Motion to July 2021 Full Council - Planning Reform

Proposer: Cllr Nicholson Seconder: Cllr Banks

Preamble:

Our Council has declared a climate emergency and committed to action on biodiversity. However local action is dependent on the right national laws.

The aspirations of the long delayed Environment Bill currently will mean nothing if the parallel Planning Bill due this year follows the route set out in the 'Planning for the Future' White paper on planning reform which was published in August 2020.

That White Paper failed to set out a vision of a zero carbon future, and instead sets out proposals to force a substantial increase in housing growth by deregulating the planning system, and limiting local control on planning applications, for example introducing zoning and downgrading the role of planning committees.

The existing 'standard method' algorithm already means that areas like ours are hit by unrealistic housing targets, with calculations skewed by an 'affordability' index that takes no account of the capacity of an area to sustain that growth. These targets are policed by a punitive 'housing delivery test' based on the same flawed methodology, with failure of the test meaning a further loss of local control.

In June 2021 the Government's own Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee called on the Government to revisit its planning proposals.

Proposed motion

We call on this Council to ask the Government to:

1. Use the opportunity of planning reform to introduce an approach that puts the climate and biodiversity emergencies at the heart, that works with not against the Environment Bill, and which retains local control.
2. Remove the system of housing targets.
3. Remove the punitive housing delivery test.

The Council therefore asks the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure to write to the Robert Jenrick MP setting out these requests, and to the two local MPs, asking them to support these requests and champion them on our behalf in parliament.