

## HANSARD – WRITTEN ANSWERS

8<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### Council Housing: Construction

**Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the setting of local authority housebuilding projections in local plans. [993]

**Robert Neill:** A letter to local authority leaders from the Secretary of State, dated 27 May 2010, set out the Government's commitment to abolishing regional strategies and confirmed that in future housing supply issues will rest with local planning authorities without the framework for regional numbers or plans. The policy change should be regarded as a material consideration in planning decisions, including on local plans. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Natascha Engel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the provision of funding for all local authority new build housing schemes announced by his Department in (a) September 2009 and (b) January 2010. [1466]

**Andrew Stunell:** The Homes and Communities Agency will fund through to completion those schemes for which they have entered into a grant agreement with the local authority. Decisions on all other schemes will be made after the Emergency Budget on 22 June.

**Ian Austin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what representations he has received from local authorities and their representative bodies on the review of the local authority new build programme. [1502]

**Andrew Stunell:** There is no review of the local authority new build programme. However the Homes and Communities Agency will not enter into any new or further commitments against its uncommitted budgets until after the Budget in June.

### Green Belt

**Mr Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the Green Belt, with particular reference to applications being made to develop land designated as Green Belt; and if he will make a statement. [972]

**Robert Neill** [*holding answer 7 June 2010*]: Policy on the Green Belt is currently set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2, Green Belts (PPG2), published in 1995. PPG2 establishes a presumption against inappropriate development on Green Belt. If a proposal for such development is received, the local planning authority has to consider whether any harm to the Green Belt would be outweighed by other considerations, and whether very special circumstances exist to justify planning permission.

In the Coalition Agreement the Government stated that it will publish and present to Parliament a simple and consolidated national planning framework covering all forms of

development. Announcements on the future

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of planning policy will be made in due course. However, the Agreement also undertakes to ensure that the protection of Green Belt by local planning authorities is maintained.

Finally, I have already announced the Government's intention to rapidly abolish regional spatial strategies and return focus on planning and housing to local councils. Given that the regional spatial strategies have themselves been a source of 'top down' pressure to remove green belt protection their removal will strengthen the position of local authorities in protecting green belt.

### **Housing: Construction**

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many homes with (a) three or four and (b) five bedrooms he expects to be built in each region in each of the next five years. [1172]

**Andrew Stunell** [*holding answer 7 June 2010*]: Statistics on the proportion of new-build completions each year that are houses and flats, split by number of bedrooms, are published on the CLG website in live table 254 at the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/xls/table254.xls>

Estimates have not been made by the Government of the number of new homes of each type that will be started or completed in future years.

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**Ian Austin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) if he will take steps to remove regional housing targets in the West Midlands in advance of the introduction of primary legislation on regional spatial strategies; [1498]

(2) what timetable he has set for the abolition of regional spatial strategies in the West Midlands; and if he will make a statement. [1499]

**Greg Clark:** The Government are absolutely committed to abolishing Regional Strategies, including regional housing targets. In advance of legislation, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to all local authority leaders and the Planning Inspectorate confirming the Government's intention and that letter can be used as a material consideration in decisions on applications and local development frameworks. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

### **Housing: Regeneration**

**Dr Pugh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on funding of Pathfinder housing areas; and if he will make a statement. [1010]

**Andrew Stunell:** The Government are committed to a range of housing programmes including initiatives to improve the quality of homes, improve access to housing and bring

empty homes into use. The Housing Market Renewal programme was included in the £6.2 billion of savings from Government spending in 2010-11 announced on 24 May, reducing the current capital programme budget announced in December 2009 by £50 million. This reduction is subject to consultation. Budgets for 2010-11 will be confirmed after the Emergency Budget is completed on June 22.

**Ian Austin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of the effects on his Department's funding for housing market renewal areas of changes in public expenditure in 2010 announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 24 May 2010. [1505]

**Andrew Stunell:** The Housing Market Renewal Programme was included in the £6.2 billion of savings from Government spending in 2010-11 announced on 24 May. The current capital budget of £286 million announced in December 2009 has been reduced by £50 million. The mechanism by which this reduction is achieved will be subject to consultation. Individual allocations for 2010-11 will be confirmed after the emergency Budget is completed on June 22.

### **Housing: South East**

**Mr Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to respond to the South East Regional Select Committee's First Report of Session 2009-10, on Housing in the South East. [205]

**Andrew Stunell** [*holding answer 7 June 2010*]: Yes, the Government will be responding to this report in the near future.

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### **Local Development Frameworks**

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance from his Department is in effect in respect of on-going (a) examinations in public of local development framework plans and (b) core strategy hearings. [967]

**Robert Neill:** General guidance on the assessment of and procedures for examining local development frameworks which include core strategies is set out by the Planning Inspectorate. This can be found online at:

[http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/appeals/local\\_dev/index.htm](http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/appeals/local_dev/index.htm)

In addition my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to all local authority leaders and the Planning Inspectorate confirming the Government's intention to abolish regional strategies and housing targets and saying that he expects them to have regard to his letter as a material consideration in decisions on applications and local development frameworks. A copy of the letter has been placed in the House Library.

### **Local Government: Public Consultation**

**Christopher Leslie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in what circumstances those resident in a local authority area will be able to initiate a local referendum. [1074]

**Andrew Stunell:** As we made clear in our Programme for Government, published on 20 May, we will give residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue. The Government intend to include the necessary statutory provisions as part of legislation to devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities control over housing and planning decisions which was announced in the Queen's Speech for this parliamentary session.

## **Regional Planning and Development**

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to publish guidance on the effects of the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies and transitional arrangements which should apply; and what guidance he expects local planning authorities to apply in making decisions on large strategic applications before such guidance is published. [966]

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**Robert Neill:** We are absolutely committed to abolishing Regional Strategies. We are keen to move in advance of legislation and are currently considering revoking Regional Strategies ahead of taking legislation through Parliament. We will make a statement in due course.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to all local authority leaders and the Planning Inspectorate confirming the Government's intention and saying that he expects them to have regard to his letter as a material consideration in decisions on applications and local development frameworks. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on what date he expects regional spatial strategies to cease to be effective; and what function such strategies will have prior to that date. [992]

**Robert Neill:** We are absolutely committed to abolishing regional strategies, including regional housing targets. We are keen to move in advance of legislation and are currently considering revoking regional strategies ahead of taking legislation through Parliament. We will make a statement in due course.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to all local authority leaders and the Planning Inspectorate confirming the Government's intention and saying that he expects them to have regard to his letter as a material consideration in decisions on applications and local development frameworks. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Andrew Stephenson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what timetable he has planned for the abolition of regional spatial strategies and the return of decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils. [1027]

**Robert Neill:** We are absolutely committed to abolishing regional strategies, including regional housing targets and will introduce legislation in the first session to do so. We are

keen to move in advance of legislation and are currently considering revoking regional strategies. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to all local authority leaders and the Planning Inspectorate confirming the Government's intention and that letter can be used as a material consideration in planning decisions. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

### **Travellers: Caravan Sites**

**Mr Gray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance he plans to issue to planning inspectors in respect of the treatment of appeals against planning decisions regarding housing on traveller encampments taken in accordance with requirements of regional spatial strategies in the period prior to abolition of such strategies. [1260]

**Robert Neill:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has now written to all local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate setting out our intention to abolish regional strategies and return decision making powers on housing (including the provision of Travellers' sites) and planning to local councils. That letter will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals and the development of plans for Traveller sites.