

National Planning Forum

Planning Reform – the Bill and beyond

Shona Dunn – 4 Mar 2011

The Government's vision Freedom, Fairness and Responsibility

- Fundamental change in the relationship between citizens and the state.
- Individuals and communities have more power and responsibility.
- Freedom from top-down controls.
- Extending transparency to every area of public life.

The Coalition:
our programme
for government



Reform to achieve...

- Greater democratic and local control
- Rebalancing system in favour of sustainable development
- Delivering a simpler and more effective system

Delivering...

A plan-led system that empowers local people to shape their surroundings whilst encouraging the idea that development can positively benefit a community. A system that is positive, proactive, simple, less adversarial and free from bureaucratic barriers.

But why? If it ain't broke...

We all know the planning system has problems, it:

- is **centralised, bureaucratic and complex** – 3,254 new pages of guidance since 2005 alone;
- is **costly** – over £2bn a year - 13 per cent more in real terms last year than five years ago - despite 32 per cent drop in applications received;
- **alienates and disempowers communities** – many will seek to resist development regardless of the circumstances of the potential wider benefit; and
- **has failed to deliver** - despite targets we have one of the lowest rate of house-building in the EC. Costs to the economy associated with delays in processing applications up to £3bn a year.

The vehicles at our disposal.....

- The Localism Bill
- Incentives to accept sustainable development
- The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The Growth Review and subsequent changes to the system

Key Planning elements ...

- Abolition of regional strategies
- Duty to Cooperate
- Local Plan reform
- Neighbourhood planning
- Reforming CIL
- Pre application consultation
- Enforcement
- Major infrastructure (IPC)

The Planning clauses have just finished in Committee – generally well received and moving towards consensus

Still aiming for an early report stage by end March, Lords Introduction possibly in May and Royal Assent as soon as Parliamentary time allows

Duty to Cooperate

Strong signals that clause could be strengthened to make it clearer that it is about strategic planning (not information exchange) and the need to have some form of sanction for failure to cooperate

Amendments from RTPI and others captured the points well and we are currently looking at how we could:

- Be clearer that the duty applies to cross-border strategic planning
- Be clearer about what is expected from engagement – including giving consideration to the preparation of joint local plans
- Enforce strategic planning through the test of soundness for local plans
- Consider how to promote local economic cooperation and the role of LEPs
- Other minor adjustments to clarify provision

Local Plans

- Debate on setting a statutory timetable for getting plans in place
- Questions about whether specific issues to be covered by plans such as assessment of housing need should be on face of Bill – for the NPPF
- Questions also about Town Centre First policy – also for the NPPF

Neighbourhood plans

- Consider whether we should strengthen business involvement
- Considering strengthening the accountability of neighbourhood forums including looking at minimum numbers and the role of local councillors
- Interested in allowing PINS and LA employees to be examiners
- Minister clear on importance of heritage tests to neighbourhood plans
- Interested in ensuring cross-border plans can be delivered

CIL

- Minor issues being considered as a result of debate including specifics around neighbourhood funding
- Consideration of general widening of possible uses of CIL to ensure can provide a genuine incentive
- Reflecting on definition of infrastructure in respect of affordable housing

Sustainable Development and the National Planning Policy Framework

- Many questions about whether the NPPF should be on the face of the Bill and about its legislative status if not on the face of the Bill
- Questions also about whether the presumption should be on the face of the Bill or even a definition of sustainable development for the purposes of the planning system
- Flexibility is key to an effective NPPF – Ministers still considering but wary of anything that introduces inflexibility and complexity

The National Planning Policy Framework (including the Presumption)

- All the Government's planning policies which bite on plan-making and development control decisions, presented **in one place** in an **integrated** way.
- **Sustainable development** at its heart (with a presumption in favour of such development).
- **Localist** in its approach, handing power back to local communities to decide what is right for them.
- Used as a mechanism for **delivering Government objectives** only where it is relevant, proportionate and effective to do so.
- User-friendly and accessible, providing **clear policies** on making robust local and neighbourhood plans and development management decisions.
- No waffle!

Pre-Consultation now closed - deadline on Monday 28 February

Around 3,000 responses received – including a number of campaigns.

3 key themes emerging:

- How the NPPF relates to the Bill
- Whether the NPPF should be spatial
- Support for retaining existing policies, highlights....:
 - Development Plans – how they work at the local/neighbourhood level; hierarchies; and whether the system should still be plan-led.
 - Housing
 - Economic growth
 - Protected Designations e.g. landscape & historic buildings
 - Range of environmental issues e.g. climate change mitigation, flooding
 - Design and quality
 - Minerals & Waste
 - Retaining town centre first retail policy

- Understanding and analysing all of the responses received fully
- Continuing debate with partners bilaterally and in other fora as draft develops
- Consultation draft and IA available in the summer for full public consultation – including Select Committee enquiry
- Government response to consultation and final version published in April 2012

Make sure you keep engaged and keep telling us what's important to you as we develop our first draft...

The Growth Review and Planning

- Launched by BIS/HMT on 29 November.
- Rolling programme over the term of Parliament, with a first report by Budget 2011.
- Intended to be a “*fundamental assessment of what each part of Government is doing to provide the conditions for private sector success and address the barriers faced by industry*”
- DCLG leading the planning work stream and contributing to a number of other strands ... regulation, competition, construction and retail.
- Will build on the strong pro-growth principles of the Bill and the NPPF and will include a strong planning package which will set the scene for further ambitious thinking in the way we want to see the planning system evolve to be positive and proactive in the delivery of sustainable economic growth... Watch this space!

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