



*Housing & Planning
Delivery Grant
Summary of Responses*



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Introduction

Housing and Planning Delivery Grant was announced as part of the recent Housing Green Paper, *Homes for the future*, on 23 July 2007. Consultation was held on the original proposal from July to October 2006. This paper summarises the views offered in the original consultation. A second consultation paper on the allocation mechanism of the grant is being issued alongside this document.

We asked eight questions in the consultation paper specifically on the proposed HPDG:

1. Do you agree that these should be the principles of the new grant?
2. Do you agree with the proposed beneficiaries of the new grant?
3. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a floor target that needs to be reached before any incentive is granted?
4. Should the improvement reward element of the grant include a separate improvement fund or be stair cased? Are there any other ways that should be considered to incentives improvement?
5. Do you agree with the proposal to reward local authorities that adopt challenging targets?
6. Do you agree that the grant should include an incentive for securing the occupation of empty properties?
7. Do you agree with the proposals identifying which local authorities will be eligible to receive the grant?
8. Do you agree that measuring against housing targets is the correct approach?

We asked a further three questions on planning incentives beyond 2007/08

9. Does planning need additional resources beyond the Revenue Support Grant? If so, how long does it need it for? What particular aspects need support?
10. Is rewarding plan making against progress in Local Development Frameworks and on planning outcomes a fair and reasonable proposal? If not, what would you suggest?
11. Are the national and regional organisations the right ones on which to focus any additional resources which may be available? If not, which others would you suggest?

The consultation paper was published by Communities and Local Government on the Department's website. A total of 217 responses were received via letter and email, around 80% of which were from local authorities. Some of these were collective responses from umbrella organisations. The aim of the consultation was to involve stakeholders at an early stage in this policy development. We are grateful for all those who took the trouble to respond. A full list of respondents is at Annex A.

Summary of Views

The messages coming through from the eight questions on HPDG were mixed. There was neither outright overall support nor opposition to any of the elements set out. Respondents were often more interested in giving detailed views or gaining further information. However, there was general recognition that a move away from – but building on the success of the Planning Delivery Grant – was appropriate, so long as some form of funding for planning departments continued.

1. Do you agree that these should be the principles of the new grant?

Thirteen percent agreed with all five principles in full, whilst almost forty percent disagreed with at least one of them. Around half of respondents did not specifically agree or disagree.

Many welcomed the shift in focus from planning processes to outcomes, including housing delivery. A number of respondents emphasised that local authorities' ability to increase delivery was limited and that they should not be penalised by a withholding of reward if delivery failed to reach a given level.

The greatest concern – articulated by the widest range of respondents – was to ensure any incentive was integrated into the statutory planning system so that the drive to increase numbers did not come at the expense of a drop in quality, such as in environmental and design terms. Many looked for reassurance that the grant was in harmony with PPS(3).

2. Do you agree with the proposed beneficiaries of the new grant?

Almost a quarter of respondents agreed with the proposed beneficiaries, whilst 8 per cent disagreed. Almost 70 per cent did not specifically agree or disagree.

There was overwhelming consensus that local planning authorities ought to be the prime or even sole beneficiary of HPDG. Many questioned whether planning advisory bodies or Regional Planning Bodies should receive a top slice. Others felt that there was a case for sharing the grant with specific partners, although there was no consensus on who these should be.

3. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a floor target that needs to be reached before any incentive is granted?

About a fifth (20%) of respondents agreed with the proposal for a floor, with about the same (21%) disagreeing. Almost 60% did not specifically agree or disagree.

Views expressed ranged from fearing that a floor could reward failure by enabling grant to be allocated even when delivery is below target, to fears that any floor ought to be low enough to account for the fact that delivery might slip despite the best efforts of a local authority.

4. Should the improvement reward element of the grant include a separate improvement fund or be stair cased? Are there any other ways that should be considered to incentives improvement?

There was no consensus on the issue of an improvement element. Nine percent of respondents agreed with the proposal and a further eight percent disagreed. The vast majority (83 per cent) of those who responded did not give a clear “yes/no” answer.

Some respondents felt that improvement should be rewarded, on the basis that extra effort deserved extra reward. Some thought that this could be focused on specific areas such as affordable or empty homes. Others were concerned that any improvement element supported and did not harm the statutory planning system.

5. Do you agree with the proposal to reward local authorities that adopt challenging targets?

Nine percent of respondents agreed with the proposal for rewarding challenging targets and just over a third (37%) disagreed. Over half (54%) of all respondents did not express a clear agreement or disagreement.

The main concern here was that any stretch targets on numbers should not imbalance the planning system away from issues of quality, such as design. Many respondents wanted reassurance that incentivising local authorities to stretch delivery did not come at the cost of poorer planning outcomes or a weakened planning system.

6. Do you agree with the proposals identifying which local authorities will be eligible to receive the grant?

Eight percent agreed with the eligibility criteria, whilst 27% disagreed. Almost two-thirds (65%) did not express a clear preference.

The greatest concern was that areas experiencing only modest or low level growth would be considered ineligible for grant. Many felt that HPDG should be a national grant so that all areas could potentially qualify for funding. A number of respondents made the point that housing pressures other than high levels of delivery also needed to be supported. On a related point, there was evident concern that many areas would need continued funding beyond the current PDG, regardless of their particular housing challenges.

7. Do you agree that measuring against housing targets is the correct approach?

Almost half (45%) of respondents favoured using annualised targets stemming from RSSs (or extant statutory targets where the RSS is not yet in place) as the baseline for assessing performance, whilst five per cent preferred using the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan figures. The other half of respondents did not state a clear preference.

This question was the least divisive; the prime concern being that HPDG was consistent with the statutory planning process.

8. Do you agree with measuring delivery using a figure based on a three year rolling average of supply?

Almost half (45%) agreed with the proposal to use a three year rolling average, whilst five percent disagreed. The other half did not clearly state agreement or disagreement.

9. Does planning need additional resources beyond the Revenue Support Grant? If so, how long does it need it for? What particular aspects need support?

This question produced the clearest response, with two thirds (66%) agreeing that planning did need additional resources. No respondent disagreed. The other third did not state a clear preference.

The main concern was to ensure planning departments continued to receive funding after PDG ceased. Many respondents argued against all funding being linked to housing delivery, particularly for those areas such as Parks Authorities where housing growth is lesser priority. Many respondents requested that future levels of support for planning remained significant and that funding for Development Control not be cut without providing an alternative source.

10. Is rewarding plan making against progress in Local Development Frameworks and on planning outcomes a fair and reasonable proposal? If not, what would you suggest?

Forty percent of respondents agreed that this was a fair and reasonable proposal, whilst one percent disagreed. Well over half (58%) did not specifically state a preference.

There were a range of views expressed in response to this question, for example requesting that HPDG encouraging speedier plan making or incentivise the allocation of land through improved forward planning.

11. Are the national and regional organisations the right ones on which to focus any additional resources which may be available? If not, which other would you suggest?

Just over a fifth (22%) of respondents agreed with this proposal, with almost five percent disagreeing. The vast majority (74%) did not state a clear view in support or disagreement.

Several respondents felt that top-slicing of grant was inappropriate and that statutory bodies in particular should receive separate funding streams. A number of respondents focused on the role of Regional Planning Bodies, some accepting that these should benefit, others concerned that funding for them was maintained by this or another source.

Annex A

1. Amber Valley Borough Council
2. Amber Valley Council
3. Arnold White Estates
4. Arun District Council
5. Ashford Borough Council
6. Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
7. Association of London Borough Planning Officers
8. Association of North East Councils
9. Audit Commision
10. Aylesbury Vale Advantage
11. Aylesbury Vale District Council
12. Barnet Council
13. Barnet London Borough
14. Barnsley District Council
15. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
16. Bedford Borough Council
17. Bee Bee Developments
18. Bexley Council
19. Birmingham City Council
20. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
21. Bolsover District Council
22. Bournemouth Borough Council
23. Bridgnorth Council
24. Brighton and Hove City Council
25. Bristol City Coucil
26. British Property Federation
27. British Urban Regeneration Association
28. Broads Authority
29. Camden London Borough
30. Campaign for Rural England
31. Canterbury City Council
32. Carlisle City Council
33. Confederation of British Industry
34. Chartered Institute of Housing
35. Chelmsford Borough Council
36. Cherwell District Council
37. Chesterfield Borough Council
38. Chiltern District Council
39. Chorley Borough Council
40. Christchurch Borough Council
41. City of London Corporation
42. Colchester Borough Council
43. Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
44. Commission for Rural Communities
45. Community and Regional Planning Services
46. Corby Borough Council
47. Coventry City Council
48. Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Association of Planning Officers
49. Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council
50. Croydon Council

51. Datford Borough Council
52. Derby City Council
53. Derbyshire County Council
54. Derbyshire Dales District Council
55. Devon County Council
56. Dorset County Council
57. Durham County Council
58. East Hertfordshire Council
59. East Northamptonshire Council
60. East of England Regional Assembly
61. East Staffordshire Borough Council
62. East Sussex County Council
63. Eastbourne Borough Council
64. Eastleigh Borough Council
65. Elmbridge Borough Council
66. Empty Homes Agency
67. Enfield London Borough
68. English Heritage
69. English Partnerships
70. English Regions Network
71. Erewash Borough Council
72. Friends of the Earth
73. Gateway Market Renewal Pathfinder
74. Gedling Borough Council
75. Government Office East
76. Government Office for the West Midlands
77. Gravesham Borough Council
78. Greater London Authority
79. Greenwich London Borough
80. Guildford Borough Council
81. Hambleton Borough Council
82. Hampshire County Council
83. Harrogate Borough Council
84. Harrow Council
85. Hastings Borough Council
86. Havant Borough Council
87. Herefordshire Council
88. Hertfordshire County Council
89. Hillingdon London Borough
90. Home Builders Federation
91. Huntingdonshire District Council
92. Ipswich Borough Council
93. John Healey MP
94. Kennet District Council
95. Kent County Council
96. Kent Planning Officers Group
97. Kerrier District Council
98. Kettering Borough Council
99. Kingston Upon Hull City Council
100. Knowsley Council
101. Lambeth London Borough
102. Lancaster Cty Council

103. Leeds City Council
104. Leicester City Council
105. Leicestershire Council
106. Lewes District Council
107. Local Government Association
108. Hammersmith & Fulham London Borough
109. Havering London Borough
110. Newham London Borough
111. Luton Borough Council
112. Maldon District Council
113. Malvern Hills District Council
114. Manchester City Council
115. Manchester Salford Pathfinder
116. Manton Parish Council
117. Medway Council
118. Merton London Borough
119. Michael Blanks, Chartered Surveyor
120. Mid Sussex District Council
121. Middlesbrough Borough Council
122. Milton Keynes Council
123. Mole Valley District Council
124. National Association of Empty Property Practitioners
125. National Grid Properties
126. Norfolk County Council
127. Norman Lamb MP (North Norfolk)
128. North East Assembly
129. North Hertfordshire District Council
130. North Kesteven District Council
131. North Lincolnshire
132. North Norfolk District Council
133. North Somerset Council
134. North Warwickshire Borough Council
135. Northamptonshire Chief Planning Officers Group
136. Northamptonshire County Council
137. Northumberland County Council
138. Northumberland National Park Authority
139. Nottingham City Council
140. Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
141. ONE North East
142. Oxfordshire County Council
143. Peak District National Park Authority
144. Peter Ainsworth MP (East Surrey)
145. Philip Bisatt (Chartered Planner)
146. Planning Officers Society
147. Plymouth City Council
148. Purbeck District Council
149. RDA Housing & Planning Leads Group
150. Redbridge London Borough
151. Ribble Valley Borough Council
152. Richmondshire District Council
153. Rother District Council
154. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

155. Royal Borough of Kingston
156. Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
157. Royal Society for Protection of Birds
158. Rushcliffe Borough Council
159. S.I.G.O.M.A (Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities)
160. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
161. Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
162. Sheffield City Council
163. Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council
164. Shropshire County Council
165. Slough Borough Council
166. Society of District Council Treasurers
167. Solihull District Council
168. South Derbyshire District Council
169. South East Regional Assembly
170. South Hams District Council
171. South Lakeland District Council
172. South Norfolk District Council
173. South Ribble Borough Council
174. South West Regional Assembly
175. Southampton City Council
176. Southwark Borough Council
177. Spelthorne Borough Council
178. St Edmundsbury Council
179. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
180. Stamford Homes
181. Stratford Housing Partnership
182. Stratford-on-Avon District Council
183. Suffolk Preservation Society
184. Sunderland City Council
185. Surrey County Council
186. Surrey Planning Officers' Association
187. Tandridge District Council
188. Taylor Woodrow
189. Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit
190. Telford & Wrekin Council
191. Test Valley Borough Council
192. The Ramblers' Association
193. The Wildlife Trusts
194. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
195. Torbay Council
196. Town and County Planning Association
197. Trevor Roberts Associates
198. Uttlesford District Council
199. Walsall Council
200. Warwickshire County Council
201. Waveney District Council
202. Wealden District Council
203. Wear Valley District Council
204. Wellingborough Borough Council
205. West Lancashire District Council
206. West Lindsey District Council

207. West Midlands Chief Engineers & Planning Officers Group (CEPOG)
208. West Northamptonshire Development Corporation
209. Westminster City Council
210. Weston Homes
211. Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
212. Wiltshire District Council
213. Worcester City Council
214. Wychavon District Council
215. Wycombe District Council
216. Wyre Forest District Council
217. Yorkshire and Humber Assembly