



WISTOW PARISH COUNCIL

Wistow Parish Council make the following submissions in respect of the proposed planning powers for Mayors in England.

Parish Councils must retain a meaningful role

The Government should make it clear that Parish Councils are not merely a statutory consultee whose views can be easily disregarded. For major developments affecting a Parish, there should be a clear requirement for the Mayor to demonstrate that Parish Council representations have been considered.

Local knowledge is extremely important

A Mayor covering a large strategic area will not necessarily understand:

- local roads;
- village traffic problems;
- flooding;
- footpaths;
- village character;
- community facilities;
- local infrastructure constraints;
- or the cumulative impact of development.

Parish councils often have this in-depth knowledge and should be recognised within the process.

There needs to be transparency around why an application is called in.

The Parish Council supports the principle of strategic oversight where a development has genuinely strategic implications extending beyond the boundaries of an individual Local Planning Authority. However, it is concerned that the proposed powers could allow properly considered local planning decisions to be overridden too readily. Where an application has been considered through established planning process, taking account of planning policy, technical evidence, statutory consultees, local representations and the views of the elected members there should be a high threshold for mayoral intervention.

The council considers that a Mayor should therefore have to clearly explain:

- Why the application is considered strategically important;
- Why intervention is necessary and proportionate;
- What strategic objectives it is intended to achieve;
- What specific strategic planning issue justifies intervention;
- How local representations have been considered.
- Why that issue could not adequately be addressed through the normal Local Planning Authority process;

- How the evidence and conclusions reached by the Local Planning Authority have been considered;
- How the representations from affected Parish and Town Councils and communities have influenced the decision and;
- Where the Mayor reaches a different conclusion from the Local Planning Authority, the reasons for doing so.

The system shouldn't become a mechanism for overriding local opposition simply to meet housing targets.

The consultation explicitly says the powers are intended to support housing delivery and economic growth. However, there needs to be a proper balance between housing delivery and sustainable development. The Council is particularly concerned that mayoral powers should not create a situation in which a democratically reached local planning decision can effectively be submitted by the view of a single officer-holder without a clearly defined evidential and procedural threshold.

Mayoral intervention should provide strategic oversight rather than become an alternative planning decision-making route whenever the Mayor disagrees with a local decision.

Appropriate safeguards and accountability should accompany new powers.

The council considers that the greater the power given to a Mayor to intervene in local planning decisions, the stronger the associated transparency and accountability arrangements should be. The Government should therefore consider safeguards including published criteria governing when mayoral intervention may be used, a requirement to publish detailed reasons for intervention and decisions, clear procedure for managing conflicts of interest, and appropriate scrutiny of the exercise of these powers. This is particularly important where a Mayor may have wider strategic objectives relating to housing delivery, economic growth or infrastructure which could potentially conflict with local planning considerations.

The objective should be to ensure that mayoral interventions complement the existing planning system and addresses genuinely strategic matters, rather than diminishing confidence in the independence, consistency and integrity of local planning decisions.

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