

Sustainable Development: a Monstrous Planning Concept

by Francis Bennion

Praise should be given to the article by Edward Fennell (Law, 5 April 2012) on the new National Planning Policy Framework. It ably shows the wide disquiet felt about this document, particularly its reliance on the faulty concept of 'sustainable development'. With wide experience as a parliamentary draftsman accustomed to framing statutory definitions, I am astonished that heavy weight should be placed on such an inadequate term. It will cause prolonged argument at almost every future planning hearing.

The document contains no proper definition of the term 'sustainable development'. It says 'Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations'. What sort of definition is that?

The document also says 'Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' That is no better as a definition.

The document adds: 'The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.' Are planning hearings really going to have to plough through over two hundred paragraphs of this document every time there is argument about whether a proposed development is 'sustainable'?

The government should think again.

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References:

None