

Government planning proposals “will leave people without a voice”

Government proposals to overhaul the planning system will leave residents and their elected representatives without a voice.

This is one of the concerns expressed by POETS – a group of planning, environmental and transport professionals and academics – about the government’s white paper, “Planning for the Future”.

The government is proposing to ditch the current system of local plans and to replace it with fast-track plans which use a zoning system. Areas would be denoted as either growth areas, renewal areas, or protected areas. In the first two the principle of planning permission would automatically be granted subject to certain criteria, while in protected areas such as areas of outstanding natural beauty there would be greater restrictions on development. Once the zones were allocated neither the public nor local councillors would have any further say.

Chris Cousins of POETS said: “One of the key features of planning in this country has been the fact that there is local involvement and decision making. These proposals will undermine that.

“There is already a large amount of development that can take place without the need for planning permission under changes that the government has recently introduced. This includes the conversion of offices to housing, which the government’s own advisors have criticised for creating the slums of tomorrow. The white paper’s proposals would go even further in giving developers free rein.”

POETS have put forward proposals for what a future planning system should contain. These include improving health by increasing active travel, providing ready access to green space, improving air quality, addressing the climate emergency, and providing employment and *genuinely* affordable housing.

Chris Cousins added: “There is nothing in the white paper to suggest that these issues will be addressed. Instead, what is proposed is a planning system which centralises power and yet will almost certainly decentralise blame when communities are faced with unacceptable development”.

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The POETS paper can be found here www.poetsplanningoxon.uk/poets-planning-white-paper-centralising-power-while-decentralising-blame-010920.pdf

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For further information about POETS, including its membership, go to:

www.poetsplanningoxon.uk