

Consultation Questions

Background

Architect/planner retired, now Secretary to East Lothian Cases Panel of AHSS
(amenity body)

Content of Guidance Notes

Sadly the 14 draft Guidance Notes fail to represent Scottish Minister's advice *in a clear and consistent manner*. Accepting that the Memorandum of Guidance, a triumph for covering its subject in one volume in a consistent tone and detail, is superseded by more recent planning documents, but its formal withdrawal also cast into oblivion the attached Appendices which for some years have set the standards by which Development Management has been carried out by Local Planning Authorities, and on which Local Plan policies have been based. Without the authority of a government source of guidance these local policies will wither. It would have been wiser to bring up to date (to cover new irritations like uPVC doors, and use of multiple projecting roof ventilators) the appendices, and re-issue it as a separate document enshrining the present best practice. The foundation of local planning authority practice would have been preserved.

Instead a policy was adopted to disaggregate the aspects of Guidance into separate Guidance Notes newly written. Draft copies of the first 14 are the subject of this consultation. The authority given to these Guidance Notes is made clear in para. 7 of the Introduction to SHEP, which states that,

“SHEP, SPP23 and H S's Managing change in the Historic Environment; Guidance Notes series are the documents to which planning authorities are directed in their consideration of applications for Conservation Area Consent, Listed Building Consent ...and their consideration of Planning Applications affecting the historic environment and the setting of individual elements of the historic environment. Planning Authorities are also directed to these documents to assist them in development planning.”

The Guidance Notes now in draft lack the authority and directness of tone and language necessary to stand on appeal, and even the terminology used in different GNs is not consistent. Some GNs appear to relate to only

Listed Buildings, while others embrace Historic Buildings and the Historic Environment. The question at the Workshop as to whom the GMs were thought to be intended to be aimed, gave a confused reply. John Gerard in his valuable E-mail on the Demolition GN noted generally "This is guidance intended for owners and other applicants, not Planning Authorities. Therefore much of the Memorandum text has been omitted. It will need to be included in guidance specifically for them and we should be consulted on that too.."

The painstaking analysis of all 14 GNs by members of IHBC Scotland was an heroic and timely contribution, but on the question, "How well does this leaflet offer the stated aim of "clear, consistent advice to professionals, developers and applicants?" they seldom scored more than 6 out of 10, and in presenting Scottish Ministers advice usually 5 out of 10.

In conclusion these 14 GNs have many valuable new aspects, but they appear to have been overtaken by extraneous concerns to make them popular generalised descriptive publications rather than specialised guidance to the Planning System, now devoid of the Memorandum or any adequate replacement.

Layout of Guidance Notes

The GNs are easy to read. The standard format starts with a short list of numbered Key Issues, followed by a standardised Introduction explaining the expected status of the document. The pages are numbered but no paragraphs after the Key Issues. A running border of photographs and their captions make an attractive page layout, and further information and advice forms the last page. The format is appropriate to a popular rather than a specialised readership.

The documents are accessible.

Many images are not coordinated with the main text, and stricter criteria for selection are necessary.

Future Guidance Notes

It is not correct to claim that the current "14 Guidance Notes replace guidance from the withdrawn Memorandum." One is on Micro-renewables, and others on aspects not dealt with at length in the Memorandum. In para.6 of the Introduction to SHEP is stated that , "In the

first instance the guidance notes will cover the topics dealt with in the memorandum.''

In East Lothian the guidance in the Memorandum, on the Repair and Conversion of Farm Buildings, mills and stables has been a constant support, and was separately issued by HS. It is essential that this guidance is not lost nor watered down.

A glossary would be a useful exercise to instil consistency in this series of GNs.

The specialised building types in the Memorandum each require a GN.

An expanded future series could usefully:

Outlaw uPVC in all its applications in the historic environment.

The non-invasive examination and recording of buildings.

Emergency aid for fire-damaged buildings.

Respondent Information Form HS Guidance Notes

Bill Dodd

14 Leslie Way, Dunbar, EH42 1GP

1. Responding on behalf of a group.
3. Yes
4. Yes