



Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons London SW1P 3JA

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22 April 2013

Rt Hon Eric Pickles, MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
SW1E 5DU

Dear Eric,

Following the amendments which the Government tabled on Friday to the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, the Committee would be grateful for an urgent response to the following questions.

- 1) Has an impact assessment been carried out to support the new proposals? If it has, can we please see it?
- 2) How will the environmental and social impact of proposals falling within the new arrangements be assessed? The proposals do not appear to allow a local planning authority to consider the wider social and environmental impact of a proposed extension but only the impact on immediate neighbours. Some extensions will have an impact on a neighbourhood that is wider than the immediate impact – for example, in terms of making areas more dense, being visible far more widely than simply by immediate neighbours - and may well have an environmental impact in terms of loss of natural habitat and green space, and prevention of running-off rainfall back to the soil. The proposals in the 2007 submission to the Shadow Cabinet, Quality of Life Policy Group, which the Government cites, were predicated on much tighter environmental controls over extensions – based on the integration of planning and Building Control - and the introduction of compulsory insurance.
- 3) Are the new proposals, like the old, time limited?
- 4) I understand that this Government's policy, like the last, is that the planning system should be financially self-sufficient. Given that the new proposals generate no fees but additional work for planning departments, how does the Government reconcile its proposals with its policy on financial self-sufficiency?
- 5) In addition, the 2007 submission to the Shadow Cabinet appears to differ from the announced proposals in that as well as suggesting a fee the 2007 report said, that there would be a conciliation service staffed separately from local authority planners. It did not suggest a services run by councillors themselves. That report states: "By adopting this proposal, there would be a considerable lessening of the work of many local planning departments and the scarce supply of planners would be released to get on with the kind of work for which they are

needed". Why has the Government not adopted these aspects of the proposals?

6) When the Committee examined the original proposals it noted that the benefits were marginal- in a range that ran from £5m to £100m. The new proposals appear to make the benefits even more marginal. What is the Government's revised range? As I understood it the original estimate was based on how many people were put off entirely from applying for planning permission who would now develop if there was no control. If some form of control is brought back, will not those people still be put off and are we back to quite marginal national benefits to be set against a loss of fee income and loss of local control?

7) Given that most planning applications for domestic extensions are determined within 8 weeks, will the new arrangements be any faster?

8) What arrangements will there be for appeals?

7) Will householders be able to submit a planning application if they are refused under the new arrangement?

8) Will the new arrangements that the Government proposes apply to all permitted development - in particular, will they apply to an extension allowed under the current rules to which a neighbour objects? Will they also apply to other forms of permitted development - for example, to offices converted to housing and to certain types of shops that the public often object to?

9) Will the a local authority itself be able to object to notified development under the new proposals?

10) The announcement made on Friday appeared to say that the need for a certificate of Lawful Development would disappear. What happens if a houseowner plans an extension just over the new permitted development limit and no one objects, surely that development must be outside planning control and not legal?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts', with a large, stylized initial 'C' at the start.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Communities and Local Government Committee