



# Summary of Consultation Proposals for New Planning Policies on Apartment Developments

## Introduction

The communities we work with want well planned development which meets local needs and strengthens the fabric of their areas. We have worked with groups in these areas to lobby for better planning policies which will strengthen communities. We also published a report recommending changes (Planning Stronger Communities, July 2009) and met with the Minister of Environment and officials to discuss our report.

In response to the lobbying by communities and elected representatives the Minister of Environment issued a consultation paper called 'Draft Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7 – Quality Residential Environments (PPS 7) in November 2009. He wants to hear the views of communities by 5 March 2010. This paper summarises the main consultation proposals.

## The Consultation Proposals

The consultation paper sets out three new policies that Planning Service would use, in addition to existing policies, when making decisions about planning applications for apartments and houses. The paper also makes some proposals on paving in all new housing developments.

The three new policies are:

- **Policy LC 1** - Protecting Local Character, Environmental Quality and Residential Amenity

This policy sets out extra planning tests for the development of apartments and houses on sites created by demolition, vacant sites and where an existing building is being redeveloped.

- **Policy LC 2** - The Conversion or Sub-division of Existing Buildings to Flats or Apartments

This policy sets out extra planning tests for converting or dividing existing buildings into flats or apartments.

- **Policy LC 3** - Permeable Paving in New Residential Developments

This policy favours the use of paving that will allow water to drain away more easily in new developments.

## LC 1 - Protecting Local Character, Environmental Quality and Residential Amenity

This policy applies to proposals for "redevelopment" i.e. proposals to build on sites created by demolition, vacant sites and where buildings are being redeveloped. It states that proposals for apartments and houses should not have a much higher density than other houses and apartments in the "locality".

It also states that the "pattern of new development" i.e. the way it is laid out and designed, should be in keeping with the "the existing residential neighbourhood".

New apartments and houses will have to be built to a minimum size, set out in the table below.

Type	Single Storey /Flat m <sup>2</sup>	Two Storey m <sup>2</sup>	Three Storey m <sup>2</sup>
1-Person/Bedsit	30/35		
1-person/1-Bedroom	35/40		
2-Person/1-Bedroom	50/55		
3-Person/2-Bedroom	60/65	70/75	
4-Person/2-Bedroom	70/75	75/80	
4-Person/3-Bedroom	75/80	80/85	
5-Person/3-Bedroom	80/85	90/95	95/100
6-Person/3-Bedroom	85/90	95/100	100/105
6-Person/4-Bedroom	90/95	100/105	105/110
7-Person/4-Bedroom	105/110	115/120	115/120

*(Table taken from Annex D of Draft Addendum to PPS 7)*

This new policy proposal applies in "established residential areas" in cities, towns, villages and smaller settlements but **do not apply in:**

- higher density inner city areas;
- city centres and larger town centres that are designated in the Area Plan; and
- "public transport corridors" and "arterial routes" in cities and larger towns.

## LC 2 - The Conversion or Sub-division of Existing Buildings to Flats or Apartments

This policy applies in all parts of the region, not just in "established residential areas". Proposals to convert or sub-divide existing buildings to flats or apartments,

including converting them to flats and apartments that will be used as houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs), will have to meet all the following criteria:

- They should not have a negative impact on the character, amenity (e.g. privacy and light) and environmental quality of existing residential areas.
- They should maintain or enhance "the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building".
- The building being converted should be at least 150m<sup>2</sup> in area.
- Flats or apartments should be self contained i.e. they should have a separate bathroom, toilet, and kitchen that is used only by the people who live in that flat or apartment.
- The flat or apartment should not be located entirely to the back of the building with no access to the public street.
- The amount of parking within the boundary of the site should not be reduced.

The justification to this policy also sets out additional planning tests for extensions.

### **LC 3 - Permeable Paving in New Residential Developments**

This policy encourages the use of permeable paving in new residential developments of flats, apartments and houses. This is aimed at reducing the risk of flooding associated with surface water run-off. The policy says that, "Where appropriate private driveways, patios, paths, and shared hard landscaped surfaces should be built using permeable paving materials."

### **Consultation Questions**

Three consultation questions have been provided, although other comments can be made and will be accepted. The three questions are:

#### **Policy LC 1**

1. Do you agree that the Addendum proposals have adequately reinforced existing policy on the protection of local character, environmental quality and residential amenity within established residential areas, villages and smaller settlements? If no, please state your reasons.

## **Policy LC 2**

2. Do you consider that the Department has proposed appropriate planning criteria to ensure existing buildings converted to flats or apartments will sympathetically harmonise with adjacent properties and maintain or enhance the overall character and environmental quality of existing residential areas? If no please state your reasons.

## **Policy LC 3**

3. Do you support the Department's efforts to encourage greater use of permeable paving in new residential developments in order to reduce the risk of flooding from surface water run-off? If no, please state your reasons.

Responses should be made in writing to [planning.policy@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@doeni.gov.uk) or to:

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The consultation period ends on 5 March 2010.

Copies of the full document are available on the Planning Service website: [www.planningni.gov.uk](http://www.planningni.gov.uk), by telephoning 9025 4916 and textphone 9054 0642, by e-mail from [planning.policy@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@doeni.gov.uk) and by writing to the above address.

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