

## Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations

Dear Morcom

At our committee meeting last week disquiet was expressed at the Government's Draft Planning Reforms Document (the consultation period ends on 17th October) and how any reforms would affect us here in Cambridge. We wondered how the Residents' Groups in Cambridge should respond to the document; ( in a strategic and non political way). We wondered if you could advise, and should we respond as a group under the umbrella of the Federation of Cambridge Residents' Association. Members felt that a group representation would be more effective.

Having read a few articles on the subject of the Planning Reform Document, there appears to be immense hostility to the new proposals from not least The National Trust ( with a reported membership of 4 million) Apparently all members of the NT have been contacted and they are hoping for a response from 100,000 members which would, apparently, be enough to force a debate in Parliament! The Director of the National Trust has met with Greg Clark, the luckless Minister charged with selling the Government's planning shake up. NT maintains the document is badly worded and needs a lot of clarification. Simon Jenkins Chairman of the National Trust appeared on Channel 4 News with Mr Clark and Jeremy Paxman last week; he had a very rough ride; Mr Jenkins said the bill as it stood was every Developers dream; Mr Clark promises to listen to everything and everyone.

Apparently the tension within government is between localism and economic growth, with the government coming down clearly on the side of economic growth. So local people will be given the power to say yes, but not to say no. Conservation groups say

the plans could cause irreversible damage. Apparently Mr Cameron and George Osborne are solidly behind the Bill with Mr Clark only the front man, and Mr Pickles planning to take on any dissident Councils.

There is an interesting article from the BBC Political Editor for the East of England

'When the new Government came in one of the first things it did was abolish regional planning strategies and controversial proposals for eco towns. It talked about 'localism' - letting committees rather than distant politicians decide where developments should go. It left some people with the impression that local opinion would rule, that if there was an unpopular housing scheme, it wouldn't go ahead. But it isn't going to be that easy as that. The Government has published new planning advice to councils, the National Planning Policy Framework telling them to make more provision for more development, and they have been told that in the event of disputes the default answer to new development will be yes. Campaign groups say this will mean thousands of new homes will now be built in the East - many on green field sites.

The Government insists that it values the country side and it says green spaces which are valuable to local communities will be protected, but a spokesman for the Department for Communities and local Government told the BBC 'Housebuilding fell to record levels under the last Government and that needs to be addressed. We will allow local communities to make decisions for themselves, they can decide what is suitable and where it goes but they can't block development!

Naturally CPRA are concerned about the future of Christ's Pieces. Only about 18 months ago Stagecoach expressed interest in taking over half of Christ's Pieces and making an Earl St.

interchange which they felt would resolve all bus parking problems for Cambridge. There was a swift response from our City Councillors saying No to that suggestion and to date we have been able to take comfort from their support. However, as we read these new government proposals it seems that it would be difficult for them to offer the same support in the future. There must be many similar situations in and around Cambridge.

We look forward to hearing your ideas.

Kind regards

Margaret Tait

CHAIR

Christ's Pieces Residents' Association