

Decision Maker: **Development Control Committee**

Date: **20th September 2012**

Decision Type: Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **PROPOSED PLANNING CHANGES**

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Chief Officer: Bob McQuillan-Chief Planner

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

On 6th September 2012 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced in a written statement proposed wide ranging changes to the planning regime. The Chairman has requested this report to give members a chance to discuss the proposed changes.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members request the Chief planner to advise the Secretary of State of their reaction to the proposed changes and copy the response to the local MPs

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: New policy.
 2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Planning Budget
 4. Total current budget for this head: £2m
 5. Source of funding: Existing budget
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 1
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 3
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-statutory - Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): N/A
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 On 6th September 2012 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced in a written statement a number of proposed changes to the planning regime. A copy of the statement is available at www.communitiesandlocalgovernment/statements .
- 3.2 The statement covers 10 areas:-
- increasing investment in the private rented sector
£200 million will be invested in housing sites to ensure that the high quality rented homes are available to institutional investors.
 - affordable housing guarantees and tackling empty homes
The Government will invite bids to provide up to an additional 15,000 affordable homes through the use of loan guarantees and to extend the refurbishment programme to bring 5,000 empty homes back into use.
 - helping first time buyers
The Government intends to continue to support house building through Newbuy making it easier to obtain a mortgage with a 5% deposit.
 - accelerating large housing schemes
The government will work with scheme promoters, local authorities and communities to accelerate delivery of locally supported major housing sites.
 - getting surplus public sector land back into use
There is a commitment to work with the Mayor of London to accelerate disposals by providing a single shop window for all surplus public sector land
 - reducing planning delays
The government proposes that where there are failures in performance, applications should be decided by the Planning Inspectorate rather than local Councils. It is also proposed to extend the fast track appeal procedure, currently only available for householder appeals.
 - reducing the cumulative burden of red tape
The Government intends to legislate so that by 2013 any developer of sites which are unviable because of the number of affordable homes can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.
 - supporting locally-led development
Councils are encouraged to use the flexibilities set out in the National Planning Policy Framework to tailor the extent of the Green Belt in their areas to reflect local circumstances.
 - helping homeowners improve their homes
A consultation is proposed on increasing existing permitted development for extensions to homes and business premises in non-protected areas for a three year period.
 - getting empty office space into use
This proposes to introduce permitted development rights to enable change of use from commercial to residential properties.
- 3.3 Members are most likely to be interested in the proposed changes to the amount of permitted development even if only for a 3 year period. This is an extremely retrograde step in protecting the environment and the amenities of neighbouring residents. Far from reducing the number of applications it is likely simply to substitute applications for planning permission with applications for Lawful Development Certificates. It is difficult to understand how it is feasible or fair to limit

this to a 3 year period. The Council should be able to put forward its views in a forthcoming consultation. To ensure that the Council does not have its role in determining applications of whatever type replaced by Planning Inspectors will require additional resource commitment to ensure that the Council is not criticised for “undue delay”.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The proposed changes would impact on both the preparation of development plan documents and the determination of planning applications.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Financial, legal and personnel implications.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Secretary of State’s statement of 6 th September