

## AMT Briefing Note

### Community Led Planning and Government Policy

#### –Some Pointers



*AMT's track record and campaign for community-led planning is in-tune with the new Coalition Government's focus on helping people shape the places where they live through a collaborative process.*

The initial statements from the new Coalition government speak of their broad intention to:

*"Give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live", appears very supportive of AMT's campaign to promote Community-Led Planning."*

This apparent support in the Coalition's outline programme published on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010 is further emphasised by detail that it refers to in the Conservative Party's 'Open Source Planning Green Paper'<sup>1</sup>. In particular, this states that:

*"We will make a truly local plan, built out of a process of collaborative democracy, the centrepiece of the local planning system. "*

### **The Coalition: our programme for government**

*"In the longer term, we will radically reform the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live, based on the principles set out in the Conservative Party publication Open Source Planning." <sup>2</sup>*

### **The Conservative Party Open Source Planning Green Paper**

#### **A new system of collaborative planning: Local plans**

The Local Development Frameworks introduced by the government have not only failed to speed up plan making, but have also been a bureaucratic nightmare to complete. They are excessively detailed, consisting of an entire suite of documents, all of which are interlinked.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.conservatives.com/~media/Files/Green%20Papers/planning-green-paper.ashx>

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[http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dg/groups/dg\\_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg\\_187876.pdf](http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_187876.pdf)

Above all, they are not expressions of a vision of the locality that emerges from the people of that locality.

**We will make a truly local plan, built out of a process of collaborative democracy, the centrepiece of the local planning system.**

New local plans will, of course, have to conform to national environmental, architectural, economic and social standards and constraints. But within this national framework, the local plan will be truly local. It will define what the people of a given locality – through a process of collaborative democracy – mean by sustainable development for their area.

Recent academic research has found collaborative democracy – the idea that citizens should be actively involved in making the kind of decisions hitherto reserved for bureaucrats and elected representatives – to be a highly successful concept. We believe that the production of new local plans is a process that is ideally suited to the use of collaborative democracy. By building local plans from the bottom up so that they genuinely reflect the will of the people, we will help communities to come together so they can solve their collective problems together.

We will therefore give local people the power to engage in genuine local planning by **mandating that all local authorities use collaborative democratic methods in drawing up their local plans.**

Following the publication of this green paper, we will consult widely on the models of collaborative democracy best suited to local planning. We will draw both upon relevant experience inside the UK (e.g. in the collaborative development of village plans) and on relevant models from other countries. We will aim to identify a range of different methods of involving the neighbourhood in developing the local plan, so that local areas can experiment in drawing up their own plans. But we will expect to see, at a minimum:

- the evolution of the plan starting at ‘ground level’ in neighbourhoods with every single resident of the neighbourhood approached to take part;
- the provision of good data by the local planning authority to the electors in the neighbourhoods, so that they can develop their vision for their community on a well-informed basis (this will need to include analysis by the council of the likely need for housing and for affordable housing for local people in each neighbourhood, as well as details of infrastructure and services planned by other agencies and the third and private sectors);
- the full involvement of democratic representatives at all levels (parish and town councils, ward councillors, accountable residents’ associations and other elected representatives), as well as consultation with other interested parties; and
- a presumption that the ‘modules’ of the local plan provided by each neighbourhood will be incorporated in the final plan unless there are strong grounds for modifying them; but also

- a role for the planning authority itself in helping neighbourhoods to develop their visions and in brokering a rational and coherent plan for the area as a whole, on the basis of negotiation with each of the neighbourhoods and with all the relevant public agencies responsible for infrastructure and the environment.

In order to align incentives and responsibilities, **we will legislate to ensure that neighbourhoods will receive a proportion of the local tariff (see below) raised from all development.**

The creation of genuinely local plans will give communities and councils more freedom to set energy efficiency and renewable generation requirements for new developments, for instance by including requirements for Combined Heat and Power systems in plans for town centres.