?**
- ii) subject to a general requirement to publicise the application or**
- iii) both?**
- iv) disagree.**

If you disagree, please state your reasons.

Claygate Parish Council strongly agrees that publicity arrangements for PiP should be extended. Option 2 is supported and should include site notices and local resident notification within the vicinity of the site.

Q29: Do you agree with our proposal for a banded fee structure based on a flat fee per hectare, with a maximum fee cap?

No. A cap is unnecessary and unfair. Large developments can and should pay their share. A flat fee is likely to fall well short of covering the cost of assessing the application. Let the LPA decide the fee structure.

Q30: What level of flat fee do you consider appropriate, and why?

A cap is unnecessary and unfair. Large developments can and should pay their share. Let the LPA decide the fee structure.

Q31: Do you agree that any brownfield site that is granted Permission in Principle through the application process should be included in Part 2 of the Brownfield Land Register? If you disagree, please state why.

No. Not enough details are included in PiP's.

Q32: What guidance would help support applicants and local planning authorities to make decisions about Permission in Principle? Where possible, please set out any areas of guidance you consider are currently lacking and would assist stakeholders.

Permission in principle should only be granted regarding such details as are approved. These should be judged as far as is reasonably possible as a normal application would be judged. Subsequent actual applications should only judge other aspects and any changes in design or circumstances since the in-principle decision was granted.

Q33: What costs and benefits do you envisage the proposed scheme would cause? Where you have identified drawbacks, how might these be overcome?

A 5 week timescale is insufficient to assess the information requirements and the application fee must reflect the costs of assessing the information. We do not believe that PiP offers any clear advantages over a more traditional route to development.

Q34: To what extent do you consider landowners and developers are likely to use the proposed measure? Please provide evidence where possible.

It is highly likely that landowners and developers would utilise this – easier and quicker. However, Claygate Parish Council asserts that (per answer to Q24) the five week period for determination and fourteen day period for statutory consultations is unrealistic, residents will be very concerned about their ability to be involved in the process and that there is much more local confidence in the pre application followed by a full application process.

Q35: In light of the proposals set out in this consultation, are there any direct or indirect impacts in terms of eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations on people who share characteristics protected under the Public Sector Equality Duty? If so, please specify the proposal and explain the impact. If there is an impact – are there any actions which the department could take to mitigate that impact?

No comment