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Kelvin Macdonald's

“Twelve Tests that the Localism Bill must pass”

***The reasons why it probably doesn't pass
them and what this means...***

National Planning Forum, 14 December 2010

Matt Thomson, Head of Policy & Practice

with apologies for not being Kelvin Macdonald



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Disclaimer

Kelvin Macdonald's position with the Royal Town Planning Institute is as Chief Policy Adviser, and is in a consultancy capacity.

The "Twelve Tests that the Localism Bill must pass" are his own, and are not necessarily the policy of the RTPI, nor are they necessarily endorsed by the RTPI, nor will the RTPI necessarily use them to assess the adequacy of the Bill.

Off the record, we quite like them.



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Another disclaimer

The views expressed in this presentation are largely those of the presenter, as the RTPI has not had time (about 32 hours) since the publication of the more juicy Volume II of the Bill to consider it and begin to consult with its members.



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The Twelve Tests...



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1. It allows for a clearly stated and democratically agreed vision of national spatial priorities, including meeting needs for housing and infrastructure, and addressing the challenges of climate change.

Yes...?



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2. It takes a broad view of sustainable development that requires all those exercising a presumption in favour of it to place economic, social and environmental sustainability on an equal footing.

Yes...?



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3. It does not assume that the Government's agendas for economic growth, for meeting targets for reducing emissions and increasing renewable energy, for social inclusion and housing delivery will be achieved simply because there is the freedom of choice to do so.

Unclear.



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4. Any duties placed on local government and others – including a duty to co-operate – are clearly defined, are resourced and are enforceable where necessary.

No.



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5. Any rights given to communities, such as the right to plan or to build, are not token rights unsupported by resources, expertise or democratic challenge.

No...?



6. The understandable desire among communities for immediate investment in local facilities does not prejudice longer term investments to meet larger-scale needs such as hospitals, waste facilities and transport infrastructure.

Unclear.



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7. The systems of incentives, funds, levies and agreements work together to fund a rigorously analysed and democratically agreed list of infrastructure priorities, and that such incentives are open and transparent and are not perceived as, or act as, development bribes.

Unclear.



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8. Neighbourhood planning not only serves to provide what local communities desire, but also allows for what wider communities need.

Unclear.



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9. In exercising powers over the future of their areas, communities accept and fulfil the responsibilities attached to doing so.

Unclear.



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10. It makes it clear that it is equally important for a neighbourhood group to consult as to be consulted.

No.



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11. It gives an equal opportunity for all communities to be involved in shaping their own futures, including those communities and groups whose engagement has often been neglected and have been served by Planning Aid in the past and we hope will continue to do so in the future.

No.



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12. It does not hamper the ability of RTPI members to continue to provide a professional, independent, unbiased, evidence-based service to all those involved in, and affected by, planning.

Unclear.



What is still an issue for the RTPI?

- Lots of questions and concerns about interpretation of the Bill's details.
- Is it the right time for a jittery development industry to be faced with major change to the planning system, especially one which promises so little consistency?
- While acknowledging that top-down targets and many aspects of regional planning need review, will choice and incentive deliver everything communities (of all sizes) need?
- Is the revocation of RSSs (and saved structure plan policies) through an Act of Parliament any more lawful (w.r.t. Cala) than through ministerial statement? Should we be looking at a proper transition?
- Will “larger-than-local” issues be successfully addressed by LEPs and joint strategies, and is the duty to co-operate strong enough?
- Are councils and/or communities resourced to deliver?



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Next steps for RTPI

- Consultation with members through General Assembly, Nations, Regions and Networks, making use of their expertise to focus on key issues – quick turnaround needed
- Ongoing discussions with CLG
- Ongoing discussions with partner organisations, including other professional institutes
- Briefings for MPs ahead of Bill's second reading (mid-January)
- Ongoing briefings for our members
- Producing practical advice, where appropriate working with CLG and others
- Encourage members to seize opportunities the Bill gives