Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Eileen Thomas

The planning system is weighed far too heavily in the favour of developers. There is insufficient protection for communities, wildlife and landscapes.

I would like to see equal rights of appeal for communities and individuals. It is unfair that only applicants may appeal. There is no mechanism (other than a judicial review, with risk of huge costs) for individuals or community groups to secure further scrutiny of a local authority’s decision to grant planning permission, even when that permission appears to breach the authority’s own local development plan or environmental laws.

There should be longer response times to planning applications to allow community councils time to alert the public and discuss applications. Remember, community councillors are volunteers and generally meet once per month.

Where I live a volume house-builder applied for permission for 300 houses; thus, a major application requiring wider consultation. Once granted, this developer then submitted several piecemeal applications for the same site, thus making various changes that would have an effect on the existing local community (such as changing the drainage arrangements, with a subsequent potential flood risk to a nearby housing estate) but without the need to consult widely, e.g. only having to give neighbour notification to about three properties. I would like to see this sort of behaviour prevented.

I would like to see proposals that would create more sustainable house-building. There is too much private sector building giving massive profits to the directors of volume house-building companies. We need more tailored, sensitive solutions for local situations.

Councillors should undergo training before sitting on a planning committee.