

DELEGATED

**AGENDA NO
PLANNING COMMITTEE
22 OCTOBER 2014
REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR,
DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES**

**Report on Recent Correspondence between the Council and Ministers within the
Department for Communities and Local Government**

Summary

This local authority proactively fulfils its planning role, and actively promotes sustainable development, it approaches development management decisions positively – looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications can be approved wherever it is practical to do so. It also attaches significant weight to the benefits of economic and housing growth.

Consequently the Planning Committee and the Council have sought to enter into constructive dialogue with Government Ministers in the Department for Communities and Local Government to attempt to bring about significant changes in the National Planning Policy Framework to more accurately reflect and address housing delivery issues within the Borough.

This report is for information and sets out the correspondence which has taken place between the Council and Government Ministers since the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework

Correspondence with Department for Communities and Local Government

1. The growing concerns of Members to the changes to the planning system resulted in the passing of a resolution at Full Council which culminated in the Leader of the Council Councillor Cook writing to the Secretary of State Eric Pickles on 12 November 2012 advising him of the motion relating to concerns about the proposed changes to the planning system (**Appendix 1**)
2. A response to Councillor Cook's letter was received from Nick Boles MP the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning) dated 2nd January 2013 (**Appendix 2**)
3. The concern of Council Members to the position they had been placed in by National Government's National Planning Policy Framework in determining planning applications culminated in the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport, Councillor Smith, at the Full Council Meeting on 6th November 2013 submitting a motion which was carried:-

"This Council calls on the Conservative-led Government to urgently review its National Planning Policy Framework which effectively removes planning control from local authorities and communities and places it in the hands of private developers, and to reverse its huge reduction in public funding to support the development of brownfield sites for housing by investing to create jobs and new housing in the Borough and the rest of the North East.

Housing developers have made it clear they are no longer interested in developing brownfield sites because the costs of remediating these sites before they can start construction are too great. This has meant that the brownfield sites which previously contributed to the required five year supply of housing are no longer deliverable within a reasonable timescale. This is leading to Councils being directed by national Government policy, planning appeal and case law precedents, to approve developments on greenfield sites to meet their obligation to deliver a five year supply of housing land. This is causing increasing anxiety in the local communities affected, and as a result totally undermining the Government's stated intention of empowering local people to influence plans for their areas.

We have great sympathy for the many local residents who have invested considerable time and effort in contributing to local consultations on local planning frameworks and we can understand their extreme concern at the current top down interference with the democratic process that the new planning system was intended to prevent.

We resolve to write our MP's urging them to raise this issue with Ministers and to request Parliament urgently to review the National Planning Policy Framework and to look again at the levels of investment available to support development of brownfield sites."

4. As a result of this resolution Alex Cunningham MP for Stockton North wrote to Eric Pickles Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government drawing the Minister's attention to the issues. (**Appendix 3**)
5. A reply was received from Nick Boles Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning) (**Appendix 4**)
6. The Council at its meeting of Full Council on 5th March 2014 again debated the issue of the National Planning Policy Framework and agreed the following motion:-to write directly to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning) to again request Parliament to urgently review the National Planning Policy Framework and to look again at the levels of investment available to support development of brownfield sites. (**Appendix 5**)
7. A reply was received from Eric Pickles (**Appendix 6**)
8. Councillor Cook wrote to the Secretary of State in July 2014 following the withdrawal of the only private site from the process of considering suitable sites to meet the needs of Gypsy's and travellers seeking reassurance that the lack of a Gypsy and Traveller Strategy would not unduly impact on the progress of the Environment and Regeneration LDD. (**Appendix 7**)
9. A response was received from Eric Pickles on 20th August 2014 (**Appendix 8**)

Corporate Director of Development & Neighbourhood Services

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WARD AND WARD COUNCILLORS

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Ward | ALL |
| Ward Councillor | ALL |

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

As report

Environmental Implications

As report.

Community Safety Implications

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 has been taken into account in preparing this report and it is not considered the proposed development would not be in conflict with this legislation.

Human Rights Implications

The provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights 1950 have been taken into account in the preparation of this report and the proposed development will not contravene these human rights.

Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework