Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Karen Wilson-Dunnett

Please consider my following points in this new planning bill.

I have been subject to the planning laws and their incompatibility with local planning democracy in my area. Our community for the past several years have been fighting plans for an incinerator on our doorstep, after public outcry and our local council voting unanimously to decline planning permission it was sent to the Scottish Government and was overturned by the reporter.

As a lay person, with no knowledge of how planning works this was very disappointing. In light of this (we are still fighting it) there are a few proposals that I would like to be considered.

1. As a community or as an individual, we/I cannot appeal to the Scottish Government for a reporter to overturn a ruling. This is reserved for companies only, the system as it stands is weighted in their favour. This is not planning democracy at a local level.

2. Planning does not get in the way of house building, red-tape and necessary evaluation of the land being used is a safe guard, not a roadblock. This agenda seems to be pushed by the house builders themselves.

3. The same local issue that made me aware of the dire state of planning in this country, resulted in the owner of the land of his proposed site, whilst planning permission was being sought, cut down all the trees on the site in the dead of night. Then denied he did it. He was given a minimal fee which was zero deterrent. New planning rules should have large fines and immediate refusal of all planning applications under that company name and/or the director if any action is made to circumvent environmental concerns on the site.

4. The future of a number of towns in Scotland are left in the hands of profit driven developers. Not the locals who actually live there and could provide real insight into what is needed. A better consultation with local communities and allowing them to draft ideas of what they would like to see in a new development. When given the choice people would choose cycle paths, saving ancient woodlands and badger sets, they would choose to have buffer zones and green links for animals, parks for children and dog walking. When left to developers they want to build the smallest house for the most money and move on to the next site.
5. This could be a tremendous opportunity for Scotland to lead the way in the UK and the world with compassionate, collaborative and innovative planning. Not the tired building of the past but something truly inspiring. Young people helping to build their own social housing, sustainability at every turn, preserving the green spaces for future generations. In my current housing estate, only every third house has solar panels, when I asked the builder why that was they said it met the target for the area. That is what you get with developer driven planning, scraping the bare minimum, ticking the box and moving on. We need to be building homes for the future that will stand the test of time.

Thanks for your time.

Karen Wilson-Dunnett