



**RTPI**

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27<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Dear Simon

### **Consultation on Scottish Planning Policy 3 – Planning for Housing (SPP3)**

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation which seeks to strengthen the link between assessing housing demand and need, and development planning and implementation; to allocate sufficient appropriate land to meet identified need and demand for housing, including affordable housing across all tenures; to ensure the creation of high quality residential environments; and to address the interface between planning control and the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Institute recognises the important role that the planning system has to play in achieving these aims.

The RTPI is the UK body chartered to represent the planning profession and offers these comments from the point of view of a diverse and policy-neutral professional body committed to supporting devolved government in Scotland. The Institute has approximately 1900 members in Scotland, working across all sectors of central government, local government, government agencies, the voluntary sector, private consultancy, the development industry and academia.

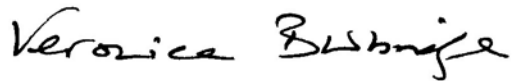
Since devolution, the Institute has empowered its RTPI in Scotland Office, together with its Scottish Executive Committee, with the responsibility for working with government and public bodies generally for the improvement of the planning system in Scotland. This is in accordance with its charter obligation to work for the public interest.

## General comments

In general, the Institute welcomes the revision of SPP3 with its recognition of the important role played by the Development Plan led system and the need to strengthen joint working between housing and planning interests, across a range of stakeholders. Our detailed comments are set out in the attached Annex under the headings of the questions raised in the consultation paper. We support the publication of a series of related policy, guidance, and advice publications. However, we consider that a clear distinction needs to be made between categories of policy and guidance. In addition, the Institute remains concerned that the resource implications for the planning and housing services in achieving these aims must be fully analysed and addressed.

The Institute trusts that these comments are of assistance and has no objection to its comments being made available to the public in the usual way. Should you wish any clarification or further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at our Edinburgh office: 57 Melville Street Edinburgh, EH3 7HL phone: 0131 226 1959, or email: [veronica.burbridge@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:veronica.burbridge@rtpi.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Burbridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and 'B'.

Veronica Burbridge  
National Director RTPi in Scotland

## Annex 1

### **DETAILED RESPONSE BY THE ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE IN SCOTLAND TO THE CONSULTATION ON SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY SPP3 PLANNING FOR HOUSING**

#### **Q1 Do you think that planning guidance on HMOs should be provided as an annex to SPP3, which replaces the existing Circular 4/2004?**

1. The provision of a clear policy statement and of revised guidance clarifying the role of planning in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) is welcomed. The Institute supports the revision of Circular 4/2004 'Houses in Multiple Occupation: guidance on the interface between planning control and licensing' but considers that the revised publication should separate from the SPP. The publication and ready availability of linked policy, guidance and advice is a very useful approach. Given the flexibility of web-based information, documents could be electronically linked and cross referenced. It may not be helpful to place important guidance in an annex and a clear distinction between policy and guidance is needed to understand their relations and differing status.
2. The Institute supports the need for clear policy guidance on the interface between planning control and licensing of HMOs. However, we consider that some distinction needs to be made between the SPP as a statement of planning policy and the supporting documents which set out guidance, advice and aspects of procedural good practice. The information and guidance on HMOs should be issued as either a Circular or a Planning Advice Note (PAN) and could be one element of a suite of PANs.

#### **Q2 Do you agree that this review structure, including the annexes, improves upon the existing SPP3? In what ways do you think the revised structure provides more effective guidance?**

3. The Institute recognises the need for a comprehensive raft of policy and guidance and supports the development of a consistent approach to housing market assessments and housing land audits. We support the general framework of examining firstly the identification of housing requirements and secondly the delivery of housing and the publication of related policy and guidance simultaneously. However, we do not support the use of annexes and would prefer the production of stand alone and readily identifiable policy, guidance and advice documents.

#### **Q3 Do you agree it is desirable to achieve a more robust and consistent approach to the assessment of housing need and demand? Does the approach set out in chapter two provide an appropriate mechanism for this?**

4. The Institute agrees that an approach which achieves a more robust and consistent approach to the assessment of housing need and demand would be desirable.
5. At the national level further clarification is needed of how the figure of 35,000 houses was derived and how the figure will be split geographically and by tenure. In advance of SHNMA processes being completed across the country, it is difficult to tell if the results will match this overall target.
6. The main issues are not just about the target set but the quality and location of housing and the extent to which housing policies contribute to wider objectives e.g. of energy efficiency. The draft SPP3 suggests that the planning process is the main reason for the failure to meet the current demand for new housing in Scotland: however, this assertion needs to be supported and explained against an assessment of the whole development

process and other contributing factors. Whilst undoubtedly the planning system has an important role to play, consideration also needs to be given to the macro economic conditions, the capacity of the development industry to deliver, skills shortages, approaches to land banking and how public funding will support the higher level of housing investment through improvements in transportation, water and sewerage infrastructure and the funding of affordable housing.

7. Land allocation in itself is insufficient to achieve new targets and new build has to be taken forward within the context of an agreed development strategy for an area. The stated increase in housing provision will only be achieved if the process of delivery is also addressed.
8. Further consideration might also be given to the new policy position that local authorities should '*maintain a generous supply of land for housing on a range of sites*' within each individual housing market area. The Institute suggests that such a policy might lead to increased pressure for release of greenfield land and also might act against policies of regeneration of existing communities. It might also lead to 'cherry-picking' of sites and would require careful control over phasing of land release. Further definition of what constitutes '*generous*' supply would be helpful.
9. It will be important to ensure that both housing and planning services are adequately resourced to bring forward SHMNA and Local Housing Strategies (LHS). There may be particular issues of expertise, resources and timing prior to the introduction of new development plans. The complexity of the new procedures may impact on the length of the development process and more attention should be given to issues of local consultation.
10. It would have been helpful to have had a longer time frame to consider the details of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment Guidance which was published towards the end of the consultation period. Given the comprehensive approach taken to the relationship between policy and guidance, it is disappointing that this crucial element was missing from the overall consultation package.

**Q4 How should the transition between the existing housing delivery system and that proposed be handled? How best can the cycles of new development plans due from the end of 2008 and the LHS due in summer 2009 be synchronised?**

11. Development Plan reviews will need to be based on up to date information including Housing Needs Assessment and Local Housing Strategies. It is important therefore that Scottish Housing Market and Need Assessments are undertaken as soon as possible so that LHS can be prepared to guide the new- style Development Plans. Further clarification is required of the requirements and timescales associated with the preparation of SHNMAs and their relations with the programme for publishing the new-style Development Plans.
12. The Institute supports the emphasis given in the draft SPP to the plan led system in setting out housing land allocations; the emphasis given to the provision of land for affordable housing; and to the inclusion of housing policies in development plans relating to quality residential environments, energy efficiency, open space provision; housing in rural areas and developer contributions. Further thought might be given in the SPP and related advice and guidance on the use of compulsory purchase in achieving land supply targets.

**Q5 Do you agree that local authorities should set policies to control the proportion of HMO accommodation in a given unit, where this is necessary? How should maximum proportions be decided?**

13. The Institute agrees that where necessary local authorities should set policies to control the proportion of HMOs in a given unit. In principle the use of planning policy or supplementary guidance would appear an appropriate response where the issue requires policy intervention. Assessment of need for and provision of HMOs will form part of the LHS and this should translate into HMO density guidelines reflecting local community factors, employment and the like. Further guidance on, this together with examples of good practice, could be helpfully set out in a PAN.

**Q6 How do you think the planning system and the HMO licensing system can work together more effectively?**

14. The planning system and the HMO licensing system could work together more effectively by adopting (as recommended by the consultative draft on page 46), a common reporting or recording system such as that used for Development Management purposes. This would ensure the consistent application and recording of information against spatial data or addresses. Consideration should also be given to ways of streamlining application systems.

**Q7 Does the 'period under consideration' require definition?**

15. The Institute considers that clearer definition of 'the period under consideration' is required together with a framework for managing the sequence of land release. This approach is important for efficiency of delivery within the context of Strategic Housing Investment Plans, and it will be important to have firm development timescales. In addition it will be important to address inconsistencies between 'periods of consideration' for Strategic Development Plans and Local Development Plans and between the seven-year audit period and the five-year housing strategy.

**Q8 Is this a useful way to highlight the range of complementary policy and guidance that should be referred to throughout the process set out in SPP3? If not. What approach would be preferable?**

16. The Institute agrees that Appendix D provides a useful way in which to highlight the range of complementary policy and guidance to which reference should be made. A distinction might be made between policy and guidance and The 'Housing and Demand Assessment Guidance' published in March 2008 should be added to this list. Hyperlinks to the listed policy and guidance documents might be provided. Reference might also be made to the policy contexts identified in the SEA as a guide to the use of SEA as a tool in assisting with the comparative assessment of sites and the involvement of communities in discussions early in the Development Planning process.

**Q9 Are there particular costs or benefits not addressed in the partial RIA? What are they?**

17. New resources and support will be required in both planning and housing services to meet the needs of more in-depth analysis of market areas and the like, to regularly up-date information, and to review progress as part of the five- year Development Plan review cycle. Additional training to increase skill sets and to encourage joint working across housing and planning services, and the potential use of consultants will require additional resourcing across local government and need to be included in the RIA.

**Q10 Will particular groups not identified by the partial RIA be affected by SPP3?**

18. Further consideration might be given to the operation of Housing Market Partnerships and how they relate to local communities and groups such as tenants associations. Particular

attention might be given to the needs of migrant workers; to 'hidden' homelessness in rural areas; and to pressures caused by holiday homes in rural communities.

19. Further consideration might also be given to matters of design, to the role of Architecture and Design Scotland and to the development of readily available sources of guidance on energy efficiency in housing design.