

Civic Voice and RTPI suggested amendment to the Localism Bill: Purposes of a Neighbourhood Forum

Introduction

1. Civic Voice and the RTPI are concerned that an amendment to Schedule 9 of the Localism at Report Stage in the House of Commons will have a serious effect on the comprehensive approach that is at the heart of effective and proper planning and, in particular, the nature of neighbourhood plans. Both Civic Voice and the RTPI are strong supporters of Neighbourhood Planning.
2. Schedule 9, 61F (5) [page 306, line 17] has been amended to read:
*(5) A local planning authority may designate an organisation or body as a neighbourhood forum if the authority are satisfied that it meets the following conditions—
(a) it is established expressly for either or both of the following purposes—
(i) furthering the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals living, or wanting to live, in an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned,
(ii) promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such an area,*
3. Civic Voice and the RTPI are concerned that the inclusion of the phrase ‘either or both’ in (a) means that a Neighbourhood Forum may be set up for – and, thus, a neighbourhood plan done purely for - ‘promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such an area’ rather than being required to take into account wider ‘social, economic and environmental well-being’.
4. The purpose of planning, as consistently emphasised in Government Guidance and statements, is to address the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. This Clause, as amended, runs entirely counter to that by encouraging a type of planning which focuses solely on just one aspect - promoting business in an area.
5. Civic Voice and the RTPI calls for this amended Clause to be further amended in the Bill’s passage through the House of Lords so that it brings back the original broad purpose for neighbourhood forums.
6. **Civic Voice and the RTPI propose that the Clause should read:**
***(5) A local planning authority may designate an organisation or body as a neighbourhood forum if the authority are satisfied that it meets the following conditions—
(a)it is established expressly for the purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals living, working, or wanting to live, in an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned, including, if relevant, promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such an area,***

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