

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Consultation Paper on new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development

6 March 2008

Report of Head of Planning Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To allow Members the opportunity to comment on a proposed consultation response relating to the Department of Community and Local Government consultation on new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the City Council generally welcomes the new PPS on Sustainable Economic Development. It requests, however, that any reference to live-work developments should include clear requirements for conditions to ensure that the work element remains available in perpetuity even if this requires sale of units after business occupation ceases. This aspect of the policy should also highlight the potential for abuse of planning policy in rural areas and support Local Authorities in firm enforcement action where appropriate to prevent it.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This is a long awaited consultation on the document which is intended to replace Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 (Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms). That document was published in 1992 and is now somewhat out of date as a statement of national planning policy.
- 1.2 The Government are asking for comments on the revised policy and require a response by 17th March 2008.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 Economic growth is seen as vital to creating a sustainable society. The new policy position recognises, however, that it is not always possible to predict the nature of potential growth in every area and that growth must be responsive to market forces. To modernise this aspect of policy it is made clear that a commitment to sustainable development responding to climate change is a key policy objective.
- 2.2 Economic development is defined in the document as now covering a wide range of economic activities. Far more than the traditional industrial and commercial use classes. It now includes retail, waste management and telecommunications activities, creative and tourism related activity, transport nodes such as ports and airports, freight terminals and energy production. Mineral extraction, housing and agriculture are also identified as coming within the scope of the policy.
- 2.3 Thankfully there are clear requirements for high quality design, the promotion of sustainable travel and the mitigation of adverse impacts arising from development.
- 2.4 The first main thrust of the policy is to require regional planning bodies and local planning authorities to use a wide evidence base to understand the needs of business in their areas and to adapt local policy to support those needs. Evidence of this type is now needed to support Local Development Frameworks so the requirements are nothing new or duplicating. Such evidence will also need to look at potential forces for change and help to develop policies to deal with new expanding sectors, such as knowledge and technology based industries.
- 2.5 Adapting land use policies to recognise the specific benefits of uses locating adjacent to each other is specifically mentioned. This is an important feature for Lancaster District in that it recognises and gives policy support to the need for Bailrigg Science Park to be physically located adjoining the university campus. Such interrelationships are a key locational factor for knowledge based developments.
- 2.6 The need for flexibility within Development Plans is also emphasised. Land allocation for restricted use classes will be discouraged, as will continually rolling over land allocations for traditional employment purposes where no take up has taken place in a single plan period.
- 2.7 There is encouragement for the use of vacant or derelict buildings, including historic buildings in rural areas to encourage positive economic regeneration. There is however a worrying level of support for live-work units which does not reflect this Authority's experiences with dealing with such developments.
- 2.8 Funding bodies are reluctant to agree conditions and restraints to prevent live-work units becoming permanent residences after business occupiers retire. Without such controls units will house an operating business for only one relatively short period then lose the business use in perpetuity, as it would be unlikely that any future purchaser would be prepared to reinstate a business use.
- 2.9 Without strict controls over live/work units in perpetuity, the concept is capable of being used as a means to abuse genuine planning controls over sporadic development in rural areas and this has implications for all local authorities.

- 2.10 Where appropriate local authorities are encouraged to develop specific policies about tall buildings, and are guided to develop car parking policies which clearly relate to local circumstances. This means differentiating between urban and rural areas, and identifies hospitals as having particular access and parking needs.
- 2.11 Telecommunications development is unusually mentioned. Encouragement for mast sharing and safeguarding locations from telecommunications development because of their impact on the built, natural and historic environment is introduced as a specific aim. This is very positive and may assist Members in their desire to introduce a locations policy for telecommunications masts in the District.
- 2.12 Finally, the draft PPS concludes with a requirement for positive development control. This suggests a presumption in favour of economic development unless there are good reasons in social, economic, or environmental terms to resist it.
- 2.13 There is an emphasis on practicality such as recognising that some schemes may not be predictable through the LDF process but should still be considered positively on the basis of supporting evidence. In rural area it is made clear that an urban approach to sustainable travel patterns will not be appropriate.

Comments to be Forwarded

- 3.14 Overall the new policy position is to be welcomed. It introduces nothing particularly radical and merely aligns policy on sustainable economic development with most other recent reforms.

The taking of a more pragmatic view about accessibility and development in rural areas is entirely sensible and will help in this district to encourage diversification away from the main urban centres.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

This is a matter of national planning policy formulation which will influence the determination of planning applications and the preparation of the Local Development Framework for Lancaster District. It will enable the Local Authorities responsible for sustainable economic development to adapt national policy to local circumstances, especially those reflecting the districts diverse character between urban and rural issues.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report although in future, preparation of policies and proposals in line with this guidance may help the City Council in being well placed to bid for external funding for sustainable economic development .

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The comments made in respect of the problems with enforcing conditions relating to live-work accommodation are derived from real cases in this district. Failure of the Government to react positively to these comments may mean that live-work conditions will be unenforceable in practical terms.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The monitoring officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Consultation Paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 4 ; Planning for Sustainable Economic Development. December 2007

Contact Officer: Andrew Andrew Dobson

Telephone: 01524 582303

E-mail: adobson@lancaster.gov.uk

Ref: ASD/D