

## Appendix 1, Lytchett Matravers Parish Council Full Council meeting 26 August 2020

### Remarks by Cllr Morgan as a preamble to agenda item 9 – consultations on an overhaul to the planning system.

There have been important recent changes to the planning system and a further radical reformation is now out for consultation in a White Paper.

Recent changes have been to Permitted Development Rights, most significantly allowing post war apartment buildings to be raised by 2 storeys. I need to check further on the status of the several small apartment buildings in Lytchett Matravers, but in general of little relevance to us. Also, Change of Use regulations have been revised allowing much greater interchangeability of commercial uses – retail, business, offices etc. A sensible recognition of economic and societal changes.

Much more relevant to us is the White Paper which seeks massive deregulation, simplification and a speeding up of the whole planning process – from distribution of development around the country, through land use designations, policy formulation and right down to the detail of planning applications.

**The 1947 T+CPA has served us well.** It has controlled development and given us the protection of National Parks, AoNBs, Green Belts, Conservation Areas and Listed Building protection. Without that protection much of our country, especially the south, would be largely developed. (Dorset is unusual with much of the county divided between very substantial landed estates which would have continued to impose their own controls even without the T+CPA). We should be wary of a dogma which seeks to abolish regulation and control for that is how the T+CPA has managed its protective role.

BUT the accompanying **bureaucracy has evolved into a labyrinthine complexity** which confounds even the professionals working through it. The Cameron administration in 2010 brought in the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** which effectively swept away a mass of supporting documents (literally capable of occupying many metres of library shelving) to be replaced by a simple c 50 page document. It was a godsend to all involved – much simpler, much clearer and, most importantly, it has not, I believe, impacted negatively on our environment. It has been revised once since 2010 and I believe the White Paper seeks further changes. I don't know the detail of that so can't yet comment.

#### **Significant changes are proposed to Local Strategic Plans and to Development Control.**

**Local Plan formulation** – The existing system is a failure with protracted evidence gathering, consultations, drafts, consultations, revisions, consultations, Inspectors, hearings, amendments, consultations ad infinitum. Even professionals involved in the process are befuddled and the public suffer 'consultation fatigue' and unsurprisingly lose interest. Local Plans take many years 6,7 or more before adoption and possibly already overtaken by events in the economy, technology and people's aspirations. No sooner are they published than we are advised the newer 'emerging' policy framework should be a 'material consideration' and 'given weight'. The White Paper quite rightly seeks to cut through this and proposes a much faster process. What we don't know, and should be wary of, is how local democracy can work to a rapid timescale. Further, I doubt that many planning authorities will have the right staff with the motivation, energy and drive to work to rapid timescales. In my personal experience, virtually all the dynamic, creative and high energy planning personnel have been head hunted into private practice. The Intent of the White Paper in this respect is admirable but, I fear will result in central government taking control away from local democratic bodies... and/or a privatisation of the planning system which could work well, provided always that it is answerable to local democracy.

**Development Control** – The White Paper proposes 3 types of land designation – I'm calling them '**Anything Goes**', '**OK but think about it**' and "**No way**' zones. In Lytchett we don't need to concern ourselves with the first. The third 'No way' zone should include the Green Belt surrounding our

village. G Belts are to be continued. It is worth noting that (when I last checked this) there are only 14 x Green Belts in the country – so it is very special. It is the second designation 'OK but think about it' which we need to consider carefully. The White Paper continues the Cameron Initiative of community planning – Neighbourhood Plans which theoretically carry real weight in assessing each planning application. The White Paper encourages local Design Guides. We should engage wholeheartedly with this.