

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Fears grow for localism

Most civic and amenity societies would have welcomed an emphasis on localism and the Big Society if the legislation matched the accompanying mood music. There are growing fears that the words are there only to hide actions which will reduce the role of genuinely founded community groups, in the interests of greater freedom for development

Attack on planning

The budget used to be about tax and spending, but this year the Comprehensive Spending Review usurped all that. Of most significance may have been the thinly veiled attack on planning.

It is too easy to berate planners as bureaucrats standing in the way of development. Their job is often to say no or "yes, but" in the interests of preserving what we already have and which once destroyed cannot be restored. There has to be an objective assessment which neither developers nor Nimby's are capable of making.

The Localism Bill had its report stage and third reading in the Commons on Tuesday and Wednesday 17th & 18 May.

In advance of this, on 13th May the Heritage Alliance's Parliamentary Liaison team issued a further briefing to MPs outlining the Alliance's stance on the Bill as it stood at the time: welcoming Amendments 173 (restoring protection for Listed Buildings, their settings, and Conservation Areas where it had been removed in previous drafts of the Bill), 163 (permitting neighbourhood development forums to cross local authority boundaries) and 161 (encouraging diversity in the make-up of neighbourhood forums). Most importantly, its response highlighted the areas of the Bill over which the Alliance still had concerns for heritage protection, and offered suggested amendments to the current text of the Bill that would ensure protection for the historic environment would not be downgraded.

Its Parliamentary Liaison Team continues to work hard communicating the Alliance's perspective to Parliamentarians: they are currently preparing a briefing for the Lords in advance of the Bill's passage to the Upper Chamber in the first week of June, and will be meeting with Peers shortly to discuss this in

person. Further briefings will be posted on its website.

One of the concerns - the level to which business interests should be involved in neighbourhood planning, referred to by the press as the 'cash for permissions clause' - has reared its head in the third reading debate, as MPs voted in favour of adding a new clause to Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that would make "any local finance considerations" material to an application. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) slammed the move as "totally unacceptable", CPRE (a member of the Alliance) described the amendment as "a brazen attempt to legalise cash for sprawl" and Civic Voice (also a member of the Alliance) said the move would result in a "profound change with far reaching consequences for the integrity of the planning system and public confidence in its decisions."

This issue of Islington News has as its theme the threat to planning. As we went to press, the Localism Bill was due to have its second reading in the House of Lords.

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The copy date for our next newsletter is October 3rd.

Planning reform: extracts from the 2011 Budget

1.82 The planning system has held back investment and created distortions in the way that businesses compete, deterring development and growth. To address this, the Government will:

- * introduce a new presumption in favour of sustainable development, so that the default answer to development is 'yes';
- * localise choice about the use of previously developed land, removing nationally imposed targets while retaining existing controls on greenbelt land;
- * pilot a land auction model, starting with public sector land;
- * introduce a number of measures to streamline the planning applications and related consents regimes removing bureaucracy from the system and speeding it up. This will include a 12 month guarantee for the processing of all planning applications, including any appeals;
- * ensure a fast-track planning process for major infrastructure applications through the Major Infrastructure Planning system; and
- * consult on proposals to make it easier to convert commercial premises to residential.

1.83 To accelerate the release of public sector land to support homes and jobs, the Government will work with local authorities to expedite planning decisions for surplus military land and other public sites suitable for housing, also testing 'build now, pay later' techniques to quicken delivery. Together with the new presumption in favour of sustainable development, these proposals will potentially allow the Ministry of Defence to realise up to £350 million of estate disposals and enable delivery of up to 20,000 new homes by 2014-15.

1.84 To reform the planning system radically and

fundamentally, the Government will:

- * introduce a powerful new presumption in favour of sustainable development, so that the default answer to development is yes;
- * localise choice about the use of previously developed land, removing nationally imposed targets while retaining existing controls on greenbelt land;
- * produce a shorter, more focused and inherently pro-growth National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to deliver more development in suitable and viable locations;
- * set clear expectations that with immediate effect local planning authorities and other bodies involved in granting development consents should prioritise growth and jobs, through a Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 23 March 2011;
- * introduce new powers so that businesses are able to bring forward neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders;
- * bring forward proposals to extend Permitted Development rights, and will consult on proposals to make it easier to convert commercial premises to residential;
- * pilot a new land auction model, starting with public sector land; and
- * ensuring all planning applications and appeals will be processed in 12 months and that major infrastructure projects will be fast-tracked.

The London Forum has responded on our behalf to these proposals and their comments appear on the following three pages.

Your favourite local shops now deliver

This is the slogan of a campaign which has just been launched in Islington. By visiting www.hubbub.co.uk on line, you can avoid the hubbub of shopping and have your chosen items delivered to your door. The first delivery will be free. The participating shops are Fin & Flounder, Frank Godfrey Family Butcher, La Fromagerie, The Barnsbury Grocer, Paul A. Young Fine Chocolates, Ottoenghi, Earth Natural Foods, Saponara Italian Delicatessen and Hansen & Lydersen.

The promotional material is silent as to how near to these shops one needs to live to qualify for

free delivery or indeed any delivery. The greatest attraction of local shops will always be seeing the items you want (although some of the items have a fairly uniform appearance), the ability to establish a rapport with local shop-keepers, and the opportunity to shop on foot. Although the delivery option will have reduce the carbon footprint of shopping it will not eliminate it.

Nonetheless, the Society has always supported local shops and this is an attempt to do the same.

National Planning Policy Framework:

Comments by The London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies.

I am writing on behalf of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies which is an umbrella organisation for over 100 civic and amenity societies in Greater London.

We are major users of the Government's planning policies - PPGs and PPSs - in pressing both the Mayor, in preparing the London Plan, and the London Boroughs, in preparing their Core Strategies, to take national policy into account. We agree that the current Government publications on planning need rationalisation, needing a clear distinction between information, policy and guidance. This will require a good deal of thought about what is policy and what is guidance and the consequences of classifying material this way - that is the status of policy versus guidance.

We are, however, concerned that the proposed changes should lead to an improvement in practice and in implementation of the policy. It is not just an issue of how many words are used, but how effectively they explain the policy - it is about clarity, consistency and legal robustness.

We have set out below:

- the main requirements for the new documents
- user needs and audience
- style
- purpose of the NPPF
- composition and characteristics of existing PPGs/PPSs
- our proposals for consolidation
- what London needs
- our proposals for key policies to be retained

1. Main requirements

The London Forum is concerned that in producing a National Planning Policy Framework for England the document must be designed to:

- consolidate not change national planning policy - the challenge of converting existing policy to a new format is difficult enough (cf PPS4 and PPS5), but many of the policies have been reviewed, changed and refined over the last ten years. This should be a consolidation document.
- be better integrated - ensuring that cross-cutting issues, such as securing more sustainable patterns of development through ensuring the right development in the right place as in PPS1, PPS3, PPS4 and PPG13, need to be

consistently expressed throughout the document rather than seen as the "territory" of a single PPG/PPS (eg PPG13);

- be more clearly expressed whilst being legally robust - plain English may sound like a good idea, but the authors must understand who the users are - they do need to be more accessible to the general user, whilst at the same time remaining legally robust, since they will be forensically tested by planning lawyers at planning appeals and in the Courts - what is needed is clarity, certainty and consistency of interpretation;
- be more effective at securing the Government's objectives for spatial planning - any "simplification" must not undermine the ability to secure these objectives - economy in communication should not be at the expense of effectiveness in securing the desired outcomes; and
- be supported by guidance to all parties - local authorities, developers and communities - both Scottish and Welsh devolved administrations have found out that a briefer national policy statement requires practice guidance - how to do it and how to do it well - to secure better outcomes from the planning system.

We recognise that this is a major challenge for the authors, which underlines the need to use this as an exercise in faithfully and effectively capturing the essence of current policy, rather than embarking on policy change.

2. User Needs and Audience

The Government needs to recognise the needs of users for:

- information - how the planning system works - general principles
- policy - what the Government expects planning authorities, developers and communities to do - national planning policy
- guidance - on process, procedures - guidance to support implementation of policy and procedural/process issues - guidance both on how to do it and how to do it well.

This approach would help produce a "planning bookshelf" that would enable all potential users to understand the planning system, the Government's planning policy and how to undertake their roles more effectively.

Audience/users:

The main audiences for policy are:

- local planning authorities - planning officers and Members - to guide both plan making and development management
- developers and investors - to inform development decisions
- consultants (lawyers/planners/surveyors) - to advise clients
- communities/members of the public - to understand what they can expect from the planning system and from their planning authority.

This is a mixed ability audience, but nevertheless a "lowest common denominator" approach would be inappropriate if you want to ensure that the policy content is clear, internally-consistent and unambiguous.

3. Style

Policy documents need to be written in a clear, well-structured, legally robust manner, as clear expressions of national planning policy, but intended for a wide audience. Need to recognise that appellants will use lawyers to exploit any ambiguity.

Purpose:

To make clear what plans should include and what should be taken into account when making planning decisions. The document should set out the Government's overall objectives for spatial planning including:

- securing more sustainable patterns of development, including adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, by promoting at the strategic level the right development in the right place and, at the local level, promoting better-designed developments to improve sustainability and more sustainable neighbourhoods (e.g. walkable neighbourhoods)(PPS1, PPS3, PPS4 and PPG13)
- planning for sustainable economic growth, including building on successful places and exploiting existing infrastructure, such as focusing economic development (jobs, shops, leisure, entertainment, culture, etc) in city, town district and local centres (PPS4 and PPG13)
- managing change more effectively to produce a more attractive urban environment (PPS1, PPS5, PPG8, PPG19)
- manage change in the rural environment (PPS2, PPS7, PPG9, and PPG20 (part))

4. Existing PPGs/PPSs and Guidance

Need to use the content of existing PPGs/PPSs to distinguish between:

- procedural documents - how the system works - PPS11 can be cancelled, although we consider that the Mayor's London Plan needs more guidance that 1/2008, which leaves PPS12, which will need alteration after the Localism Act receives Royal Assent - are these "policy" or good practice?;
- key positive planning/place-shaping documents for promoting more sustainable patterns of urban development - PPS1, PPS3, PPS4 and PPG13, PPG17
- rural planning policy - PPG2, PPG7, PPG9, PPG20 (part) - proposed consolidated PPS on Natural and Healthy Environment
- planning to manage risks - PPG14, PPG20 (part), PPG22, PPG23, PPG24 and PPS25
- managing change - PPS5, PPG8, PPG18 and PPG19

5. Consolidation and repackaging existing policy and guidance

The previous Government started the conversion process from PPGs to PPSs, limiting the content to policy and stripping out guidance. This has been achieved effectively for PPS4 and PPS5, although for PPS3 there is a need to consider whether to strip out all the "how to do it" process/procedure material to guidance. The test is whether this is policy or guidance. For example, preparing a Strategic Housing Market Assessment may be policy - but how to do it is guidance! PPS3 could be radically shortened in the manner of PPS4 and PPS5.

We consider that PPS4 and PPS5 do not need further consolidation at this stage - they, and their accompanying guidance, should be retained.

The last Government proposed consolidation of PPS7, PPS9 and parts of PPG20 into a single draft PPS on the natural environment. We consider that this should be the next theme for consolidation

- This could be followed by consolidation of:
- planning to manage risk - PPG14, PPG20 (part), PPG22, PPG23, PPG24 and PPS25
 - managing change - PPG8, PPG18 and PPG19

6. What London Needs

Existing PPGs/PPSs barely recognise that major cities, let alone London, have different requirements than much of the rest of the country.

- There is relatively little acknowledgement of this apart from PPG2 (Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land).
- PPS3 does not recognise the importance of planning for higher densities;
- PPS4 does not recognise the need to plan for a dense network of centres and the importance of neighbourhood centres as a focus for walkable communities and the importance of town centres as the focus for the public transport network and the main location for not just shops, but for jobs, public administration, culture, etc; and the need to exploit locations with high public transport accessibility is particularly important in London, as is the need for maximum parking standards to reflect both density and higher public transport accessibility levels.
- The cross-cutting policy messages in PPG13 are fundamental to the creating or maintaining a more sustainable pattern of development and ensuring accessibility for all to wide range facilities - jobs, education, health, shopping, leisure and culture.
- PPG17 still does not acknowledge the more sophisticated approach that has been developed in London

London is fortunate in having a Spatial Development Strategy covering the whole of London. Government planning policy underpins this strategy and, whilst it does not repeat the various PPGs/PPSs or even refer to them, it is an essential starting point for articulating the plan, despite the fact that the PPGs/PPSs do not articulate the regional dimension. Thus, although the new NPPF is likely to expunge material that refers to levels above the local level, there will still be a need, especially for London, to articulate the need to consider the pattern of development - for housing, employment, shopping, leisure, health, etc - at a higher than local level.

7. Key policies that should be retained:

We propose that PPS4 and PPS5, including their guidance, should be retained since they have only recently been adopted - there should be no need for any change to these given the scale of the task ahead.

We agree with the priorities identified by Civic Voice as those most critical to retain, namely:

(1) Those which fundamentally shape the geography and location of housing, economic and other development:

- Town centre first policy for retail, leisure, offices, culture, public administration and other

town-centre uses; including retention of the sequential test and impact test and a positive approach to mixed use (PPS4)

- Making best use of previously developed land; including the sequential approach to the location of new housing and a positive approach to density and design (PPS3)
- Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (PPG2)
- Reducing the need to travel (PPG13) and additionally
- Locating high trip-generating uses in locations that are or will be well served by public transport (PPG13)

(2) Those which recognise and protect the qualities that make places attractive, enjoyable and distinctive:

- Historic environment (PPS5, Policies HE1-12)
- Design (PPS1)
- Conservation, restoration, enhancement and enjoyment of the natural environment (draft PPS natural environment)
- Local character and distinctiveness and the importance of sense of place (PPS5, draft PPS natural environment)
- Local green space (draft PPS natural environment)
- Local designations, including local listing, character areas and areas of landscape value (PPS5, draft PPS natural environment) and additionally
- the sequential approach to disposal of open space, which requires the needs of all other open space uses to be considered before disposal for development (PPG17)

(3) Those which promote sustainability and adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change

- Sustainable development, including the prudent use of natural resources (PPS1)
- Climate change (PPS1 Annex)
- Reducing the need to travel (PPG13)

We are particularly concerned that PPG13 should be "mainstreamed" - it contains cross-cutting policies which are fundamental to shaping the pattern of urban development and getting the right development in the right place.

We would be happy to discuss these issues with DCLG as part of the preparation of the new national planning policy Framework.

CPRE South East eBulletin

The Budget: Planning and Localism Special

27th March 2011

"We are going to tackle what every Government has identified as a chronic obstacle to economic growth in Britain, and what no Government has done anything about: the planning system. From today, the default answer to development is YES." (George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 12.55pm, Wednesday 23rd March 2011)

Budgets usually balance the income and expenditure of the Exchequer. On Wednesday the planning system uniquely took centre stage for part of George Osborne's Budget speech. The Treasury and Department for Business have apparently decided that the Localism Bill has gone too far towards indulging the interests of communities and strayed too far away from the priorities of business and central government. Wednesday's budget signalled that the march towards community-led localism has halted. Economic growth through development is now the overriding priority for the planning system. Local, community, environmental and heritage concerns must give way to that priority.

The Chancellor ordered planning authorities to adopt a presumption of saying YES to planning applications. Environmentally designated land and green belt will retain protection but green fields are to become an easier target for developers. Minister Greg Clark instructed local authorities to give paramount priority to economic development and threatened that if they did not do so central government would overrule their decisions on appeal. He announced that other consent regimes, including those for energy, environment, transport and heritage, will take second place to economic development. The irony of the Minister for Decentralisation issuing central directives on local planning, and threatening to intervene if they are ignored, seems not to have occurred to Mr Clark.

For every Budget, some of the most important news lies buried in the hundreds of pages of supporting analysis and argument. Perhaps that is why headlines such as "Budget promotes Tesco town roll out" have yet to appear. Businesses will now be able to develop neighbourhood plans and inevitably they will be able to use their public relations muscle to turn out the required 50% plus vote required for their approval. Has the government fallen for the rhetoric of the supermarket giants that their emporia are our local shops and their aisles are our high streets? Or does it not realise that businesses serve their shareholders first and local communities second?

This Budget will unleash a rush for short-term economic growth which could soon overwhelm our beautiful but inadequately protected landscapes and townscapes with quick-build monotony. This is a Budget that could quickly erode Britain's natural and historic environment, leaving little more than its crown jewels intact. It is a Budget that has clawed back power from local communities even before the Localism Bill which conveys those powers has completed its passage through parliament.

Localism, the main theme of the government statements on planning for many months, was nowhere in evidence on Budget day. George Osborne failed to mention localism once in his speech, and the Budget Report is a localism-free zone. The Plan for Growth makes no mention of localism anywhere.

Both Eric Pickles and Greg Clark, the government's champions of localism, issued press releases supporting the budget. They did not mention the localism word once between them.

When it comes to the localism agenda, central government and business interests have won. A local community can do what it wishes in planning matters, providing those wishes conform with what the government and business interests have told it to do. Localism is dead. It died in the House of Commons at 12.55pm on Wednesday, 23rd March 2011 when George Osborne told MPs that "the default answer to development is YES."

Andy Boddington, Editor

The CPRE South East eBulletin is issued monthly, with occasional special editions when required. It covers all the planning and environmental news with a relevance to the remit of CPRE. Views expressed are those of the editor, not of any part of CPRE. Our audience is CPRE and its friends.

The 2012 Budget at a Glance

* The government published a Plan for Growth alongside the usual budget papers. Eric Pickles and Greg Clark issued statements in support.

* George Osborne, the Treasury and the Department for Business attacked the planning

system, declaring that it was an impediment to growth.

* Osborne and Clark declared that economic growth and job creation are the overriding objective for planning authorities.

* Osborne said that from now on the "default answer to development is yes."

* Clark told planning authorities that if they do not prioritise economic growth and job creation over other planning considerations, the government would overturn local decisions on appeal.

* Clark stated, with the agreement of other ministers, that energy, transport, heritage and environmental consents take second place to the drive for economic growth.

* Businesses will now be able to develop neighbourhood plans on the same basis as local communities.

* Brownfield targets are to be abolished, with the expectation this will lead to more greenfield development.

* The green belt and other environmentally designated sites will retain protection.

* Local authorities will be able to take an option on purchasing land, and auction it when they have given the site planning permission-keeping the profits.

* 21 new enterprise zones are to be created, the first 11 in the north, west and London.

* The government intends to make it easier to change property from commercial to residential use without planning permission.

* Planning permission will be faster, with a 12 month guarantee for decision inclusive of any appeal.

Localism Q & A with Greg Clark M.P.

This note presents a series of questions developed by civic societies for Decentralisation Minister Greg Clark MP on the Localism Bill and his answers. The questions were developed at two networking events involving nearly 100 civic societies and in response to a podcast interview between Greg Clark and Civic Voice's Director, Tony Burton in March 2011.

1. *How does a neighbourhood development plan differ from a parish plan?*

At present when a community wants to set out its ambitions for its area through a parish plan, there is no duty on the local planning authority to support it in that activity or to adopt the plan produced by the community. This can lead to excellent plans with real community buy-in not being adopted or significantly used by the local planning authority.

Communities will be able to use the provisions within the Bill to produce a neighbourhood development plan that establishes general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. Subject to passing a number of tests, including independent examination and a community referendum, it will then become part of the statutory development plan for the local area and have a direct influence on the determination of planning applications in the area.

2. *Neighbourhood development plans are all very well but what is being done to simplify and involve people more in Local Plans?*

Councils already involve and engage people in the preparation of local plans. Here, the statement of community involvement will remain as a tool for communities to hold local councils to account. It

works as a clear reminder to involve local people and listen to their views - this is localism in action.

Changes in the Bill relating to local plans will be accompanied by streamlined regulations, policy and guidance over the next year or so to make the system easier to understand and to do - both for practitioners and local people.

We also expect the recently announced 'Frontrunners' project will uncover good practice in community-led planning.

3. *Our group is doing a lot to influence and prepare Area and Town Centre Action Plans so what extra benefit does neighbourhood planning provide?*

Area Action Plans (AAPs) will still be available as an important tool to help shape priority areas of regeneration or conservation. If an Area Action Plan is underway, communities may decide not to start a neighbourhood development plan but to participate in the AAP process instead. But whereas AAPs are usually led by local councils, neighbourhood planning will allow communities to take the lead in preparing proposals. Councils and communities will need to decide in each case whether it is appropriate to prepare an AAP or a neighbourhood development plan. There is no compulsion to prepare either type of plan, they are entirely optional

and both parties should talk to each other to ensure there is no duplication effort.

4. *It is difficult to get our head around the Localism Bill so what is going to help lay people understand what can be done?*

To ensure communities have the right support and advice to meet their aspirations, on 13th April I announced four organisations, with renowned expertise in planning, who will share a £3.2m fund to provide assistance to help local groups engage with the planning system..

In addition, we have published a plain English guide on the Localism Bill. See: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide> and we intend to supplement this with much more detailed advice on how we see neighbourhood planning over the summer.

5. *How is the commitment to localism consistent with proposals to relax planning controls and introducing the 'default answer to development is yes'?*

Localism and sustainable growth can - and should - support one another. We are committed to giving places more control over the issues that affect them, including giving them the freedom to identify what development is needed, and how best to deliver it.

Local planning authorities should press ahead without delay in preparing up-to-date plans, and use the opportunity to deliver the sustainable growth that we need. Where they do this, we want to ensure that there is confidence in those plans as the key basis for making planning decisions. That is something that the presumption in favour of sustainable development will emphasise, although the presumption will also give prominence to national policies where plans are not up-to-date.

6. *What resources will be available to local authorities to make the huge cultural change in their officers and ward councillors that the Bill implies at a time of major cuts?*

Government is committed to meeting unfunded new responsibilities which the Localism Bill places on councils. In addition, regulations under the Localism Bill will enable local councils to charge a fee on development carried out through a neighbourhood development order to meet some of the council's neighbourhood planning costs. Government anticipates that this charge will be below current planning application fees.

7. *What will prevent local councils frustrating communities by not agreeing neighbourhood planning boundaries or who can form a neighbourhood forum?*

Local councils will be accountable to communities and will have to explain their actions to them.

8. *The Localism Bill says local councils have to 'support' neighbourhood planning but ours doesn't support it. What support must they provide beyond running a referendum?*

Local authorities will have a legal duty to support neighbourhood forums and parish councils to develop their proposals. However, the extent of support and advice that is given will be for each local council to determine, according to their own skills, resources and the community's needs. In addition, they are required to take lead roles at various stages throughout the process for putting in place plans and orders, not just in running the referendum.

9. *Our community disagrees fundamentally with the core strategy of our local council so why would we want to prepare a neighbourhood development plan which can't question it?*

The neighbourhood planning system has been designed to enable neighbourhoods to come to a different view to the local plan on a range of policy areas - for example the detailed design, mix or location of development, while being in conformity with the local plan's strategic policies. However, neighbourhood development plans and orders are powerful planning tools and therefore there need to be appropriate checks and balances in place to ensure neighbourhood planning isn't used to block key infrastructure or development proposals from proceeding or to undermine important strategic policies in the local plan.

10. *Is £3m of Government funding enough to provide communities with the support they need to undertake neighbourhood planning right across the country?*

See answer to Question 4. The Localism Bill will allow the Secretary of State to be able to give funds directly to anyone doing neighbourhood planning. In many communities we anticipate a range of funding sources being used to support neighbourhood planning. Developers, local councils, landowners and local businesses may all be interested in sponsoring neighbourhood planning.

11. *The steps we will have to go through to prepare a neighbourhood development plan are quite daunting. Can the process be made simpler?*

Neighbourhood planning is another tool in the toolbox communities can use to plan for their area - it is flexible. We are leaving it to communities to decide what level of detail they want to provide and how they want to use plans or orders. For example, they could choose to have a plan with just one or two policies for a part of the neighbourhood or several policies for their area.

A minimum level of checks and balances are needed to ensure that neighbourhood planning isn't captured by unrepresentative interests and meets certain conditions before it becomes the starting point for making planning decisions. Local councils are placed under a duty to support neighbourhood forums and parish councils in preparing their proposals and we will be supporting a range of organisations to help neighbourhood forums and parish councils in the preparation of their plans.

12. Who will have the final say on whether a neighbourhood development plan is made?

If more than 50% of people voting in the referendum support the plan, then the local council must (except where they consider them to be incompatible with certain legal obligations) bring it into force. If less than 50% vote in favour, then a neighbourhood development plan cannot be brought into force.

13. Will there be measures to mediate between conflicting interests and bring different community perspectives together?

We will be consulting on regulations to prescribe the arrangements around consultation and participation. But, ultimately this is an opportunity for the community to work together to agree on a way forward for their neighbourhood that the majority of the electorate supports.

14. Will there be consultation on a neighbourhood development plan and will local authorities be obliged to publicise it?

We will be consulting on regulations to prescribe the arrangements around consultation. Overall, we expect that the nature of the consultation exercise to be proportionate to the scale and ambition of the proposals.

15. What are the 'strategic elements' of a Local Plan?
It is a matter of law what policies are strategic - though local planning authorities will need to make a judgement about this in order for a plan to go to

referendum. Whilst the strategic policies will be different in each local council's area, the overall scale and distribution of housing and employment are likely to be 'strategic policies' in many local council areas.

16. Who decides the neighbourhood boundary and who can form a neighbourhood forum?

The town or parish council or a community group applies to the local planning authority for a new area to become a neighbourhood area. In parished areas, the parish boundary is expected to be the starting point for the neighbourhood area. In response to an application, the planning authority must designate that area or some other area consisting of part of it as a neighbourhood area. Local planning authorities will need to ensure that neighbourhood areas are coherent, consistent and appropriate.

We anticipate that many new and existing residents' organisations, business and community groups will put themselves forward. Forums will need to have an open approach to their membership, including local residents and employees of businesses in the area. We expect local elected members to play a central role in neighbourhood planning activity in both parished and non-parished areas.

17. How long will neighbourhood development plans run for and will we need to go to a referendum for even the smallest change?

Neighbourhood development plans will include details on how long it will last, but we are not setting a limit on this.

18. How will the referendum on neighbourhood planning proposals work in a town centre where most of the people affected don't live there?

The examiner can decide to recommend an extended area for the referendum. This might be appropriate for a town centre context where development on the edge of the neighbourhood has transport impacts on adjoining neighbourhoods. The local council will need to take the examiner's views into account in deciding the referendum area.

19. Our neighbourhood has a local authority boundary running down the middle of the High Street - so why can't neighbourhood development plans work across more than one local council?

This issue was raised at Commons Committee and I promised that we would look into how this could

be taken forward.

20. *Can we designate a conservation area through a neighbourhood development plan?*

Conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. We are not intending to change this approach. However neighbourhood development plans can contain policies to protect the character of an area.

21. *Which public bodies are required to co-operate in neighbourhood planning - will it include Network Rail and Transport for London?*

We have not specified who needs to co-operate with parish councils or neighbourhood forums - other than the local planning authority, who has a duty to support the development of neighbourhood planning proposals for their area. There will need to be engagement with a wide range of public bodies and other organisations in the preparation of plans, but who should be involved will vary according to the focus of the plan.

22. *We want businesses involved but is it really true that business groups can initiate and prepare a neighbourhood development plan?*

The Government announced as part of the Growth Review, that business could take a leading role in neighbourhood planning in their areas, bringing forward plans and orders subject to getting the agreement of their local community and passing independent examination. This reflects that even in predominantly residential areas, the role of local business is often crucial to the wellbeing of the neighbourhood.

23. *Will developers with planning applications in conflict with an agreed neighbourhood plan still be allowed to*

appeal?

An applicant will continue to be entitled to appeal a decision even where their application is not in accordance with a neighbourhood development plan.

24. *What safeguards will there be against developers or landowners with an interest in the area of a neighbourhood plan distorting its outcome by funding its preparation?*

There will be checks and balances to ensure that neighbourhood planning is not captured by unrepresentative interests. Neighbourhood development plans or orders must be legally compliant and take account of wider policy considerations, and must be examined by an independent person, before being put to a community referendum - where they must be approved by the majority of voters, before the proposals can come into force.

25. *How does competition law square with the new rights for communities to take on and run public services?*

The Community Right to Challenge, which is included in the Localism Bill, enables voluntary and community bodies to express an interest in running a local authority service. The authority must consider this expression of interest and where it accepts it, it must run a procurement exercise for the service in which the challenging organisation can bid alongside others. We are currently consulting on the detail of the Right, including what support and guidance may be necessary to assist communities in exercising it successfully. The consultation document is available on our website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/righttochallengeconsultation>

Society publications

Twentieth Century Buildings in Islington, by Alec Forshaw, £14.99, photographs by Richard Leeney, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9

The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington, by Andrew Bosi, photographs from C.F. Day Limited and Oliver Craxton, £5, ISBN 0-9541490-1-7

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

[all of the Society's publications are available from the Society at 35, Britannia Row, London, N.1 or from local bookshops]

Books from our President and Vice-Presidents

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 and available on Amazon, ISBN 0-8264 9023-9.

A History of Islington, by Mary Cosh, published by Historical Publications at £18.95, ISBN 0-948667-974

53 Cross Street - the biography of an historic house by Mary Cosh & Martin King, photographs by Pauline Lord, published by the Islington Archaeology & History Society

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

Plaques in Islington

On a building on the corner of Jerusalem Passage E.C.1 there is a green Borough of Islington plaque to record the site of the home and workplace of the musical coal man Thomas Britton.

At an early age Britton moved to London and became apprenticed to a small coal man (charcoal merchant) in Clerkenwell eventually starting his own business.

He became known for his singing voice and spent income from his coal business on building up an impressive library which enabled him to discuss literature with leading book collectors and nobility of the day.

His next door neighbour was the Scientist Theophilus Garencieres and he taught him chemistry. They became great friends and Britton constructed a moving laboratory for Garencieres. They shared a love of esoteric ideas, Britton having an interest in Rosicrucianism. He acquired an

extensive practical and theoretical knowledge of music and in 1678 Britton converted the loft above his storeroom into a tiny concert hall and musician Roger L'Estrange opened the venue with a well attended performance on the viol. Britton's concerts became regarded as the premier venue for chamber music in London and attracted highly regarded musicians such as J.C.Pepusch, John Banister, Philip Hart, Abel Whichelo, and George Frideric Handel. Britton played the viol and the recorder and composed short pieces with Samuel Pepys regarding him as an expert on Tudor liturgical music.

In 1714 magistrate Justice Robe played a practical joke on Britton. He employed a ventriloquist to project his voice and tell Britton that his end was near and that he should fall to his knees and repeat the Lord's prayer. He did so and was so affected that he died a few days later. S.W.



From the Society

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What we do

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for good architecture in new or refurbished buildings
- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike
- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's history and its social and cultural diversity
- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place
- we build links between residents officials and councillors
- we publish a regular newsletter
- we send advisers to Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues and is a member of Civic Voice

We gave evidence to the Islington Fairness Commission on the role of local shops in addressing poverty. The Commission reports later this month.

Future Society events

Our monthly Meet the Officers meetings continue at the Canonbury Tavern, Canonbury Place on the first Tuesday each month at 9.0 p.m., on Tuesdays 5th July, 2nd August, 6th September, 4th October.

The Bill Manley pub crawl will be held on June 24th. This year there are four venues included for the first time. We start at the Alma, Newington Green Road, at 6 p.m. and then proceed at hourly intervals. We first take in the George Orwell at 382, Essex Road. The next stop is the more familiar Lord Clyde, also in Essex Road, but then we make our way to the Myddleton (sic) Arms, and The House, both of which are in Canonbury Road. The House was formerly the Belinda Castle.

We are hoping to hold a formal event on Thursday July 7th.

Other Events in or around Islington:

Archaeology & History Society (8.0 p.m. Islington Town Hall)

15th June, 2011 "Islington's Regency Renaissance".
 Speaker Lester Hillman.

21st September, 2011. An address from Islington's newer M.P., Emily Thornberry.

19th October, 2011. Islington's Green Plaque scheme. Speaker: Allie Dillon, Islington Local History Centre.

16th November, 2011. "Wells and Brimtoy - toymakers of Islington. Speaker: Chris Rule, resident of Islington and member of the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society committee.

from the first Sunday in August, the chairman of the Society will be leading a monthly guided tour of Union Chapel. The tour will be free, donations to the Chapel restoration fund welcome.

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art,
 39a Canonbury Square

13th April - 12th June 2011 Exhibition "Double Portrait: Ida Barbarigo and Zoran Music".