Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Community Planning Aberdeen

Dear Sir or Madam

Call for Evidence on the Planning (Scotland) Bill – Submission on behalf of Community Planning Aberdeen

I am writing on behalf of Community Planning Aberdeen to set out our views on the Planning (Scotland) Bill.

Community Planning Aberdeen is the name of the community planning partnership in the City. The community planning partnership consists of senior representatives from all partner agencies working together to deliver improved outcomes for those who live, work, visit and do business in Aberdeen.

Our partners are

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeen Civic Forum
Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership
Active Aberdeen Partnership
ACVO
NHS Grampian
North East Scotland College
NESTRANS
Police Scotland
Skills Development Scotland
Scottish Enterprise
The Scottish Government
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Our communities

The partnership wish to submit its views to the following 3 questions;

1. **Do you think the Bill, taken as a whole, will produce a planning system for Scotland that balances the need to secure the appropriate development with the views of communities and protection of the built and natural environment?**

These new proposals indicate a more complementary and mutual approach to place-based planning. We hope that the focus of developing LPPs will improve relationships, trust and experience between statutory authorities and community groups. Using the community planning mechanisms which we have been developing in recent years, this new approach to planning has the potential to increase the aspirations of communities—ultimately improving the environment and public health outcomes.
We agree that the current system is in need of review, and that the proposed package of reforms would have some benefit in improving the current planning system. The Bill aims to balance the views and interests of various groups; however we are not yet in a position to comment in great detail on whether this will be effective in practice until further clarifications emerge.

The Bill does aim to balance the views and interests of various groups; however we are not yet in a position to comment on whether this will be effective in practice until further details emerge. More specifically, issues of financial resourcing, knowledge and expertise resourcing, repetition/duplication of work, and ‘consultation fatigue’ when introducing new components to the system (such as Local Place Plans within the Development Planning process). These are essential considerations when seeking a suitable balance between the expectations of the Local Authority, the local communities, and the development sector, and so should be clarified.

4. Will the changes in the Bill to the content and process for producing Local Development Plans achieve the aims of creating plans that are focused on delivery, complement other local authority priorities and meet the needs of developers and communities? If not, what other changes would you like to see introduced?

We agree that changes to the process for producing Local Development Plans increase the focus on delivery – however whether this will lead to an actual increase in the delivery of development is unknown. Though a greater focus has been placed on ‘delivery’, the challenges currently facing development still remains, and it seems that certain aspects have been repealed but not replaced with practical measures to assist delivery.

Provisions seeking to better align community planning and spatial planning are welcomed in order to recognise the role spatial planning plays on improving local outcomes. It is intended in the Bill that the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Local Place Plans (LPPs) will feature in the LDP preparation process. This will rely heavily on cross-department working, and require a consistent approach across all to ensure there is no conflict between each of the documents. The priorities set out in each of these documents are likely to change over time to respond to social, economic and environmental factors. Flexibility is therefore essential to allow each document to operate individually but compliment the others.

6. Does the Bill provide more effective avenues for community involvement in the development of plans and decisions that affect their area? Will the proposed Local Place Plans enable communities to influence local development plans and does the Bill ensure adequate financial and technical support for community bodies wishing to develop local place plans? If not, what more needs to be done?

In revising the Local Development Plan preparation process, the Bill introduces further opportunities for communities to engage in and influence the LDP – foremost through the introduction of Local Place Plans (LPPs). It is clear that better linking
spatial and community planning has the potential to have considerable benefits for people and places.

Spatial and community planning are essentially all about creating better places for people. Communities may not, however, always distinguish between spatial and community planning, but rather look at the end result, i.e. how places work for them as a whole.

Ensuring that both community and spatial planning are committed to delivering the same vision and objectives for community areas is clearly essential. Careful thought needs to be given to the review process surrounding statutory plans under both headings.

In terms of practical application, there is still a level of detail missing from the Bill in terms of the preparation of LPPs. Ensuring that a fair cross-section of each community is represented is of particular importance when establishing the community bodies for preparing LPPs. We are keen to seek further guidance on how we can effectively balance local interests in this process.

Both Local Development Plans and Local Place Plans should take account of plans and strategies arising from other legislation. In preparing a local place plan, a community body must also have due regard to any Locality Plans developed under the Locality Planning provisions within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. This needs to be considered in any forthcoming regulations and guidance relating to the Planning Bill.

LPPs should be prepared in a consistent manner to ensure they can be transposed to the LDP. Further guidance is required as to how LPPs would be prepared, and what support would be provided, if any, by local authorities. It is not clear from the Bill what period a LPP would cover, or what public consultation, if any, would be required prior to publication, and inclusion as part of a statutory LDP.

With regards to technical and financial support; improved, user centric, systems can provide guidance and support to make the aims, objectives and outputs of a Local Place Plan understandable for all stakeholders. Using digital mapping, data analytics solutions, augmented reality/visualisations and place based apps could all enhance positive engagement in the development of Local Place Plans.

Whilst there is clearly a long way to go in terms of fleshing out these proposals, the general principle of increasing community involvement is supported.

The Partnership would be grateful if these views can be taken on board as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Brownrigg
Team Leader, Development Plan
On behalf of Community Planning Aberdeen