

Stiffkey Parish Council Public Consultation Response

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – Planning Reform Working Paper: Planning Committees

Stiffkey Parish Council submitted its views as part of the consultation as follows:

In our view, the decision-making processes already in place and used by the Planning Committee of North Norfolk District Council are consistent and fit for purpose. The introduction of a national scheme of delegation will likely lead to a loss in democratic accountability as more decisions are delegated. We do not believe it would increase democratic accountability; it would simply result in less scrutiny and inevitably a reduction of truly representative input into decision making.

It is our view that creating a national scheme is not necessary. Every location is different and has a distinctive culture, heritage, vernacular style, specific material traditions and environmental considerations etc. Therefore, every area has different planning needs and nuances. Local knowledge and experience must therefore be an important deciding factor, and simply using the number of objections or any target-based determinations (which would themselves be arbitrary) will be profoundly counterproductive. This approach could also lead to an exclusion of local opportunities, such as 'Councillor Call-in' to be part of the process and has the potential for the role of Parish Councils to be further diminished.

We would agree with North Norfolk District Council that the need for flexibility in approach and options as a key area for review is currently missing from the proposals. While standardisation is not a bad thing in certain areas – such as requirements for energy efficiency for example, removing all areas of local democratic input into what can and cannot go to Committee is a retrograde and anti-democratic approach.

We would support, as also suggested by North Norfolk District Council, some nationalisation around the role of the Ward Councillor, as well as the introduction of good practice guidelines- especially with regard to the role of Parish Councils

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