

(By email)

I include below the answers to the questions in Annex 1 we felt able to respond to. These were prepared within our group and passed around for comment.

#### Annex 1

1) It can be flexible and responsive but within the limits that the environment can support. Once the environment is unsustainable then any economy working within it is unsustainable. Each of the circumstances has its own timeframe. The minimum time for the process should allow proper consideration of the pressures on natural resources and consultation. Elements of the process should not be made less effective to reduce the time. All sides might see ways that the system could be made more helpful to them but it has to balance these sometimes conflicting needs.

3) There is too much latitude given to developers in the current planning system with little specific guidance on sustainable development. It is growth that is quantified not the necessity to conserve natural resources. Growth is seen in terms of numbers of jobs, houses and councils will be conscious of not meeting those "targets". Part of the difficulty is the width of meanings that are included within the term, sustainable development, from sustainable economy to sustainable environment.

5) Should be discussing whether it is a level playing field for all stakeholders and this appears to be favouring business. As in 1) they may take time to go through because of what is involved but there is a high degree of success for applications. So developers can apply with a high expectation of success.

6) Without being repeated, the stated declaration that sustainability is an overarching principle is not carried over to succeeding paragraphs or into documents lower down the hierarchy.

8) The information required to make a planning application is necessary to reach a considered decision. How it might be streamlined to reduce the regulatory burden is difficult to see.

11) We consider the planning system provides some support for the formation of business clusters and wider agglomeration of economic activity by zoning.

14) To achieve a balance between local interests and the interests of the wider community applications need to be given higher profiles, perhaps the use of feature articles in the local press.

15) For planning to provide the infrastructure at least in step with development would strengthen economic performance in regions, sub-regions (including city regions) and at the local level.

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