

## **SEPTEMBER UPDATE: NPF REPORT FROM CLG**

### **LOCALISM BILL**

- The Bill went to Lords second reading on 7th June and Lords Report stage commenced on 5 September.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

- Following publication of the *Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning* scheme, the first round of Front Runner projects were announced on 2 April. So far we have applications from local authorities for 126 schemes as Neighbourhood Planning front runners. We aim to consult on the draft regulations within the coming months.
- Neighbourhood planning provisions in Localism Bill passed to Lords following Government amendments at Commons Report and Committee stages. Various other amendments were made during the Lords Committee stage of the Bill.
- An Invitation for business front-runners closed on 8 July. Successful applicants likely to be announced later this month.

### **ABOLITION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

- The action to abolish regional strategies will consist of two stages. The first stage is to remove Part 5 of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, which provides the architecture of the regional planning tier, including Leaders' Boards whose responsibility it was to prepare the relevant regional strategy. This will prevent any further regional strategies being created.
- The second is to abolish each existing regional strategy. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the first stage will take effect immediately on Royal Assent and second stage will be done by commencement order.
- The Written Ministerial Statement of 5 April, said the Government would undertake a voluntary assessment of the likely significant environmental effect of abolishing the existing eight regional strategies. An environmental report on each of the eight regional strategies is being compiled and a public consultation will begin shortly.

### **LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS (LEPs)**

- The Budget statement of March 2011 '*Plan for Growth*' included a commitment to provide support for investment across the regions by setting up 21 new Enterprise Zones.
- There are now 37 Local Enterprise Partnerships, covering 98% of the country, representing 98 per cent of all businesses and 23 million employees in England.

## **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- Published for consultation on 25 July, it sets out for the first time in one concise document the Government's priorities for the country and the role which planning can play in delivering them. The policies in the draft Framework will ensure that the right land in the right places is available to meet the economic needs of the country.
- Consultation will close on 17 October and we aim to publish the final NPPF in December.
- A number of consultation events are currently taking place at various locations throughout the country.
- Decisions will be made in due course about how much guidance is essential for the Government to issue in support of Framework.

## **ABOLITION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING COMMISSION**

- Subject to the passage of the Localism Bill through Parliament, from April 2012 major infrastructure projects will be decided by Ministers, within a clear policy framework provided by National Policy Statements, on the basis of recommendations by a new unit within the Planning Inspectorate.
- Transitional arrangements will ensure that any projects being considered by the Infrastructure Planning Commission at the time of these changes do not have to start the planning process again.
- As of 6 April 2012 PINS and the IPC will merge. The new organisation will retain the long established name The Planning Inspectorate and will continue to be an agency of DCLG and the Welsh Government.

## **FREE SCHOOLS**

- A summary of responses to the Government's 2010 consultation on planning for schools development was published in August.
- A planning policy statement introducing a presumption in favour of the development of free schools and other state-funded schools was published on 15 August.

## **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

- We want local authorities to lead on the implementation of the levy. To help facilitate this we launched the *Community Infrastructure Levy Front Runners* Project on 24 December. The project is supporting over 30 local planning authorities to develop the best approach to take when implementing the levy in their area. The Front Runners project also encourages and supports Front Runners to share their learning and good practice across the sector.

- We will shortly be consulting on regulations to implement key Localism Bill provisions including the spending of CIL funds in neighbourhoods and enabling Mayoral Development Corporations to charge and operate a CIL.

## **EIA REGULATIONS**

- The consultation exercise on the consolidation, with amendments, of the 1999 environmental impact assessment Regulations (as amended) was completed towards the end of last year. These regulations - The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 - came into force on 24 August.

## **GREATER FLEXIBILITY FOR PLANNING PERMISSIONS: GUIDANCE**

- The 23 March 2011 'Plan for Growth' included a commitment to an autumn consultation on a further package of measures to streamline the information required to support planning applications, in order to make it simpler and more efficient. Consultation is scheduled for autumn 2011.
- Budget statement of 23 March 2011 announced consultation on Change of use from residential to commercial. Consultation was launched on 8 April and ended on 30 June. Analysis of consultation responses (700) currently in progress. Awaiting views of Ministers on way forward following consultation.
- Any legislation arising from our analysis of the consultation responses and subsequent recommendations will be autumn 2011.
- Budget statement also announced wider review of the use Classes Order; Calls for evidence/issues papers to be sent to key partners; Phase 2 of review to develop options is scheduled for early autumn 2011.

## **LOCAL PLANS**

- Local authority plans are key to setting a strategic context for successful neighbourhood plans, and the tool to making sure the 'duty to co-operate' and cross boundary joint working between local councils and public bodies is achieved. As of August, 116 councils have adopted core strategies, or been found sound.
- On 15 July we published the Local Planning Regulations – consultation, seeking views as to whether the revised regulations are fit for purpose. The consultation closes on 7 October.

## **RED TAPE CHALLENGE**

- In April the Government launched the Red Tape Challenge to take stock of the 21,000 statutory rules and regulations active in the UK today. It harnesses the ideas and experience of those who deal with regulation on a daily basis to help cut unnecessary

bureaucracy. Every few weeks the regulations affecting one specific theme are published on the Red Tape Challenge website. Planning regulations are part of the Housing and Construction theme, which is likely to go live on the Red Tape Challenge website later this year.

- Following a five-week window during which the regulations in a theme are available for comment on the website, the comments will be used to help produce proposals on regulatory reform, including which should stay, which should go and which should change. These will then be reviewed by a Ministerial 'Star Chamber' with the presumption that all burdensome regulations will go unless Departments can justify why they are needed – well-defined and necessary regulation will be kept. Departments then put their proposals to the Reducing Regulation Committee, seek policy clearance and in due course decisions will be published on the Red Tape Challenge website.