

The NPPF:

Fact Not Fiction – Transition Period



Home Builders Federation Briefing

12 October 2011

Anti-NPPF groups are demanding that the government introduces a transition period within which local authorities will be able to put in place local development plans before the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF applies.

- 1) A transition period without the presumption in favour of sustainable development would mean that local authorities would be under no pressure to produce local plans that set out their housing requirements and policies for development. Without a local plan there would be no policy basis against which planning applications could be judged.**

The purpose of a presumption in favour of sustainable development is to provide some certainty for developers where there is no local plan in place. This does not give developers a “free rein” – construction will still need to adhere to the three pillars of sustainability as set out in the NPPF. In effect, the NPPF will serve as the default local plan and the provisions of the NPPF must be read as a whole. Without the Regional Strategies and the housing targets that these set, and without a local plan that has set a new housing policy approach, there is no evidence base against which to judge the appropriateness or otherwise of new development proposals. The obvious effect of this will be a continued state of limbo and a lack of growth. Without a local plan, and without the Regional Strategies, we would have a planning system bereft of clear policy against which to plan for the future provision of housing.

- 2) Local authorities have already had seven years to adopt local development plans and were required by law to have one in place by 2007. Yet to date only between 25 and 30% have done so.**

Local authorities need to proceed expeditiously with the production of local plans. The presumption will encourage them to do so in order that they can define what they believe is the most sustainable development for their area. If they choose not to take this responsibility then the default position should be sustainable development as defined by the NPPF.

The housing crisis has reached a critical stage with fewer homes built last year than since the 1920s which has severe social and economic consequences, not least severe house price increases that have had a severe effect on affordability. As such it is vital that where possible delay in the planning system is avoided. The presumption in favour of sustainable development would help to prevent that delay.

3) Planning permissions have already fallen in the 17 months since the general elections during a planning policy vacuum.

The HBF produces quarterly reports revealing the number of planning permissions granted over each three month period. These results have showed a startling plunge in the number of permissions granted over recent years with particular falls since the election in 2010.

It is simply not credible to claim that house building will increase over the next few years if there is no presumption in favour of sustainable development in place where the local planning authority has not produced an up to date local plan. Instead we are likely to see further falls in land with planning permission coming forward for development, meaning that house-building will fall even further, exacerbating rather than solving the housing crisis.

A transition period where neither presumption in favour of sustainable development nor a local plan (where it is absent) guides housing construction and growth in an area would decrease house-building, worsen the housing crisis and stifle economic recovery.

About HBF

The Home Builders Federation (HBF) is the representative body of the home building industry in England and Wales. The HBF's member firms account for some 80% of all new homes built in England and Wales in any one year, and include companies of all sizes, ranging from multi-national, household names through regionally based businesses to small local companies.

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*“The voice of
the home
building
industry”*