

Lib Dems in [INSERT AREA] vow to challenge Govt's "power grab" on planning

Liberal Democrats have warned that the Government's planning proposals will "disempower" local authorities like [INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY/ COUNCIL] and allow developers to "run roughshod" over local communities' wishes.

A motion accepted at the Party's Autumn Conference, making it official party policy, lays bare the risks of the Government's proposals, which the Party argue amount to a Government "power grab" that will reduce investment in affordable housing urgently needed in [INSERT AREA] and elsewhere.

In supporting the motion, Liberal Democrats reaffirmed their commitment to challenging the move through the Government's consultation process, and rejected the "reduction of local control" in places like [INSERT AREA].

Instead of going ahead with planning reforms, the party is calling on the Government to match the Lib Dem ambition to build 100,000 social homes for rent every year.

[INSERT NAME] Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for [INSERT AREA]

"People living in areas like [INSERT AREA] are the people best placed to make sure planning decisions shape our communities for the better. But this Conservative Government's planning reforms will strip away local people's ability to shape those decisions and is a developer's charter.

"With nine out of ten planning proposals approved nationwide, it's certainly not the planning system that is causing problems. "Liberal Democrats in [INSERT AREA] wholeheartedly object to these proposals, which do nothing to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing, undermine our climate commitments and put our local heritage at risk."

Liberal Democrat Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson Tim Farron said:

"The Conservatives' planning power grab will disempower local people and local authorities alike, and lead to even fewer affordable homes being built.

"Instead of addressing the root cause of the housing crisis, the Tories' proposals serve the interests of wealthy developers, giving them carte blanche to run roughshod over local communities' wishes.

"Liberal Democrats at every level of Government will do everything in our power to ensure our voice is heard through the consultation process. We are also calling on the Government to act now to address the housing crisis, by matching the Liberal Democrats' ambition to build 100,000 social homes for rent every year."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

See below for the full text of the Emergency Motion.

Emergency Motion: Opposing the Government 'Power Grab' on Planning

Conference notes that:

- A. The Government is consulting on plans to overhaul the planning system
- B. The reforms to existing planning rules allow fast track permissions for offices and retail centres to be converted to houses; and extra storeys to be added to existing housing and flats.
- C. The assessment of local housing need and the threshold below which developers are required to contribute to affordable housing will also be changed.
- D. In the future reforms proposed in the Planning for the Future consultation published on the 6 August 2020, land will be categorised into growth, renewal or protection zones;
- E. 'Growth' areas will allow planning permission in principle if a site is designated a development site in the local plan.
- F. 'Renewal' areas will be subject to a statutory 'presumption in favour of development'
- G. 'Protection' areas will be where development will be discouraged.
- H. The Government has already laid new regulations allowing Permitted Developments that do not provide adequate environmental standards to counter Climate Change dangers

Conference recognises:

- I. i) The need to build more housing to prevent homelessness and provide adequate, affordable and suitable accommodation for everyone, and the failure of successive governments to address the issue.
- II. ii) That councils currently approve nine in ten applications.
- III. iii) That the Local Government Association findings show that over a million homes have planning permission but remain unbuilt.

Conference believes that:

- 1. The planning system is not the cause of low build-out numbers.
- 2. These proposals reduce democratic accountability and public scrutiny undermining the ability of councils to determine planning applications.
- 3. These proposals significantly reduce the scope for public participation and influence on planning applications within local communities.
- 4. The proposed changes would favour development interests over those of local communities.
- 5. Delegation of detailed planning decisions to planning officers, rather than a democratically elected planning committee fails to recognise the role that public democratic scrutiny has in ensuring decisions are fair, transparent, with any impacts fully considered.
- 6. The reforms restrict a planning authorities' ability to set local planning policies in line with the needs of their area and community aspirations, undermining the plan-led system, disempowering councils and communities.
- 7. Replacing the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 payments with centrally imposed housing targets and a national levy, will likely result in less money for affordable housing, sustainable transport and other critical infrastructure.

8. The effort to speed up applications risk watering down or removing the requirement altogether for Strategic Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments and similar assessments.
9. The proposals do not sufficiently take into consideration the Climate Change Act 2008 provisions that address carbon dioxide emission standards for future housing stock.
10. The proposals put at risk archaeology and heritage by undermining pre-commencement archaeological conditions in the development process.

Conference reaffirms the commitment of the Liberal Democrats to:

1. Empower local democracy.
2. Provide the infrastructure the country needs.
3. Provide truly affordable good quality housing.
4. Support housing with high standards of design, amenity, space.
5. Achieve the smallest possible carbon footprint from housing.

Conference strongly objects to these proposals and urges all Liberal Democrats – including the party's councillors, MPs in England and those elected at any other level – to participate in the consultations and to reject the arbitrary housing targets and reduction of local control proposed in the consultation paper.

Applicability: England