

Brighton & Hove City Council

For general release

Meeting: Sustainability Commission

Date: 29 October 2003

Report of: Director of Environment

Subject: Consultation on Draft Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consult members on the changes proposed in the draft Consultation Paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) – *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*.

2. Recommendations

That the Sustainability Commission:

- 2.1 Note the changes and implications outlined in this report.
- 2.2 Provides a response that will inform the recommendations to the Environment Committee.

3. Information/background

- 3.1 Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) set out the Government's national land use planning policies for England. The Government's Planning Green Paper (December 2001) announced the Government's intention to review all of its Planning Policy Guidance: to see whether it is needed; to seek greater clarity from it; and to remove from these documents advice on practical implementation and policies that are best expressed at a regional or local level. The revised documents, which will be re-named as Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), will set out the Government's broad policy objectives

for England, and the proposed planning policies that will help deliver these objectives.

- 3.2 Following a review of PPG7 *The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (February 1997), the Government considers that the broad planning policy framework provided by PPG7 remains appropriate. However, it has concluded that a considerable amount of the material in PPG7, particularly in its annexes, is out of date and/or inappropriate for a shorter, focused Statement of national Planning Policies.
- 3.3 The Government’s consultation paper seeks comments on a draft of a new Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) on *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*. It is the Government’s intention that the PPS (and accompanying guidance to be drafted) should, in due course, replace the existing PPG7.
- 3.4 Draft PPS7 sets out the Government’s policies, which are based on the principles of sustainable development and the need to protect the wider, largely undeveloped countryside for the benefit of all. Its objectives are:
- (i) To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas;
 - (ii) To promote more sustainable patterns of development and support an urban renaissance;
 - (iii) To make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions and, over the long term, reduce the persistent gap in growth rates within and between regions; and
 - (iv) To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors where farming achieves high environmental standards, minimising impact on natural resources, and contributes both directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity.

4. Outline of Draft Alterations

- 4.1 **Farm Diversification** – The draft PPS strengthens the Government’s stance to encourage farm diversification to non-agricultural activities where this is vital to the continuing viability of farm enterprises. Local planning authorities are encouraged to:
- apply criteria-based policies to planning applications for farm diversification projects;
 - support well-conceived farm diversification schemes for business purposes that are consistent in their scale with their rural or urban fringe location; and
 - give favourable consideration to proposals for diversification in Green Belts, where the development preserves the openness of the

Green Belt, through the re-use or replacement of existing buildings where feasible.

- 4.2 **Tourism & Leisure** – Local planning authorities are encouraged to support, through plan policies and development control decisions, sustainable rural tourism and leisure proposals that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors. In addition, there will be scope for new tourist and leisure-related developments, subject to appropriate control over their number and location to protect environmental quality. Large-scale tourism and leisure developments in rural areas will be subject to a close assessment of their benefits and disadvantages in terms of sustainability, particularly in terms of traffic generation.
- 4.3 The draft states that facilities for tourists and visitors should be provided in, or close to service centres or villages. Small-scale facilities should be allowed where they would enhance visitors' enjoyment and/or improve the financial viability of a particular countryside feature or attraction, provided that they do not detract from the attractiveness of this feature or the surrounding countryside. Wherever possible, tourist and visitor facilities should be housed in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements.
- 4.4 Tourist accommodation is encouraged by the draft Statement to be located in or adjacent to existing towns and villages, but the conversion of suitable existing rural buildings to provide hotel and other serviced accommodation should be allowed where these uses can be justified. Extensions of such existing uses should also be viewed positively where the scale is appropriate and where it will help to ensure the future viability of such businesses. Proposals for static and touring caravan parks will be carefully considered, and located away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4.5 Draft PPS7 contains a broad policy relating to horse riding and other equestrian activities. Local planning authorities are encouraged to set out in development plans their policies for supporting equine enterprises, whilst maintaining environmental quality and countryside character. They should also facilitate the re-use of farm buildings for small-scale horse enterprises (less than 10 horses) that provide a useful form of farm diversification.
- 4.6 **Rural Services & Facilities** – Draft PPS7 expands on the need for those who live and work in rural areas to have reasonable access to a range of services and facilities. Local authorities are required to facilitate and provide this provision where there are identified needs, enhance public

transport links and identify particular sites for community buildings and local service facilities within existing settlements. Planning authorities should also support the retention of local facilities through their development plan policies.

- 4.7 **Buildings in the Countryside** – The draft Statement contains a new criteria-based policy that permits the replacement of existing buildings in the countryside for business purposes, or exceptionally, other uses with wider benefits such as an educational or interpretative centre at a nature conservation site. The criteria include the requirement for the replacement building to bring about an environmental improvement in terms of impact of development, and a requirement that the building is not substantially larger in terms of its footprint and height, than the building it is replacing.
- 4.8 The government proposes to remove the specific policy exception in paragraph 3.21 of PPG7, which allows large, high quality houses to be built in the open countryside. Accordingly, this exception is not included in draft PPS7.
- 4.9 **Local Countryside Designations** – in a significant policy change, the Government does not consider that local countryside designations, such as areas of high landscape value, are necessary in the draft PPS, because the draft policies should provide sufficient protection for the countryside. In reviewing their development plans, local planning authorities are advised to remove any existing designations and instead adopt criteria-based policies for the location and design of rural development throughout their area. This approach is already used by Brighton & Hove City Council through Policy NC6 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan.
- 4.10 **Written Style** – much of the existing background, contextual and non-planning text and information in PPG7 has been omitted, including guidance on how policies are to be implemented. It has also minimised cross-reference and overlap with other PPGs. The Government welcomes views on whether separate guidance on any other aspects of the planning policies in PPS7 would assist in the implementation of these policies.

5. Sustainability Implications

- 5.1 The new draft PPS7 will provide a more robust planning framework for sustainable development in the countryside and rural areas. In particular, the promotion of farm diversification and sustainable tourism and leisure opportunities will encourage development plan policies to be focused on protection of the countryside and sustainable solutions to development.

6. Consultation

6.1 This report forms part of the consultation process.

COMMITTEE REPORT APPENDIX



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<p>Financial implications There will be no financial implications with the acceptance of the recommendations made within this report. <i>Finance Officer consulted: Alasdair Ridley Date 20/10/03.</i></p>
<p>Legal implications Once adopted, the new PPS will be a material consideration in determining planning applications. There will be no human rights implications arising from this report. <i>Lawyer consulted: Hilary Woodward Date 21/10/03.</i></p>

<p>Corporate/Citywide implications Draft PPS7 supports the priorities of the council to encourage and promote sustainable development practices, focused on planning. The response of the Commission to the changes proposed and set out in this report will be incorporated into a report to the Environment Committee and our subsequent response to the ODPM.</p>	<p>Risk assessment There are no risks associated with the proposals set out in this report.</p>
<p>Sustainability implications The new draft PPS7 will provide a more robust planning framework for sustainable development in the countryside and rural areas. In particular, the promotion of farm diversification and sustainable tourism and leisure opportunities will inform development plan policies to be focused on protection of the countryside and sustainable solutions to development.</p>	<p>Equalities implications There are no equalities implications associated with the proposals set out in this report.</p>
<p>Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder There are no implications for the prevention of crime and disorder as a result of the proposals set out in this report.</p>	

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COMMITTEE REPORT APPENDIX



Contact Officer

Liz Cannings, Senior Planner, 01273 292378