

Consultation on Local Planning Regulations

A response by the English National Park Authorities Association

October 2011

The English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA) exists to support the policy making process by co-ordinating input on behalf of the nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. It is governed by the Chairs of the ten Authorities, and our response represents the collective view of the Authorities. It has been prepared by officers, working within the policies established by the National Park Authorities (NPAs) and follows consultation within the National Parks Heads of Planning Group. Individual NPAs may submit separate comments, which will draw on the specific issues for their particular area.

General Comments:

ENPAA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft regulations and supports many of the proposed changes, particularly:

- the retention of important elements of the current system, such as the production of Local Development Schemes and Monitoring Reports whilst reducing requirements and increasing flexibilities regarding the amount and type of information required to be formerly reported to government;
- the change in focus on reporting relevant information to local communities and businesses;
- the proposal to remove a number of the definitions associated with the policy planning process, such as 'Core Strategy', and 'Area Action Plan'. This should hopefully make the local plan preparation process more accessible to local communities;
- the proposal for planning inspectors' recommendations being non-binding on the local planning authority and the increased flexibility of the examination process regarding non material changes to the plan; and
- the opportunity for local planning authorities to withdraw DPDs at any time before adoption.

ENPAA would also like to make the following comments relevant to the consultation with regard to the duty to co-operate. The list of organisations that have been identified in the regulations doesn't include local authorities themselves or neighbouring authorities. Is it not essential for local planning authorities to be included in the regulations? For example, within National Parks this will be very important in relation to housing provision.

In addition, although the draft regulations correctly refer to local planning authorities, the introductory text refers to 'local councils' – it should be noted that National Park Authorities are not councils, they are however local planning authorities.

Response to Consultation Questions:

Question 1: Do you agree that the revised regulations effectively reflect the changes proposed in the Localism Bill?

Largely, however it is confusing that the regulations still refer to development plan documents when the localism bill and draft National Planning Policy Framework refer to local plans. ENPAA would support the more consistent use of the term local plan as this is more readily understood by local communities. In addition the role of Supplementary Planning

Documents is diluted in the draft National Planning Policy Framework but they are still an important part of the regulations.

Question 2: Do you agree with the list of bodies included in the duty to cooperate?

The draft regulations should ensure a role for Local Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas in the plan making process in the same way that Local Enterprise Partnerships are given a specific role. This would then reflect the aspirations within the Natural Environment White Paper to protect natural value through the planning system.

In addition, it is suggested that the National Grid and Forestry Commission are also included.

Question 3: Do you agree the revised regulations effectively consolidate the 2004 regulations with the revisions in 2008 and 2009?

Yes

Question 4: Are there any ways in which the regulations should be changed in order to improve the process of preparing local plans, within the powers set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Localism Bill?

There is nothing currently included to cover the relationship with neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders. Some clarity on this would be very helpful and would allow local communities to have a greater understanding of planning policy for their local areas.

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