Local Government and Communities Committee
Planning (Scotland) Bill
Submission from Joyce Hartley

Equal Right of Appeal

Opponents of Equal Right of Appeal (ERA) often cite concerns about adding further delays to the planning process and making it more complex and confrontational.

No matter how effective and good early engagement is, at the end of the day, if the desired outcome is not what the community wants, that community can become disillusioned and cynical about planning. This is damaging to the planning system and the reputation of the many planners who are striving on a daily basis to achieve the best solutions for communities.

In order to address this and to achieve greater equality, it seems only right that communities should have the same rights of appeal as applicants and the development industry.

A speeded up and better resourced appeals process should ensure that no additional delays are incurred, and prevent the sort of criticism which is damaging to a system striving to be fair and inclusive.

Housing

One of the greatest obstacles to securing more housing is the price of land and overly high land values.

It seems fundamentally wrong that tax payers should pay the brunt of infrastructure costs, (and also schemes such as 'help to buy') whilst landowners can walk away with vast profits, generated by the 'community' grant of planning consent. Fundamental land reform is needed to allow communities to capture a greater share of land values, reduce reliance on speculative housebuilding and ease the way for others housing models. This would include greater opportunities for smaller builders and self build/co-housing models.

The debate about infrastructure funding seems to be never ending, going round in circles year after year with no evident signs of a satisfactory and equitable solution. Why isn't it possible to adopt the methods used by the New Towns and in other European countries - put the infrastructure in, get building more houses and claw the money back at a later stage.

An inordinate amount of time, money and resources can go into lengthy and frequently protracted/abortive discussions about developer contributions and planning obligations.
A fundamental review of the current process by which housing land is secured is long overdue and a reform of existing legislation urgently required to deliver the seismic shift that is needed. There is a growing volume of research and evidence to support the huge benefits that land value capture could bring.

**Community Planning/Spatial Planning**

The proposal to create a closer link between community planning and the development plan system offers communities a greater opportunity to become involved not just with the planning system, but in the delivery of a range of services. This is to be welcomed and should lead to more satisfactory outcomes for the place making agenda and wider community planning objectives.

However, there is a concern that the plan making landscape could become crowded and that the lines between various plans and consultation exercises could become blurred, causing confusion and ‘consultation fatigue’.