

Report on the Planning White Paper

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Summary: The Planning White Paper and associated documents on planning performance agreements and changes to permitted development rights are the subject of public consultation. There are implications for the Board and AONB and responses are proposed to each document.

Purpose of Report: To propose and approve responses to the Planning White Paper and associated public consultation exercises.

Background

1. The 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' White Paper was published by the Secretaries of State for: Communities and Local Government; Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Trade and Industry, and Transport at the beginning of June. It is subject to a public consultation process that closes on 17th August 2007.
2. The main aims of the White Paper are to:
 - streamline the planning system;
 - introduce a new system to make decisions on major infrastructure projects more timely and efficient;
 - set policy for such projects at the national level, and
 - improve engagement in the system.
3. The White Paper is accompanied by consultations on other documents including 'Planning Performance Agreements' (a new way to manage large-scale major planning applications) and 'Changes to Permitted Development' (permitted development rights for householders). All of these documents are subject to a proposed Board response detailed in Appendix 1. The key elements of the documents are detailed below.

The Planning White Paper

4. Key infrastructure projects will be considered by an independent Infrastructure Planning Commission which will base decisions on national policy statements. Guidance will be offered to promoters of such schemes.
5. The procedures for infrastructure projects will be improved by rationalising the different development consent regimes and improving the inquiry procedures for all of them.
6. Public participation will be improved across the entire process with opportunities to be involved being extended to include open floor stages at inquiries.

7. There is a proposal to explore devolution on decisions on smaller infrastructure projects, where appropriate, to local authorities.
8. National Policy Statements (NPS) would be better prepared in the context of a national spatial planning strategy and the implications for the environment should receive greater recognition.
9. Public consultation will be fundamental to the proposed system and applications for major infrastructure projects should meet defined standards before being considered by the infrastructure planning commission.
10. The Government proposes that certain organisations should be consulted on relevant projects – whilst National Park authorities are included in the list AONB Conservation Boards (and other management bodies) are not.
11. There will still be a requirement to have regard to the purposes of AONBs, as a result of the relevant Acts of Parliament, in decisions that the IPC will make.
12. There are proposals to review the current planning policy framework (PPG and PPS) to produce a more strategic, clearer and more focused national framework.
13. One proposal that is particularly welcomed and supported is that which would remove the requirement that all SPDs should be listed in a local planning authority's LDS (paragraph 8.21). In addition it is proposed that the blanket requirement for sustainability appraisal of SPD should be removed (paragraph 8.23).
14. The timely provision of infrastructure is also discussed and should be soundly addressed as part of the plan making process.
15. The Government intends simplify the planning application process by introducing an approach that assesses the impact of proposals on others, to determine what type of development is permitted.

Planning Performance Agreements – a new way to manage large-scale major planning applications

16. Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) are a means of providing greater certainty with regard to the speed and quality of large planning application assessments and decisions. Though not having direct implications for the Board and AONB the use of PPAs is to be welcomed.
17. The PPA process would allow early involvement by environmental bodies and specific consultees. As part of the process a list of key issues should be created.
18. The consultation document redefines major development into two categories – large-scale major and small-scale major applications and that only the large-

scale category would be removed from the 13 week determination requirement (BV target 109a).

Changes to Permitted Development – permitted development rights for householders

19. The Government is advocating an impact approach for permitted development.
20. The Government is proposing that the restrictions proposed for conservation areas should apply to other designated areas (including AONBs).
21. Consultation will be undertaken in connection with basement development.
22. The Government is considering changes to Article 4 directions so that the Secretary of State approval is not always required and the right to compensation may be removed.
23. Some types of permitted development could be subject to prior approval procedures (similar to those for telecommunications development).
24. The Government proposes various limits for extensions, roof extensions, alterations and developments within the curtilage of dwellings, many of which are similar to the existing situation, though many are restricted in designated areas.
25. The consultation suggests no restriction on paving over gardens as it is not considered to be a national problem.

Recommendation

1. **That the Board approves the responses to the Planning White Paper and associated consultation documents as detailed in Appendix 1.**