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Written Parliamentary Questions and Answers 11th October, 2011

Yesterday saw a slew of written Parliamentary Questions asked by Labour's newly appointed Shadow Communities and Local Government team, including the new Shadow Housing Minister Jack Dromey MP, and a variety of Conservative MPs mostly inquiring about the draft NPPF. Ministers are obliged fully answer where possible and provide all necessary information.

Political Developments have highlighted the key passages below:

Housing

Andrew Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of the potential effects on the level of family breakdown of (a) house and rental prices and (b) housing supply. [72759]

Grant Shapps: The Department has made no assessment of such effects of house and rental prices and housing supply. However, the wider social effects specifically of 'mortgage repossession' were identified in a Department Research Report, 'Evaluation of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and Homeowners Mortgage Support' published in July 2010.

Housing: Local Government Finance

Alison McGovern: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on what date he plans to announce the funding allocations arising from the Housing Market Renewal Transition Fund. [71888]

Grant Shapps: I expect to announce the outcome shortly.

Housing: Planning

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the possible use by the Planning Inspectorate of unmet five-year rolling housing delivery targets as a factor in decisions on appeal for housing developments on land outside the approved local development framework. [70057]

Robert Neill: The current policy of the Secretary of State is set out in paragraph 71 of Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3, which advises local planning authorities to maintain an up-to-date five-year housing land supply. Where they have not achieved this objective, planning decision-makers are asked to consider planning applications for housing favourably, having regard to general policy safeguards set out in the PPS. Where there is an appeal, Planning Inspectors must consider this policy.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr Pickles), is currently consulting on a proposal to simplify and replace all planning policy statements with a single National Planning Policy Framework. The draft framework may change before it is approved. However, if it was approved as currently drafted, local planning authorities will be set an objective to increase the supply of housing. The draft policy suggests that authorities will identify and maintain a rolling supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements. Their five-year land supply should include:

“an additional allowance of at least 20 per cent to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.”

If this advice were not to be taken and a planning appeal were to follow, Planning Inspectors would consider the presumption in favour of sustainable development that is also set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. This would indicate that planning permission should be granted at

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appeal to meet the housing objectives of the framework, unless the adverse impacts of allowing the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits, when assessed against the policies in the framework taken as a whole.

Housing: Planning Permission

Tony Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the number of new homes for which planning permission has been granted but construction has not yet commenced in the last three years. [71629]

Robert Neill: In England at 31 July 2011 there were 250,000 dwellings with detailed planning permission on sites where construction has not yet commenced, according to estimates by the Homes and Communities Agency. These outstanding planning permissions amount to just over one year's projected average annual household growth (232,000 household per annum until 2033).

Local Development Frameworks

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to put in place a fast-track procedure to approve existing local development frameworks to bring them up to date with the national planning policy framework. [71886]

Greg Clark: The last Government's Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 added significant complexity and delay to the planning system. As highlighted on 23 February 2010, Official Report, column 497WA, by the beginning of 2010—six years after the Act—only 61 core strategies had been adopted.

In this context, we are currently considering what steps central Government can take to help local authorities speed up the system.

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Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many officials in his Department worked on the draft of the national planning policy framework produced by his Department. [71892]

Greg Clark: A wide range of officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government and other Government Departments were involved to varying degrees in the development of the draft national planning policy framework.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many officials in his Department worked on the draft of the national planning policy framework produced by the practitioners' advisory group. [71897]

Greg Clark: The suggested draft of the practitioners' advisory group was the conclusions of the members of the group, rather than of the Government. A small number of officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government provided administrative support to the group and officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government and other Government Departments met with the practitioners during the course of their work.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what (a) financial assistance and (b) other support his Department plans to provide to local authorities which do not have a local development framework in place to introduce one; [71898]

(2) what (a) financial assistance and (b) other support his Department plans to provide to local authorities to update their local development frameworks; [71899]

(3) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of local authority resources to produce or update local development frameworks. [71900]

Greg Clark: Councils' statutory planning functions are financed through formula grant. As with all local government functions and services, there is significant potential for councils to make savings and do more for less through better procurement and joint working.

A number of our reforms are reducing planning burdens on local authorities—such as through reducing the need for unnecessary planning applications and the abolition of regional planning.

My Department has also provided £3 million of funding in 2011-12 to the Planning Advisory Service to provide consultancy and peer support, learning events and online resources to assist councils on planning reform.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what legal advice his Department has sought on whether (a) adopted and (b) post-examination local development frameworks will be technically out-of-date once the national planning policy framework is adopted. [71920]

Greg Clark: In line with the practice of previous administrations, the Government do not disclose their legal advice. Notwithstanding, it is a common occurrence—under this and previous administrations—for central Government to make amendments or updates to national planning guidance.

In such circumstances, it is a matter for the local planning authority to assess the weight and relevance to be given to the new policies when making decisions on individual planning applications.

Planning Permission

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to paragraph 51 of the draft national planning policy framework, what legal advice his Department has (a) sought and (b) received on the precedence of the neighbourhood plan over existing policies in a local development plan. [71859]

Greg Clark: Under Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Once a neighbourhood plan is brought into force its policies will form part of the development plan for the local area.

The Localism Bill requires all neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan that applies to the neighbourhood area.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to paragraphs 62 and 63 of the draft national planning policy framework, what legal advice his Department has (a) sought and (b) received on how development management works in law. [71860]

Greg Clark: Paragraph 62 of the draft National Planning Policy Framework confirms the existing position on the role of the development plan in the determination of planning applications. It fully reflects Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the planned timetable is for implementation of the national planning policy framework. [71861]

Greg Clark: The Department's Structural Reform Plan includes a commitment to produce the final National Planning Policy Framework by April 2012.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to paragraph 28 of the draft national planning policy framework, where the inputs of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be defined. [71863]

Greg Clark: Current guidance on the preparation of Strategic Housing Market Assessments can be found at:

[http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningand building/strategichousingmarket](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningand%20building/strategichousingmarket)

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) with reference to paragraph 109 of the draft national planning policy framework, if he will place in the Library a copy of each document containing the evidence base for the added 20 per cent. housing target for choice and competition; [71864]

(2) with reference to paragraph 109 of the draft national planning policy framework, what assessment his Department has made of how the 20 per cent. housing target for choice and competition will work in areas of constraint or low demand. [71867]

Greg Clark: The evidence base for policies in the draft national planning policy framework is set out in the consultation stage impact assessment which was published on 25 July 2011 and placed in the Library of the House.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department is taking to assist local authorities in preparing for the implementation of the national planning policy framework. [71902]

Greg Clark: The draft framework is currently out for consultation. As part of the public consultation process, we are holding a series of events across England offering opportunities for councils, community groups, the development industry and local people to express their views directly to us. For example, we arranged, with the Planning Officers' Society, a specific event to bring together planners from across England to discuss the draft framework on 26 September 2011.

The draft framework includes a draft policy that states it will be open to councils to seek a 'certificate of conformity' with national policy to assist councils in identifying which of their existing local policies may be consistent with the national planning policy framework and which may not be, and will consider any representations made on this point in the current consultation. We are currently considering how this procedure can be offered free to councils.

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance the Planning Inspectorate has issued to local planning authorities on what consideration should be given to the draft national planning policy framework in planning decisions; and if he will make a statement. [71941]

Greg Clark [holding answer 15 September 2011]: My Department's chief planner wrote to all local authority chief planning officers announcing the publication of the draft national planning policy framework. This letter can be seen on the Planning Portal and the DCLG website.

The Planning Inspectorate has also issued advice to inspectors on the consultation document and this can be seen on the Planning Portal and the Planning Inspectorate website.

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many planning applications have been (a) submitted, (b) approved and (c) rejected in each local authority area in each of the last four quarters. [71942]

Robert Neill [holding answer 15 September 2011]: The number of applications received, decided, approved and refused for each local planning authority in England for the quarters April to June

2010, July to September 2010, October to December 2010 and January to March 2011 are shown in a table that has been placed in the Library of the House.

Tristram Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with which organisations his Department has had meetings to discuss the National Planning Policy Framework since May 2010. [72072]

Greg Clark: Officials routinely meet with a wide range of organisations to discuss planning matters. Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on my Department's website.

Tristram Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) with which organisations he has had meetings to discuss the National Planning Policy Framework since April 2011; [72073]

(2) with which organisations the Minister of State for Housing and Local Government has had meetings to discuss the National Planning Policy Framework since April 2011; [72074]

(3) with which organisations the Minister of State for Decentralisation has had meetings to discuss the National Planning Policy Framework since April 2011. [72075]

Greg Clark: My Department routinely publishes details of ministerial meetings on the departmental website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/transparencingovernment/ministerialdata>

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what assessment his Department has made of the potential effects of implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework on the level of judicial reviews in respect of planning applications; and what assessment he has made of the risk of a judicial review in respect of the process for introducing the National Planning Policy Framework; [72291]

(2) what assessment he has made of the potential effects of his National Planning Policy Framework on the (a) legal profession and (b) courts system. [71901]

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Greg Clark: The impact assessment accompanying the draft National Planning Policy Framework contains an assessment of the potential effects of the draft National Planning Policy Framework on the justice system. The process of reducing and simplifying planning policy will lead to a reduction in the number of planning decisions that are referred to the courts. This is because there will be less complexity, less contradiction and a clearer statement of Government policy, as a result of streamlining planning policy (Part A) and of the greater likelihood of having local plans.

Planning Permission: Appeals

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the national planning policy framework on planning appeals. [71858]

Greg Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the published Impact Assessment, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will place in the Library a copy of the assessment of the potential impact on appeals of the national planning policy framework made by the planning inspectorate on the day his Department receives the assessment. [71862]

Greg Clark: Information about the expected impact on appeal cases is contained in the consultation stage impact assessment. A final impact assessment will be published alongside the final national planning policy framework, and a copy will be provided to the House.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many planning applications in each development category have been referred to the Secretary of State in each of the last five years; and how many such applications so referred have been called in for determination in each of those years. [71883]

Robert Neill: The information requested is shown in the following table:

	<i>Referral type</i>	<i>Numbers referred</i>	<i>Numbers called in</i>
2006	Departure	620	17
	Flooding	2	0
	Green Belt	59	1
	Shopping	94	5
	Playing Field	20	0
	Housing Density	2	0
	Greenfield Housing	34	0
2007	Departure	597	14
	Flooding	20	4
	Green Belt	68	2
	Shopping	99	2

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2008	Departure	574	10
	Flooding	20	4
	Green Belt	81	4
	Shopping	99	10
	Playing Field	11	0
	2009 flooding	0	0
	2009 Greenbelt	0	0
	2009 outside Town Centre	1	0
	2009 playing field	1	0
	2009 World Heritage Site	0	0
2009	Departure	221	1
	Flooding	5	2
	Green Belt	39	1
	Shopping	37	4
	Playing Field	13	0
	2009 flooding	3	1
	2009 Greenbelt	72	0
	2009 outside Town Centre	45	0
	2009 playing field	21	0
	2009 World Heritage Site	0	0
2010	Departure	18	0
	Flooding	0	0
	Green Belt	0	0
	Shopping	0	0
	Playing Field	0	0
	2009 flooding	4	1

	2009 Greenbelt	157	4
	2009 outside Town Centre	93	0
	2009 playing field	50	0
	2009 World Heritage Site	3	0
2011 ⁽¹⁾	Departure	2	0
	Flooding	0	0
	Green Belt	2	0
	Shopping	0	0
	Playing Field	0	0
	2009 flooding	0	0
	2009 Greenbelt	54	0
	2009 outside Town Centre	46	0
	2009 playing field	20	0
	2009 World Heritage Site	0	0

(1) To 31 August. Notes: 1. The criteria for referral of application to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has changed over the five year period. 2. As of 1 April 2007 the Greenfield and Housing Density direction were cancelled. Also on 20 April 2009 the Consultation Directions 2009 superseded the remaining referral directions with departure from the local plan no longer included as a reason for referral and development on a World Heritage Site introduced as a reason for referral. Data Source: DCLG Planet Database

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to publish the Planning Inspectorate's assessment of the potential effects on the level of planning appeals of implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework. [72292]

Robert Neill: I once again refer the hon. Member to the published Impact Assessment a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Planning Permission: Offices

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the removal of office development from the town centre first policy on sustainable transport on (a) the removal of car parking standards and (b) other sustainable transport matters. [71871]

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what impact assessment he has made of the effects on the sustainability of high streets of the removal of office development from the Town Centre First policy. [71877]

Robert Neill: A consultation stage impact assessment was published alongside the draft National Planning Policy Framework on 25 July 2011. This includes consideration of the expected impact of changes in current planning policy.

Planning Permission: Rural Areas

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many out-of-town planning applications referred to him have been called in since May 2010. [71874]

Robert Neill: No out-of-town applications have been called in by the Secretary of State between 1 May 2010 and 31 August 2011.

Planning: Appeals

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many planning appeals in each category the Planning Inspectorate considered in each of the last five years; and how many and what proportion of such appeals in each category were (a) upheld and (b) dismissed. [71884]

Robert Neill: The following tables show the numbers of planning appeals in each procedure category considered by the Planning Inspectorate in each of the last five years. The tables also show the percentage that were upheld and dismissed. Please note that from 6 April 2009 a new procedure category, Householder Appeal Service, was introduced and is a sub category of Written Representations.

<i>Written Representations</i> ⁽¹⁾				
	<i>Decided</i>	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Percentage upheld</i>	<i>Percentage dismissed</i>
2006-07	16,705	5,557	33	67
2007-08	16,875	5,732	34	66
2008-09	16,854	5,332	32	68
2009-10	12,418	3,695	30	70
	⁽¹⁾ (2,218)	⁽¹⁾ (714)	⁽¹⁾ (32)	⁽¹⁾ (68)
2010-11	9,396	2,827	30	70
	⁽¹⁾ (4,959)	⁽¹⁾ (1,741)	⁽¹⁾ (35)	⁽¹⁾ (65)

⁽¹⁾Householder Appeal Service shown in brackets.

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<i>Hearings</i>				
	<i>Decided</i>	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Percentage upheld</i>	<i>Percentage dismissed</i>
2006-07	3,216	1,169	36	64
2007-08	2,252	873	39	61
2008-09	3,332	1,312	39	61
2009-10	2,174	847	39	61
2010-11	1,160	461	40	60

<i>Inquiries</i>				
	<i>Decided</i>	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Percentage upheld</i>	<i>Percentage dismissed</i>
2006-07	937	439	47	53
2007-08	889	478	54	46
2008-09	901	432	48	52
2009-10	561	297	53	47
2010-11	337	165	49	51

Regional Planning and Development

Mr Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to publish for consultation his Department's environmental assessment of the revocation of regional strategies; and if he will publish the environmental report for each region separately. [72387]

Robert Neill: I announced in a written ministerial statement on 5 April 2011, Official Report, column 52WS, that the Government are undertaking a voluntary assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of revoking all eight regional strategies which will be published as eight separate reports. I will announce the start of public consultation on the assessments shortly.