

SDC Response to The Planning Reform Bill

Sustainable planning should **promote the highest quality development and most beneficial use of land**, in the most appropriate locations at the most appropriate time, and in the public interest. It should assess and provide for **needs rather than just meet demands**. Conversely, it should prevent inappropriate, poorly located, poor quality or unnecessary development. Sustainable planning should result in a **net improvement in places**.

The SDC is encouraged by the government's recognition of the central role of sustainable development in the Planning Reform Bill, as shown by the requirement for the Secretary of State to develop National Policy Statements "with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development". The effective delivery of this objective, in setting the framework for decisions by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC), should embed sustainable development principles firmly within the reformed Planning System.

The SDC aims to assist the Government in ensuring that these measures will be implemented in such a way as to bring about sustainable solutions for all by meeting the criteria set out in our response to the Planning White Paper:

- The topics covered need to **be integrated together** to achieve a consistent spatial approach. Effective horizontal integration of policy, based on sustainable development principles, is critical to overcome the potential of 'silo' delivery
- Their primary focus must be to deliver whole policy solutions, which would include both the **reduction of demand** and the supply of infrastructure for national needs
- They must **meet other EU and national policy objectives** such as those within the Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive etc
- They must **address the national carbon reduction target** (currently set at 60% cuts by 2050, based on 1990 levels)
- They should be **subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment**, both individually and as an integrated whole to assess their cumulative impact – to include a 'climate proofing' test.
- They must be subject to **full consultation, and genuine engagement and debate**, at all levels and with all stakeholders throughout the various stages of their development, in compliance with the Aarhus Convention.

The creation and management of the Infrastructure Planning Commission will be of critical importance to the success of these reforms, not least in ensuring public confidence in the process. To facilitate this we would wish to see the IPC taking the same consideration of sustainable development principles in their decision making process as outlined for the national policy statements themselves.

In our role as the independent Government advisor on sustainable development, the SDC will continue to influence the further development of the Planning Reform Bill.