

THE ARCHAEOLOGY FORUM

a grouping of independent bodies concerned with archaeology

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22 June 2009

Dear Ms. Richardson,

SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY (SPP) CONSULTATION

The Archaeology Forum (TAF) is a grouping of the key, non-governmental organisations concerned with archaeology in the UK. Its members include the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK, the Council for British Archaeology, the Institute of Conservation, the Institute for Archaeologists, the National Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, Rescue, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers, and the Society of Museum Archaeologists UK.

The Archaeology Forum is pleased to contribute to this consultation on Scottish Planning Policy. A number of the organisations listed above have submitted (or intend to submit) separate responses to this consultation and TAF's response seeks to highlight commonly occurring concerns.

Our responses on selected consultation questions are given below and relate specifically to the historic environment.

Q1: Overall, is national planning policy clearer and easier to understand in the consolidated SPP compared to the existing SPPs and NPPGs?

Q2: Do you support the proposed structure and format of the consolidated SPP?

Q3: Do you agree with the removal of advice and background information from the consolidated SPP?

There is a real fear amongst TAF's membership that greater clarity and ease of understanding will not be achieved by replacing detailed policy guidance in SPP23 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and other subject specific SPPs with an overarching SPP. Members do not seek generally to detract from Scottish Government's aim to provide clear, succinct and accessible policy, but are concerned that the withdrawal of the relatively detailed provisions of SPP23 will leave a significant gap in Scottish planning policy and guidance and one that is not wholly filled by Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP). Furthermore, there is a real risk that such a gap will lead to inconsistent interpretation and application of policy at local level.

Consequently, TAF would not support the proposed structure and format of the consolidated SPP and does not agree with the removal of advice and background information from the consolidated SPP.

TAF would only support such an approach if policy, advice and background information currently contained in SPP23 were to be replicated in supplementary guidance of appropriate weight. PAN42 will remain extant but is in need of up-dating. This may provide the vehicle for providing up-to-date planning policy and guidance to supplement a consolidated SPP. Equally SHEP would require revision to provide equivalent detail and strength to take the place of SPP23. However, TAF members are concerned to see that such guidance is not produced piecemeal or in an ad hoc fashion but is fully integrated with the merging SPP.

Q7: Is the contribution of the planning system to sustainable economic growth, as explained in this section, clear and easy to understand?

Q8: Have the main elements of national planning policy relating to town centres and retailing been included and are they clearly explained?

Although these sections are generally clear and easy to understand, paragraph 43 and paragraphs 44-51 fail to draw attention to the particular significance of the historic environment when dealing with sites that have been previously developed (brownfield sites) and town centres respectively. The constraints (and opportunities) to which such considerations give rise should at least be touched on in the draft SPP.

Q14: Have the main elements of national planning policy relating to the historic environment been included and are they clearly explained?

TAF members have identified a number of areas in which there appear to have been significant changes in policy or where current policy is not adequately explained. These include

- Paragraph 82 – The importance of the historic environment (and its value to society) is touched on in this paragraph but is not developed to the same extent as in SPP23 nor is the potential role of community and non-statutory organisations in safeguarding the historic environment identified. Such matters are central to planning policy in relation to the historic environment.
- Paragraph 82 – As pointed out by ALGAO(Scotland) in its individual response dated 9 June 2009, it may better reflect current Parliamentary thinking to refer to ‘*environmentally* sustainable economic growth’ in this paragraph.
- Paragraph 88 – This paragraph fails to make clear that non-designated heritage assets (which encompass a wide range of remains, both buried and above ground and which constitute over 95% of the historic environment) are a ‘material consideration’ in the planning process. This represents a significant omission in the transposition of paragraph 47 of SPP23.
- Paragraph 89 – Paragraph 49 of SPP23 states that ‘the planning authority, before determining the application, *should be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate provision for the excavation, recording, analysis, publication and archiving of the remains*’.(paragraph 49) [my italics]. By contrast, paragraph 89 of the draft SPP fails to make clear that it is the responsibility of the developer to make appropriate provision for the excavation, recording, analysis, publication and archiving of the remains’.
- ‘Built heritage’ – We would prefer to see the use of the term ‘historic environment’ in place of the term ‘built heritage’ where the latter is used in the SPP (for instance, in paragraphs 141, 173, 179 and 181). The ‘historic environment’ better conveys the breadth of the subject matter (which might usefully be clarified in paragraph 82).
- The role of local authorities – TAF members would like to see greater prominence given in the draft SPP to the significant role that local authorities play with regard to the safeguarding and management of the historic environment
- The importance of SMRs/HERs – This should be specifically highlighted in the draft SPP (as it is, for instance, in paragraphs 23 and 48 of SPP23).
- Specialist conservation and archaeological advice – The need for this is expressly acknowledged in paragraph 22 of SPP23 and should be repeated in the draft SPP.

Other matters have been raised by members of TAF and are dealt with in individual responses. Indeed, in some instances members wish to see policy developed and strengthened (for instance, in relation to public involvement in and benefit from archaeology and in the development of quality standards in archaeology), and TAF and its members would be pleased in future to contribute further to the formulation of supplementary or revised planning policy.

Thank you for this opportunity for the Archaeology Forum to contribute its views to this consultation.

Yours sincerely,



Gill Cherry

Secretary,
The Archaeology Forum

The Archaeology Forum's members are:

The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK
The Council for British Archaeology
The Institute of Conservation
The Institute for Archaeologists
The National Trust
The National Trust for Scotland

Rescue: the British Archaeological Trust
The Society of Antiquaries of London
The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
The Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers
The Society of Museum Archaeologists UK