

The Scottish Government has issued Draft Planning Delivery Advice on “Housing and Infrastructure”. This has come as a result of the “root and branch” review of Scottish planning. The Government has commissioned a separate study on housing and infrastructure to tackle one of the practical issues of the current shortage of housing.

The draft advice is concerned with improving housing and infrastructure delivery primarily through the development plan process, but it will also be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals. Once finalised, it will replace Planning Advice Note (PAN) 2/2010.

Developers have found delivery of housebuilding in Scotland has become increasingly challenging in recent years. There has been a reduction in completion rates and shortage of deliverable sites coming forward. This guidance seeks to improve the way in which this is handled.

Effectiveness

The document sets out that there should be a lesser focus on numbers of houses planned. Instead a stronger emphasis be given to delivery of houses, providing levels of what is required to meet current demand, but also to prepare for the future in places which can successfully evolve and grow over time. The advice addresses the issue of effectiveness (i.e. how a planned site performs) and in doing so identifies a number of criteria against which the effectiveness of a proposed housing site will be assessed. The most notable change is the removal of marketability as one of the effectiveness criteria. Is this an admission that previously identified sites were not attractive for housebuilders and buyers?

Infrastructure

In terms of Infrastructure, emphasis is given to partnership working, with a focus on working with stakeholders and agencies in “Delivery Groups”. The advice states that the costing of infrastructure developments should be explored as early as possible to ensure that the correct funding is in place to achieve delivery. The advice suggests this can be done, in a number of traditional methods, for example, Planning Agreement, Developer Contribution, Scale or Kind, but also new approaches such as Cumulative Contributions, thought to be particularly useful for strategic projects.

We consider this a welcome approach given that the most attractive sites currently appear to be smaller but more deliverable.

Rapleys is working with a number of landowners, housebuilders, and housing providers in Scotland and we look forward to putting our practical experience to use on these projects when the new guidance is adopted.

Please contact the above for further information or advice regarding this update.

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