

## PRESS RELEASE 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Serious concerns from Better Wetherby about the proposed new planning system

The Chair of Better Wetherby Partnership, Roger Owen, has written to local MPs, Alec Shelbrooke, Nigel Adams and Andrew Jones, highlighting the serious concerns of Better Wetherby about the Government's proposals to introduce major changes to the current planning system. These changes, aimed at streamlining the process and speeding up house building, were initially outlined in the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper published in August 2020

A Planning Bill is likely to go before Parliament in the Autumn of 2021. New legislation is likely to introduce a completely new concept of local plans which should be completed within a thirty month time frame. Better Wetherby fear that the new proposals will particularly undermine the ability of local residents to comment on individual applications.

The Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Select Committee recently published a Report urging the government to reconsider the reforms.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6180/documents/68915/default/>

Mr. Owen said, ***'Although Better Wetherby welcomes the Prime Minister's statement in the foreword to the planning White Paper that the changes should aim to make it harder for developers to dodge their obligations and give local people a greater say over what gets built, the reality is likely to be the opposite. We believe that our MPs should hear at first hand of our experiences of the current planning system. Change is certainly needed so there should be no fear that we are resisting a fresh approach. However, if the Government truly believe that local people should have a greater say over planning proposals they should not only take on board the views of the Parliamentary Select Committee, but listen to us too.'***

Mr. Owen highlighted in his letter that planning policy in the immediate Wetherby Area has added complications by virtue of it being governed by three major local authorities – Leeds, Harrogate and North Yorkshire. The proposed changes aim to end the current requirement for authorities to have a 'Duty to Cooperate' when resolving strategic planning solutions. Better Wetherby believe the proposed removal of these obligations to be a regressive move and that measures should be introduced to strengthen and improve cooperation in this important part of the planning system. Such action is necessary to overcome the problem of the poor cooperation between the three authorities highlighted in recent years on two major housing proposals off Harrogate Road and Racecourse Approach.

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Mr. Owen added, ***'Having presented evidence at both Leeds and Harrogate's Local Plans, Better Wetherby is all for improving the current local plans system. However, these proposals are not the way to enhance local participation in the planning system. Far from it. The rush to get a new system in place has all the hallmarks of meeting the needs of the developer/land owner lobby to obtain quick planning consents. Good decision making on housing plans that will clearly affect and expand communities can only benefit from effective consultation processes that enable local people, and organisations like Better Wetherby, to contribute in a constructive way to planning decisions. If the MPs want to truly learn how to achieve efficient planning of communities they need to listen to our experiences'***

For further information, please contact: Roger Owen, Better Wetherby – Telephone 07973 805055 or by email at [roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com](mailto:roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com).

*The Better Wetherby Partnership is a consortium of local people from a variety of organisations who contribute to initiatives designed to help make Wetherby and the surrounding villages better for the community of both present and future generations.*

#### **Notes for Editor**

- 1. 'Planning for the Future'** issued in August 2020 by Ministry of Housing, Communities and local Government, sets out 24 major questions in the 59 page report.
- 2. Better Wetherby** partners include Kirk Deighton Parish Council (the constituency of Nigel Adams MP), and North Yorkshire County and Harrogate District authorities. Wetherby Town Council and Collingham with Linton Parish Council are within the constituency of Alex Shelbrooke MP.
- 3.** More information about Better Wetherby's organisation, membership and activities can be found on our web site <https://www.betterwetherby.com/>

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