PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 1: Creating Sustainable Communities - Consultation Draft

1 SUMMARY

1.1 This report explains the principles of the Government's high level policy objectives for planning outlined in draft Planning Policy Statement 1. The Government is asking for views and comments on the draft guidance by 21st May 2004. A copy of the consultation document has been placed in the Members' Library.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 In December 2001, the Government announced its intentions to review all its Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) to decide whether it is needed and, if so, to review and simplify into new Planning Policy Statements (PPS).

2.2 PPS 1 is intended to replace Planning Policy Guidance Note 1: Policy and Principles.

3 PPS 1 - KEY MESSAGES

3.1 PPS 1 is intended to set out the Government's vision for planning and the key policies and principles that should underpin the planning system. These key policies and principles are built around three themes:

- Sustainable development
- A spatial planning approach
- Community involvement in planning.

3.2 The draft PPS argues that planning should aspire to make places better for people and deliver development where communities need it and which is sustainable. The planning system should promote sustainable patterns of development by:

- making suitable land available for development;
- contributing to sustainable economic growth;
- protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment;
- ensuring high quality development through good design; and
- ensuring that development supports existing communities.

3.3 The principles of a plan-led system are reaffirmed in the PPS, but the process for preparing new Development Plans must provide local communities with real opportunities to influence how they want to see their areas develop.

3.4 Whilst the Government reaffirms the importance of speedy decision making, it is explained that Planning Authorities should aim to provide a quality service for planning and development control. In addition, Authorities should ensure that they have in place appropriate arrangements for enforcement.

3.5 Sustainable development is considered to be a core principle of the planning system and Authorities must consider the four aims of sustainable economic development, social inclusion, protection and enhancement of the environment and prudent use of resources. Policies in the Development Plan must consider the needs of the community and be properly based on analysis and evidence.

3.6 Very specific advice is provided in relation to new development. Ill conceived designs should not be accepted and design policies must encourage developments that are appropriate in scale; secure positive improvements to the streetscape; create safe environments; make efficient use of natural resources; and address all the needs of society.

3.7 The new planning system is to adopt a spatial planning approach. This means that the Local Development Documents (LDDs) may include policies that can impact on land use, but that are not capable of being delivered solely or mainly through the granting or refusal of planning permission and that may be implemented by other means.

3.8 Spatial plans will need to set a clear vision for the future pattern of development, consider the needs of communities and help to integrate the wide range of activities relating to development and regeneration.

3.9 The new planning system requires Authorities to prepare a "Statement of Community Involvement" (SCI). This will explain the arrangements for involving the community in preparing Local Development Documents AND for consulting on planning applications.

3.10 It is expected that communities will be able to contribute to ideas about how the vision for their area is developed and to the preparation of the specific plans and policies.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The draft PPSI is a short, succinct statement of the Government's ambition for the new planning system. The three central themes in the document relate to sustainable development, the principles of spatial planning and community involvement.

4.2 Since the late eighties, sustainability has been an important issue for Government and Local Authorities in the UK were required to prepare Local Agenda 21 Strategies (the local expression of national agreements on sustainability) by 2000. However, this was only a start and sustainability is

now a core theme of all strategy and plan development. Indeed, the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan reflects an approach based on sustainability in the use of land, resources and regeneration.

4.3 Spatial planning is a new concept for many used to the traditional land-use approach to planning. In effect, the new LDDs will need to work alongside economic regeneration strategies, housing strategies, etc, and, where appropriate, articulate the requirements of those strategies in its policies and proposals.

4.4 This new arrangement may very well make the preparation of LDDs more complicated, but the end result should be a more effective policy framework that better reflects the needs of communities. For example, a spatial framework should be better able to deal with the challenge of reconciling new development with the requirements for infrastructure.

4.5 It has always been the case that Planning Authorities have consulted widely on the preparation of Local Plans and most Authorities also consult widely on planning applications. However, the Government believes that early consultation on Development Plans is essential if the preparation of the overall vision is best to reflect the needs of a community. In addition, Authorities will be required to make clear their arrangements for consulting on planning applications.

4.6 The arrangements for consulting on LDDs and planning applications will be explained in a Statement of Community Involvement. This will be a statutory document that must be placed on deposit by Planning Authorities and will be subject to independent examination. The aim will be to ensure that communities will be able to understand the opportunities available to contribute both to the plan-making process and also to decisions on planning applications.

4.7 There is no doubt that the preparation of an SCI will place another burden on Local Planning Authorities although, in principle, it is difficult to take issue with the importance of high levels of community involvement, particularly in plan making.

4.8 Interestingly, the Government has also published a document explaining their objectives on community involvement in planning and this states that "It would be unrealistic to think that all sections of the community will be completely satisfied by all plans and planning decisions all of the time". This realism is welcomed since there is little doubt that the arrangements for providing housing and employment land allocations now, through the Structure Plan or in the future through a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), may not reflect the views of the local community that has little opportunity to challenge the provision.

4.9 In conclusion, the draft PPS1 provides a succinct explanation of the new planning system and the key principles that Planning Authorities will be expected to take into account in preparing their Local development Documents and Statements of Community Involvement. No particular issues have been identified that it is considered merit a response and therefore it is proposed that the contents of the draft be noted.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Strategic Risk**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill proposes a new planning system that is intended by the Government to be simpler, more flexible, more predictable, efficient and effective and that will deliver the quality development needed to secure sustainable communities. PPS1 is intended to articulate the high level objectives for planning. The Authority must deliver the principles of the new system through the preparation of Local development Documents and the Government has set out specific timescales for these to be in place following the enactment of the Bill.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The principles of sustainability and spatial planning are closely linked to the strategy for crime and disorder.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The new planning system is intended to facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of urban and rural development, including good quality design and protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 At this stage, the resource implications of delivering the new planning system cannot be easily quantified. The Government is making money available to local Planning Authorities over the period 2003-2006 to enable them to develop the quality of service delivery and to assist in preparing their LDDs. Each LDD must be subject to public consultation, together with the Statement of Community Involvement, and each may result in a local enquiry.

9 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

9.1 As explained in the report, the Government expects very significant levels of community consultation as a key feature of the new planning system. That being the case, the expectation is that consultation with Parish Councils will feature prominently in the SCI. It is also the case that Parish Councils that prepare Parish plans will be able to request the Local Planning Authority to include these in the 'folder' of Local Development Documents.

10 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That, subject to comments from Members, the contents of the consultation paper be noted.

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Background Papers:

Planning Policy Statement 1: Creating Sustainable Communities
Community Involvement in Planning: The Government Objectives

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