

**Planners Network NUK  
In Trouble Again: Planning  
under Threat  
What's worth fighting for ?**

**Duncan Bowie**

**University of Westminster and  
Highbury Group on Housing  
Delivery**

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

# 5 Housing Supply Objectives

- **Numerical output which meets housing requirements incorporating household population growth and any backlog in housing need, reflected for example in overcrowding of occupation of unfit premises which are beyond economic repair;**
- **Housing which is of a type appropriate to meeting requirements in terms of built form, bedroom size mix and standards;**

## Objectives (2)

- **Housing which is located in areas within which people wish to live and which is supported by employment opportunities, transport and social infrastructure and access to open space;**
- **Housing which is affordable in both capital cost and revenue cost terms by the households for whom it is intended; and**
- **Housing which is in effective use, in terms of not being under-occupied and not involving an ineffective use of resources in terms of both public subsidy and space.**

# 5 Preconditions for housing delivery

- **Sufficient land coming forward for residential development in appropriate locations; the labour, skills and materials to deliver the numerical output;**
- **A planning and building control regime or code which ensures housing is appropriate to meet requirements and complies with a set of standards;**
- **A planning regime which ensures that housing is only built in locations where employment opportunities, transport and social infrastructure and open space is provided and that a funding mechanism is in place to ensure delivery of these components of sustainable communities;**

# Preconditions (2)

- **A funding regime, either in terms of funding bricks and mortar or household costs which ensures housing is affordable by the households for whom it is intended; and**
- **A mechanism for ensuring resources are used effectively. This can include for example, density controls, licensing of development and/or occupation and financial controls including taxation measures, which disincentivise underuse of land or residential property.**

# Not meeting precondition 1

- **There is no central control over the release of land for development and the Homes and Communities Agency has not used its land acquisition powers.**
- **Councils are not acquiring housing land and in some cases are still disposing of it.**
- **Although the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) inherited English Partnership's role on developing a brownfield land strategy, there is no evidence of any government or government agency proactive strategy to bring forward land for development. This is generally viewed as best left to the market.**

# Not meeting precondition 2

- **The Parker Morris standards for council housing were scrapped in 1980. While the Homes and Communities Agency operates standards for housing it funds, there is no standard for new private housing. Coalition government does not appear to support national standards.**
- **The application of the Code for Sustainable Homes, though the application to private housing is not mandatory. Building regulations are limited to matters relating to materials, construction processes, energy efficiency and safety.**

# Not meeting precondition 3

- **The planning regime introduced by the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act has not as yet proved to be fully effective. The majority of local planning authorities still do not have local spatial plans in place. The Government has abolished regional planning outside London (and weakened it in London) and centrally and regionally determined housing targets based on an assessment of need for development and capacity for development.**
- **There is little linkage between the identification of areas for residential growth such as Thames Gateway and the identification of employment capacity and its delivery. There is a lack of economic planning, this being left to the market.**

## **Not meeting precondition 3**

- **Funding for transport and social infrastructure is generally inadequate and not directly related to the areas of potential residential growth. Coalition govt has abandoned support for growth areas. Growth now a matter for local decision.**
- **Some of the Governments proposals for new towns, now branded as 'eco-towns' have been shown to be not fully consistent with the principles of sustainable residential development. Coalition government has in effect abandoned initiative.**

# Not meeting precondition 4

- **The current funding regime is inadequate to support the required provision of affordable housing, especially socially rented housing. For many locations, notably areas of significant demand with high land costs, and high existing use costs, available grant is generally at too low a level relative to land and built cost to make a development viable.**
- **The new Government has now abolished all grant for social rented housing, with only limited grant for sub market rent ( at 80% of market rents unaffordable by low and middle income households in higher value areas).**

## **Not meeting precondition 4**

- **The arrangements for the Community Infrastructure Levy, to fund transport and social infrastructure, are likely to act as a further restraint on development, especially in the current market context. The Government has not put in place a mechanism for the public sector to benefit from the long-term value appreciation of development.**

# Not meeting precondition 5

- **There are no adequate mechanisms for ensuring effective use of resources. Guidance on density was limited to a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare and has been withdrawn by new Government.**
- **There are no government targets for the range or type of housing provided in terms of affordability, built form or bedroom size mix. Both dwelling type and location are matters left to local authorities to determine.**
- **Local planning authorities powers to set parameters for development are weak, and the nature of development is largely market driven.**

# Not meeting precondition 5

- **Taxation does not incentivise effective use of land or property, with stamp duty acting as a tax on purchase and constraint on affordability, with no taxation on value appreciation. Council tax remains insufficiently progressive and in fact includes discounts for under-occupation rather than penalties.**

# The Current Ideology

- **Limited powers of direction over the market**
- **Reliance on private sector ownership and development to the extent of assets being transferred on a significant scale from public to private sector**
- **Light touch regulation ,if any**
- **Reliance on private sector investment to reduce demand on the public sector budget and the taxpayer.**

# Planning and growth

- **Last Govt attacked planners as constraining growth – ignoring wider economic factors**
- **New Government's attack on planners as 'enemies of growth'**
- **Planning can create a spatial framework for the implementation of growth – but growth dependent on private and public sector investment**

# Planning and neighbourhoods

- **Are neighbourhood plans the end of strategic planning ?**
- **No public control over use of land/ development rights**
- **No intermediary between developers and existing residents – bribery and corruption**
- **A regime for NIMBYs and protectionists**
- **Enabling disadvantaged communities to produce positive plans**

# What we fight for

- **A democratic planning regime with an appropriate balance between central, regional, local and neighbourhood powers**
- **Planning policies which enable appropriate and sustainable development**
- **A mechanism for ensuring 'excess' private profit is captured for public purposes**

# What we fight for

- **Adequate public sector investment to support basic services for households and communities who cannot self fund**
- **A national spatial planning framework supported by a national infrastructure investment plan and budget**
- **Strategic planning powers which reduce spatial inequities**
- **Planning appropriate for a globalised economy and a transient population. England is not just an aggregate of self contained villages.**