

## Prime Minister's Questions

**Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con):** My constituency was recently pleased to welcome Mary Portas as part of her review of Britain's high streets. Does the Prime Minister agree that Rugby's positive approach to new housing, which will create new customers for the high street, is an effective way of supporting town centres?

**The Prime Minister:** I am delighted that Mary Portas has made it to Rugby, and I agree with what my hon. Friend said. We do need to build more houses in our country and we do need to reform the planning system, but we want to do it in a way that gives more control to local people, so that we can actually make sure that we have thriving high streets in the future.

**Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con):** The Infrastructure Planning Commission has made one decision—to grant planning permission for the giant American waste company Covanta to build a 600,000 tonne incinerator in Mid Bedfordshire. Thousands of people in Bedfordshire responded to the consultation, saying that they do not want this. The small print of the decision says that the decision is subject to special parliamentary procedure. Will the Prime Minister please let the people of Bedfordshire know that this Government are not like the previous Government, that we listen to local concerns and that we will ensure that that monstrous rubbish-guzzling atmosphere-polluting incinerator will not be imposed upon the people of Bedfordshire?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. There are difficult planning decisions that have to be made, but what the Government have done is made sure that the planning system is more democratic and reports to Parliament, and that Ministers have to take decisions and be accountable. I cannot speak for how those Ministers have to make those decisions. They have to make them in their own way, but we have ended the idea of the vast quango with absolutely no accountability, as my hon. Friend rightly says.

**Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con):** Is the Prime Minister as enthusiastic as I am about the Localism Bill and the prospect that it will deliver real growth and empower local communities? Does he agree that the best way to tackle political disengagement is through local accountability?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. We all know that we are not building enough in this country to provide houses for our young people, to end the scandal of overcrowding and to reduce the number of people on housing waiting lists. The best way to get that to happen is to ensure that local people really feel they have a say in and control over development in their own area. That is the way to square the circle. The top-down targets under the previous Government did not work, but the localist approach will.