

Places People and Planning - A consultation on the future of the Scottish planning system

A summary of the consultation produced on behalf of the Museselburgh Conservation Society by Barry Turner:

There are four key themes with four related key questions, 20 individual proposals and 34 optional technical questions. The deadline for comments on a prescribed on-line proforma is 4th April.

The proposals seek to change the perception of planning as being bureaucratic and dull and to unlock the potential of people and places. Planning should be central to the delivery of great places and a force for positive change. The planning system should help to improve peoples' lives by making better places and supporting the delivery of good quality homes. Planners need to have the confidence to guide how an area should grow over the long term, not just respond to developers. The government wants planning to re-establish itself as a visionary profession rather than micro-manage the built environment.

If there are messages coming from these proposals they are that community involvement needs to be strengthened, public trust in the system must be improved, there should be an emphasis on delivery, infrastructure is paramount and the status of planning in local authorities needs to be upgraded. Here are the main proposals under the four key themes.

Making plans for the future

- There is a need to align community planning and spatial planning.
- Do away with Strategic Development Plans but have more proactive regional partnership working and develop the National Planning Framework (NPF) to better reflect regional priorities.
- Have a 10 year timescale for Local Plans.
- Replace the Main Issues Report (MIR) with a Draft Plan and do away with Supporting Guidance.
- Introduce a new 'gatecheck' by a reporter to deal with significant issues at an early stage.

People make the system work

- Local communities to be given the opportunity to produce 'Local Place Plans' as a framework for development and incorporation into local plans.
- Get children and young people involved in planning.
- Get more review decisions made locally. ('Keep decisions local')
- Charge for appeals and reviews and discourage repeat applications. Increased fees for retrospective applications.
- Reporters to clearly demonstrate how they have taken community views on board.

Building more homes and delivering infrastructure

- Actively seek out ways of delivering housing where progress is slow.
- Greater use of Simplified Planning Zones.
- Investigate how to give councils more powers to acquire land not being used as allocated.
- Consider a development land tax (i.e. build or pay a tax).
- Adopt an infrastructure first approach with better coordination of infrastructure planning at a national and regional level.
- Work towards an infrastructure levy.

Stronger leadership and smarter resourcing

- Increase planning fees to cover costs.
- Remove the need for planning consent for a wider range of development.
- Develop skills in planning departments and in the profession generally.
- Expand the use of IT.