

Letter to MP's

Re: Prior Approval process: Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO 2015)

I am writing on behalf of, and at the request of, East Devon District Council's Planning Committee.

As you are aware under Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the above GPDO 2015 Order, various changes of use of buildings are permitted via a Prior Approval process that does not generally allow consideration of Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan policies and limits the matters that the local planning authority can consider. The legislation also restricts the local planning authority to making a decision with 56 days otherwise the proposed is deemed to be granted.

The legislation allows agricultural buildings in very rural, isolated and often sensitive locations to be converted to dwellings, shops, hotels and other uses with minimal assessment by the local planning authority and via a process that the local planning authority and wider public find less than democratic.

As a planning committee for a very rural planning authority we feel we have lost necessary control over some developments. The planning system is supposed to be plan-led yet this legislation often over-rides consideration against local plan policies and neighbourhood plan policies. The result of this is that local communities, despite engaging in the local plan process, and in many cases spending years and many thousands of pounds preparing a neighbourhood plan for their area, find themselves with development being granted under this Prior Approval process contrary to local and neighbourhood plan policies.

The process has resulted in increases in travel and use of private transport in unsustainable rural areas, making it very difficult to achieve our carbon neutral target for the District. Inhabitants of these countryside villages and hamlets are understandably very concerned that their Neighbourhood Plans and the East Devon Local Plan, which have been years in the making, are rendered ineffective, and that Central Government is dictating development, often outside of the Built Up Area Boundaries to the benefit of individuals only and at the expense of wider objectives.

Examples of such situations are:

- Having to grant consent for the conversion of an agricultural building to a shop in the small hamlet of Combe Raleigh against the wishes of all of the residents and resulting in a shop that will encourage people to drive there from established settlements with the associated traffic movements and disturbance to residents;
- Having to grant consent for the conversion of employment buildings to residential use undermining local employment opportunities;

- Having to grant consent for agricultural buildings to be used as hotels in unsustainable locations undermining our existing hotels and guest houses in our main towns;
- Having to grant consent for a chicken house to a shop in a very rural area undermining our already struggling town centres.

As Chair of the Planning Committee I would ask you all to raise these concerns with the Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

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