

<p style="text-align: center;">Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper 21 May 2007</p>

Background – *Barker and Eddington*

The Government announced in the 2005 Pre-Budget Report that Kate Barker would lead an independent review of land use planning, focusing on the link between planning and economic growth. The final report of the Barker Review was published in December 2006, shortly after the Eddington Transport Study, which examined the long-term links between transport and the UK's economic productivity, growth and stability, within the context of the Government's broader commitment to sustainable development and the environment. The Planning White Paper details proposals for reform of the planning system, building on both Barker's recommendations for improving efficiency and effectiveness in land use planning, and Sir Rod Eddington's proposals for reform of infrastructure planning.

Introduction and proposals

On 21 May 2007, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP, launched *Planning for a Sustainable Future – White Paper*. The wide-ranging reforms aim to improve the planning system and are set out in detail in the White Paper, as well as a schedule of government responses to Barker recommendations and the launch of a consultation on the proposals.

- Planning ensures development meets economic, social and environmental objectives in an integrated and sustainable way, therefore an effective and efficient planning system is essential.
- The need for development and modernisation must be balanced with a need to protect the environment and local communities.
- A plan-led approach with development plans and policies at both local and regional level on which the public is consulted is preferable.
- Significant developments have been made since 1997 on planning policy, however there are long-term challenges for the whole planning system: commercial, residential and infrastructure. The long-term challenges are:
 - Climate change – planning can help meet CO₂ reduction targets through, for example, low-carbon homes, reducing travel needs, and supporting integrated public transport.
 - Sustainable economic development – planning can help through supporting increased competitiveness and associated economic developments.
 - Increasing housing supply as the population increases, ages, and becomes more prosperous.
 - Improving local and national infrastructure is essential for sustainable communities.
 - Protecting and enhancing the environment and natural resources, and maintenance of security of energy supply.
- Reform of current national policy is essential as it is not clear, responsive, efficient or effective. Individuals and communities struggle to have the opportunity to deliver their opinions on planning projects and processes, because



the present system is complex and opaque. On occasion there are problems with the level of decision making i.e. local/national.

- Further reform is needed and the foundations for this are in the recommendations from Eddington on infrastructure planning and Barker on land-use planning. The government's five-core principles are:
 1. Planning must be responsive and address long-term challenges.
 2. Planning should be streamlined, efficient and predictable.
 3. All stakeholders must have the opportunity to comment and engage.
 4. Planning should be transparent and accountable.
 5. The appropriate level of government should undertake planning.
- Government proposes integrated planning – inclusive of economic, social and environmental objectives – which is facilitated through a clear policy framework. Any national policy is long-term for key infrastructure projects – including renewable energy.
- Town and country planning systems will be made more efficient and effective, to improve flexibility i.e. through reducing the need to request for planning permission and streamline the application process.

Summary of proposals

For key national infrastructure such as major airport and port projects, improvements to the **Strategic Road Network**, major new power generating facilities and facilities critical to energy security, and major reservoir and waste water plant works. Government proposes to deliver:

- national policy statements to ensure that there is a clear policy framework for nationally significant infrastructure which integrates environmental, economic and social objectives to deliver sustainable development;
- provide greater certainty for promoters of infrastructure projects and help them to improve the way that they prepare applications;
- streamline the procedures for infrastructure projects of national significance by rationalising the different consent regimes and improving the inquiry procedures for all of them;
- clarify the decision making process by creating an independent commission to take the decisions on nationally significant infrastructure cases within the framework of the relevant national policy statement;
- improve public participation across the entire process.

For the town and country planning system, Government proposes to:

- produce a more strategic, clear and focused national planning policy framework;
- publish a new Planning Policy Statement, 'Planning for Economic Development', which will further reinforce the Government's commitment to promoting a strong, stable and productive economy with access for all to jobs, regeneration and improved employment prospects;
- improve the effectiveness of the town centre planning policy;
- **finalise the Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change** and introduce legislation to set out clearly the role of local planning authorities in tackling energy efficiency and climate change;



- **work with industry to set in place a timetable and action plan to deliver substantial reductions in carbon emissions from new commercial buildings within the next 10 years;**
- review and wherever possible extend permitted development rights on microgeneration to non-residential types of land use including commercial development;
- place planning at the heart of local government by aligning the Sustainable Community Strategy and the local development framework core strategy;
- introduce changes to local development frameworks to ensure a more streamlined and tailored process with more flexibility;
- introduce Planning Performance Agreements;
- introduce a new impact approach to householder development which will reduce the number of minor applications;
- and streamline the planning application process, reduce the number of applications called in by ministers.

(Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper, p.24-25)

Consultation

Annex A of the White Paper launches a consultation, requesting responses to a number of the key proposals contained in the White Paper and other issues on which the Government would like comments:

- Proposed reforms to the development consent regime for nationally significant infrastructure projects
 - Improving the way key infrastructure projects are dealt with
 - National policy statements
 - Preparing applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects
 - Determining applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects
- Proposals to reform the town and country planning system
 - A positive framework for delivering sustainable development
 - Strengthening the role of local authorities in place shaping
- Making the planning system more efficient and effective
- Other issues – including planning fees

The deadline for submissions is Friday 17 August 2007. Responses and queries can be sent to: planningreformconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

The full document may be accessed at:

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/669/PlanningforaSustainableFutureWhitePaper_id1510669.pdf

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Huckstep on jhuckstep@smtt.co.uk or 020 7344 9217

