

What does the Conservative-Lib Dem Coalition mean?

A Town Planning Perspective

May 2010



Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners

Planning Design Economics

The new Conservative-Lib Dem coalition will be making changes that will affect your planning and development interests

What are the key issues and how might they affect you? See our responses to the most FAQs about what's in store for town planning.

How soon will any changes to planning affect my business?

Changes to the planning system will not apply retrospectively. The new CLG Minister, Eric Pickles, could make an early statement of Government intentions possibly including plans to revoke regional strategies and the abolition of regional government as they achieve both cost-cutting and a move towards more localised decisions. A new Planning Bill will take longer (see right).

But how will revoking regional strategies affect my developments?

If you want the support of existing strategies, there will be a limited window for relying on them. Their abolition could be unhelpful for promoting housing as the (usually lower) local authority figures for their own requirements will be used instead - but don't forget that in the longer term, there will be financial incentives for councils, designed to make them want to encourage housebuilding.

There has been a huge focus on 'localism' - what will this mean for getting development off the ground?

The general emphasis on local rather than centralised decision making is common to both parties. You should review your existing relationships with local councils and the local communities within which you operate. Long term relationship building and effective public consultation at the local level will be key determinants to success in the future. Proposals that are controversial locally are likely to become harder to get permission for when changes are introduced, so in these cases 'full steam ahead' now might be the best approach.

What else is on the cards?

We expect a new Local Plan system to be introduced that will resemble the one before Local Development Frameworks. Localism might mean the re-introduction of the idea of third party rights of appeal. The Infrastructure Planning Commission will probably lose its separate identity so that a ministerial decision would be required on any major infrastructure project. The Community Infrastructure Levy might be replaced by local tariffs. In designing individual schemes, you might find that you will have to meet higher targets for providing renewable energy and also, more and better planned open space. Retail developments might have to pass a new 'competition test' and the 'needs test' looks likely to be re-introduced.

How will all these changes be introduced?

We expect a Planning Bill to be introduced to Parliament in the first year of the coalition being in power. The detail will be in Green/White Papers which will give us forewarning of what is proposed and the chance to comment. In the meantime we do not expect to lose the new ability to extend the lifetime of unimplemented permissions, or to make amendments to approved schemes.

And then what?

If the move to localism and the other changes do not deliver increased levels of housebuilding as many commentators fear will be the case, or if they hinder economic investment, the merry-go-round of changes to the planning system will probably continue.



NLP Contacts:

Cardiff

Gareth Williams
E: gwilliams@nlpplanning.com
T: 029 2043 5880

London

Nicholas Thompson
E: nthompson@nlpplanning.com
T: 020 7837 4477

Manchester

Justin Gartland
E: jgartland@nlpplanning.com
T: 0161 837 6130

Newcastle

Philip Barnes
E: pbarnes@nlpplanning.com
T: 0191 261 5685