**CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED REFORMS TO LOCAL PLANS**

 **RESPONSE TO NALC FROM SEAFORD TOWN COUNCIL**

1.Given the need for the contents of the Plan to be fully comprehensive it is difficult to envisage how the process can be carried out over a reduced 30-month period without increases in staffing and resources.

2.The staffing of Local Planning Authority Development Control and Local Plan sections has been cut over the course of many years and it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep staff given the higher salaries offered by Private Practice.

3.Also, the cost of engaging consultants to carry out the surveys required to ‘inform’ the Plan has increased.

4.Lack of resources is one of the reasons why only 35% of LPAs have adopted new Local Plans in the past 5 years.

5.Looking at the proposed 30-month timetable and all the stages that have to be squeezed into the time available, including the three ‘Gateway’ interventions the fear is that important stages and procedures would have to be rushed and that the input of local Town and Parish Councils and residents would restricted.

6.Town and Parish Councils, having worked hard on their Neighbourhood Plans, are having to look on powerlessly while their relatively new constructive local policies are overruled in appeals. This is, in the main, due to the priority given to national planning guidance where the District Council falls short of the requisite 5-year housing supply. Local residents and Councils are therefore rapidly losing faith in the system. The Government has promised to implement amendments to the NPPF to give more weight to Neighbourhood Plans but the amendments, promised this Spring, has not been put into effect.

7.Following on from this it is vital that, whatever future format is decided on for Local Plans, the Government allows due weight to be placed on them and does not allow them to be ‘trumped’ by National guidance. Planning decisions should be made locally rather than nationally if the system is to retain any credibility.

8.These are the Town Councils general comments on the Local Plan system and the proposed 30-month timetable. Many of the specific questions set out in the Consultation document and NALC’s Circular relate to LPAs and Planning Practitioners.

9.The only specific questions we as a Town Council wish to respond to are:-

Q5 – Templates would make it easier for LPAs to prepare Plans and for the Public to understand them.

Q6 – 30 months is too short a period to accommodate the work and public consultation required to prepare a sound Plan given the restricted resources currently available to LPAs.

Q22 – The intention to speed up the examination by providing Gateway assessments will simply serve to transfer delays to other parts of the procedure.

Q25 – Yes

Geoff Johnson

Planning Officer

Seaford Town Council 13th September 2023