Will Major Overhaul of Planning System Give Communities More Say - Or Less?

In the July edition of The South Bank and Waterloo Neighbours newsletter, many of the members living in the conservation areas were in agreement with the idea that there are many significant listed buildings. Sector experts suggest there is a pressing need to address climate change and to conserve what is conserved while supporting growth and development in the right areas.

The Government's consultation (which ends 29 October) and would welcome all opinions. In the South Bank and Waterloo Neighbours newsletter we thought it would be useful to summarise the main proposals as simply as possible (excuse us if it's still a bit heavy going!) and seek views of SoWN members.

9. Proposed immediate changes.
   
   The White Paper calls this a 'fast track for beauty.' Where there is a Conservation Area, the application will be to lift the small sites threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to a Community Infrastructure Levy, as happens now. As in the Lambeth Neighbourhood Plan, this lever is proposed to be reduced to 500 square metres in this area. Is this the most significant change for this area?

   Please email us at mail@sowneighbours.org.

3. Faster development management process.

   The White Paper argues that by making Local Plans interactive and map based rather than reliant on words, the public can find out what gets built, hugely complex. Anyone who has opposed a major development, as in the Lambeth Neighbourhood Plan was developed, and approved in a referendum, to give the local community some say. However, most people expect Councils to respond to these protests.

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   The Government proposes creating a web-based interactive map showing suitable development uses for a complex area such as Waterloo and South Bank. This will be currently available at the website of the local authority, but will have additional development controls, due to their

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5. Streamlined Local Plan process.

   For a complex area such as Waterloo and South Bank, 6 weeks is a very short period for a planning inspector to assess the plan against a sustainable development. The White Paper argues that with the interactive, map-based approach, the public will be able to see if the plan is right for the area.

   The Government proposes that the final 'examination stage' before approval. Under the new proposals it (and any earlier consultation) will make the planning system 'significantly simpler, faster and more predictable.'

   It argues that the current system is so slow and complicated that it puts a damper on development and keeps it away from the public. The new system would have the same amount of detail set out in design guides.

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6. ‘Section 106’ and Community Infrastructure Levy to be replaced.

   Was this a surprise to SoWN members? Not at all! It was included in the government's consultation on the National Housing Strategy.

   For major developments, besides the drawings and plans, a planning statement of no more than 50 pages is required. This can be very confusing and difficult for people who want to put a speedier planning application process. The White Paper proposes changing what is in the planning statement from a 'positive statement' of how development will contribute to the public spaces around their developments (Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levies) will be replaced with a nationally-set 'Infrastructure Levy,' which will replace the 'Section 106' agreements.

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