



Copers Cope Area  
Residents' Association

SHORTLANDS  
RESIDENTS'  
ASSOCIATION



25 June 2021

To Rt. Hon Bob Stewart DSO MP. Member of Parliament for Beckenham

Cc at end

Dear Bob

### Planning for the Future

We are writing jointly as the four largest Residents' Associations covering your constituency of Beckenham. Following the publication of the House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's report on the Government's proposed planning reforms, and the debate in the Commons on 21 June, we would be interested to know your view on these planning proposals and we seek your support in opposing them.

Encouraged by your contribution to the debate on 30 September last, CCARA and WBRA wrote to you on 10 October (attached) about the frequent changes in planning regulations, providing ever further Permitted Development Rights, and the consultation document Planning For The Future. We do not seem to have had a reply. We are now joined by Shortlands RA, who share our concerns, which they raised at their Zoom AGM in April, which you attended, and by West Wickham RA.

We are very encouraged that the Select Committee echoed our main concerns about the proposals, principally the "Zoning" of local authority areas and the removal of the rights of ordinary people to participate in planning decisions on a case by case basis.

It is difficult to envisage how your constituency of Beckenham might be divided into three broad brush Zones with any degree of sensitivity or recognition of the granularity of local life. In the debate on 20 June, the Minister for Housing, Chris Pincher, said repeatedly that local people would be able to participate fully when the authority drew up the local plan. But only 30 months are allowed for this whole process, including only 6 months for local public consultation, to run concurrently with the Secretary of State's examination. Even if we, as Residents' Associations, were able to have a meaningful input at this plan stage, (and individual residents are highly unlikely to participate at this stage), this does not compensate residents for the loss of rights to participate in individual applications on their doorstep. As the Committee says "**All** individuals **must** still be able to comment and influence on **all** individual planning applications" (Our emphasis.)

**[www.coperscope.org.uk](http://www.coperscope.org.uk) & [www.westbeckenhamra.org](http://www.westbeckenhamra.org)**

To protect and promote the interests of residents in matters of local concern.

CCARA, founded in 1935, covering central and northern Beckenham.

WBRA, founded in 1945, covering parts of Kelsey and Eden Park, Clock House and Penge and Cator.

Much is made in the media of the detrimental effect of these proposals in the countryside, but in our view the effects will be equally, if not more, detrimental in urban areas, where people live more closely together and the impacts of individual development are felt more keenly. Broad zones and design guides cannot provide assurances that individual developments will not materially adversely affect individual families.

One issue is especially important. The proposals seem to be aimed at larger developments of, say, a block of flats or a housing development. However, most applications are for individual houses – conversions, extensions or infill – which are in established neighbourhoods and next to established families. If these are in a Growth Zone, will they get automatic approval despite the potentially devastating effect on the next door neighbours?

At root of this debate is a mistaken idea that the planning system is holding back housing development. All our Associations fully support building the right housing in the right place, and especially the need for affordable housing. But the point was made many times in the debate on 21 June, and most forcefully by Teresa May last September, that over a million consents for housing are extant but unbuilt. The planning system is not the problem here.

It is critical the planning system ensures the housing that is built is of the right type, in the right place and is of the right standard. The Planning for the Future proposals will not deliver this for the very fact it does not work in partnership with communities.

Therefore, we would be grateful to know your personal views, and for your support in persuading the government to drop these damaging proposals. We look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely

Chloe-Jane Ross, Chair, Copers Cope Area Residents' Association

Alan Old, Committee Member for Planning, Copers Cope Area Residents' Association

Marie Pender, Chair, West Beckenham Residents' Association

Mark Dempsey, Chair Shortlands Residents' Association

Danny Miller Committee Member for Planning Shortlands Residents' Association.

Christopher Barnes, Committee Member for Planning West Wickham Residents' Association

Cc Bob Neill MP, Member of Parliament for Bromley and Chislehurst

Gareth Bacon MP, Member of Parliament for Orpington

Michael Tickner, Stephen Wells, Russell Mellor, Copers Cope Ward Councillors

Christine Harris, Diane Smith, Peter Dean, Kelsey and Eden Park Ward Councillors

Mary Cooke, Aisha Cuthbert, Shortlands Ward Councillors

Nicholas Bennett, Mark Brock, Hannah Gray, West Wickham Ward Councillors

Alexa Michael, Chairman, Development Control Committee