

Motion: Erosion of local democracy in the planning system

This Council notes:

- The importance of local democratic oversight in the planning process, particularly in ensuring that decisions reflect the views and interests of residents.
 - The role of “call-in” procedures in allowing elected Members to refer planning applications to committee where there are significant material planning considerations or public concerns.
 - Provisions within the Government’s Planning and Infrastructure reforms which seek to remove or significantly restrict local planning call-in powers.
 - Plans to impose nationally prescribed limits on planning committee size, including a proposed maximum of 13 members, regardless of local context or governance structures.
 - The direction already issued by Government that now requires Local Planning Authorities to notify the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) when they are considering refusal of schemes of 150 or more dwellings, enabling the Secretary of State to intervene and determine such applications.
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This Council believes that:

- The removal or restriction of planning call-in powers for elected councillors undermines local democracy and reduces transparency in decision-making.
 - Imposing a maximum committee size fails to recognise local governance needs and risks weakening effective representation and accountability.
 - Requiring notification to MHCLG and enabling central Government to determine locally significant applications represents an unacceptable centralisation of planning powers.
 - These combined measures risk reducing public confidence in the planning system by distancing decisions from locally elected representatives.
 - Local planning authorities are best placed to balance development needs with community impact.
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This Council resolves to:

- Formally oppose Government proposals for a “national scheme of delegation” that would remove or significantly restrict planning call-in powers available to local councillors.
- Request amendments to Schedule 1 specifically, which sets out that householder, minor residential and minor commercial applications must in all circumstances be delegated to officers.
- Oppose the imposition of a maximum planning committee size of 13 members.
- Call for revocation of the directive requiring referral of planning decisions to central Government for applications of 150+ dwellings where refusal is recommended.
- Direct the Council Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the Council’s concerns as expressed above regarding the erosion of local democratic control within the planning system.
- Share this resolution with local Members of Parliament and neighbouring authorities to encourage broader opposition to these proposals.

Proposed by: Cllr Julien Speed

Seconded by: Cllr Tara Noe