

Parliamentary Statement Revoking Regional Strategies

Today I am making the first step to deliver our commitment in the coalition agreement to “*rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils*”, by revoking Regional Strategies.

Regional Strategies added unnecessary bureaucracy to the planning system. They were a failure. They were expensive and time-consuming. They alienated people, pitting them against development instead of encouraging people to build in their local area.

The revocation of Regional Strategies will make local spatial plans, drawn up in conformity with national policy, the basis for local planning decisions. The new planning system will be clear, efficient and will put greater power in the hands of local people, rather than regional bodies.

Imposed central targets will be replaced with powerful incentives so that people see the benefits of building. The coalition agreement makes a clear commitment to providing local authorities with real incentives to build new homes. I can confirm that this will ensure that those local authorities which take action now to consent and support the construction of new homes will receive direct and substantial benefit from their actions. Because we are committed to housing growth, introducing these incentives will be a priority and we aim to do so early in the spending review period. We will consult on the detail of this later this year. These incentives will encourage local authorities and communities to increase their aspirations for housing and economic growth, and to deliver sustainable development in a way that allows them to control the way in which their villages, towns and cities change. Our revisions to the planning system will also support renewable energy and a low carbon economy.

The abolition of Regional Strategies will provide a clear signal of the importance attached to the development and application of local spatial plans, in the form of Local Development Framework Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents. Future reform in this area will make it easier for local councils, working with their communities, to agree and amend local plans in a way that maximises the involvement of neighbourhoods.

The abolition of Regional Strategies will require legislation in the “Localism Bill” which we are introducing this session. However, given the clear coalition commitment, it is important to avoid a period of uncertainty over planning policy, until the legislation is enacted. So I am revoking Regional Strategies today in order to give clarity to builders, developers and planners.

Regional Strategies are being revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and will thus no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Revoking, and then abolishing, Regional Strategies will mean that the planning system is simpler, more efficient and easier for people to understand. It will be firmly rooted in the local community. And it will encourage the investment, economic growth and housing that Britain needs.

We will be providing advice for local planning authorities today and a copy has been placed in the house library.