

The crazy concept of sustainable development

by Francis Bennion

Stewart Baseley of the Home Builders Federation says it was a rival trade association, the House Builders Association, and not his own lot that described the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a mish-mish. I am reluctant to intrude on a private argument, but I have to side with his rivals. The NPPF really is a mish-mash, and a particularly horrible one at that.

I also have to find fault with Baseley's outfit for asking the government to introduce the presumption in favour of sustainable development immediately. As a parliamentary draftsman of many years' experience I can say that it is a lousy concept, empty of meaning. The NPPF document says 'Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations'. What sort of definition is that? Then it goes on: '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 crowning stupidity is the following in the NPPF document: '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 turgid document every time there is an argument about whether a proposed development is 'sustainable'? {Published in *Private Eye*, 4-17 May 2012.}

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References:

None