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19 March 2010

### **BCSC response to consultation on development management policy statement**

BCSC welcomes the publication of the consultation on a draft new planning policy statement on development management.

Our organisation represents businesses operating in the retail property sector, our mission being to promote industry best practice and advance the professional aims of the retail property industry. Our membership is a broad church of nearly 3,000 property professionals including owners, developers, retailers, surveyors, architects and public sector managers.

We are committed to working with the Government to develop the most suitable planning policies for the successful regeneration of the UK's towns and cities. In particular, we support the Government's ambition to implement the recommendations of the Killian Pretty review, as published in November 2008. We therefore are fully supportive of the objectives of this draft policy statement.

Please find our responses to your questions below.

**Consultation questions on the draft planning policy statement on development management (Part 2)**

**1. Do you agree with the objectives we have identified for development management? If not, what amendments to these objectives would you suggest?**

We strongly support the objectives of development management. In particular, we would like to see emphasis placed on the timeliness of development processes. The viability of projects and thereby the regeneration prospects of an area can be undermined by time delays.

**2. Do you consider that the seven key elements identified for development management suitably reflect the objectives and the role of development management in the local authority context? If not, what amendments to these elements would you suggest?**

We believe that the seven key elements do reflect the role of development management. However, we would recommend that there is due emphasis placed on the monitoring and reporting element. We believe that there may be scope to benchmark local planning authorities to incentivise employing best practice techniques on ALL projects.

**3. Do you agree that we should give each authority the discretion to tailor their development management service to local circumstances? If not, what alternative would you suggest? For example, should we provide a more prescriptive national policy?**

BCSC would welcome further clarity on the scope for flexibility. We are concerned that local planning authorities may seek to tailor their own service according to existing internal resources. We do not believe that this would necessarily be beneficial in all circumstances as there may already exist an inadequate level of resource. We would recommend that there should be a minimum level of development management service expected from each authority and that authorities should be supported to up-skill or increase resources as required.

**4. Do you consider that the proposed development management policies provide a suitable overarching national policy framework within which local working practices can be framed?**

The policies do provide a national framework. However, there is little to guide us on what the consequences would be if local working practices did not follow suit. Further explanation would be helpful.

**5. Are any of the proposed policies too prescriptive? If yes, please indicate which ones, and suggest alternative wording or approaches.**

We are happy with the length and format of the policies. Our concern relates to how local planning authorities will be encouraged/mandated to adopt them.

**6. Are there any topics relevant to development management which you would like to see in covered in: (a) the detailed policy annexes to this PPS? (b) guidance?**

As above.

**7. Overall, does the proposed new planning policy statement on development management provide an effective way of supporting existing local planning authority good practice in development management, and of guiding improvements where they are needed? If not what amendments or additional/alternative approaches should be considered?**

The new planning policy statement looks to be effective in formalising the best practice already taking place. However, we would urge that there should be further work to ensure that best practice is adopted throughout local planning authorities. We would be happy to work with Government on such a project.

**Consultation questions on the draft pre-application engagement policy annex (Part 3)**

**8. Do you agree with the pre-application principles? If not, what amendments to these principles would you suggest? Are there any additional principles which should guide local planning authorities to ensure a good quality and effective pre-application service?**

We are strongly in favour of pre-application dialogue. BCSC believes that communication between the planning authority, developer and community groups is crucial to achieving positive planning outcomes for the benefit of communities. In too many circumstances councils are not comfortable with this process and therefore we support the need for full guidance being given to local authorities to ensure they are aware of the benefits of engaging a developer at the earliest opportunity and are comfortable with the process of doing so.

Detailed pre-application discussions ultimately ensure that quality applications are submitted, with all of the correct information and documentation provided to the local authority, making the process far more efficient.

In addition to involving officers in early dialogue there needs to be clarity as to when elected members can become involved in pre-application discussions. Our members feel that currently there is a significant divergence in practice between authorities, with many having concerns over the need to avoid bias or prejudice and therefore an unwillingness to engage. When early engagement is done well members and applicants clearly value the benefits of transparency and rational debate about the aspirations and concerns of both parties.

Critically pre application discussions need to be a three way conversation involving community groups and the local people they represent. From a retail development perspective it is local stakeholders that ultimately will be using the service that is being provided and therefore it is clearly in our members' best interests to secure support for development plans from local people. The process of local consultation, which our members are taking increasingly innovative approaches to, gives people some ownership into development plan or indeed the design of an application.

We strongly believe that the time and effort spent at the beginning of a retail development project engaging with relevant partners will be more than repaid once the project is delivered and the shopping centre is in use. However this is only the case where the engagement is supported by all parties and therefore a genuine attempt to progress a plan that responds, as much as possible, to the aspirations of all parties. What we would also like to see better communication, guidance and training of officer and elected members on how to maximise the potential of this process.

**9. Do you agree with the draft policy (PA1) on pre-application planning services? If not, what amendments would you suggest?**

We are broadly happy with this draft policy.

**10. Do you agree with the draft policy (PA2) on the approach to be taken to preapplication advice for small scale development? If not, what amendments would you suggest?**

As above.

**11. Do you agree with the draft policy (PA3) on the need for clear LPA guidance on preapplication advice and discussions? If not, what amendments would you suggest?**

We particularly welcome the guidance point b) relating to need for local planning authorities to set out the actions that they will take to respond properly to request for advice or for meetings. As previously stated, we would still be keen to learn if there will be any measures introduced to compel planning authorities to adhere to this guidance.

**12. Do you agree with the draft policy (PA4) on the proposed scope for involvement of key participants at the pre-application stage?**

We agreed with the proposed scope of the involvement. In particular we would welcome involvement of statutory consultees at an early stage in order minimise time delays during the full planning process.

**13. Do you agree that the extra resources spent by applicants at the pre-application stage will be compensated by savings at the post-application stage? If not, please explain.**

We do believe that this. See question 8 for more detail.

**14. Should specific fees for pre-application engagement be established in planning legislation, or do the current powers under the Local Government Act 2003 make adequate provision?**

N/A

**Question on the draft determination policy annex (Part 4)**

**15. Do you consider that the draft policy on determining planning applications is a good replacement for *The Planning System: General Principles*? If not, what amendments would you suggest?**

We welcome the draft policy as an alternative.

**16. Will the draft policy on determining planning applications be useful to LPAs in terms of applying a development management approach when making planning decisions? If not, what amendments would you suggest?**

We would hope that this policy would be useful to LPAs, but we do believe that there may need to be further work undertaken to explore ways to ensure that the guidelines are adhered to.

If you would like to receive any information from us at this time, please feel free to contact our Public Affairs Manager Philippa Latimer on [philippa.latimer@bcsc.org.uk](mailto:philippa.latimer@bcsc.org.uk) or 0207 227 3455.

Yours sincerely,

**Edward Cooke**  
**Executive Director**  
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