

An accelerated planning system

Response to consultation by the Highbury group on Housing delivery

We note that while the proposal relates to major commercial applications, this would also apply to mixed use schemes with a residential content where the commercial space criteria was met.

While we recognise the need for speedy decisions in relation to planning applications which increase employment capacity, we object to the establishment of a two tier system, where certain applications are given priority treatment in exchange for the payment of an increased planning fee. Given the limitations on available planning resources, this will be to the disbenefit of small applications, which will normally have a residential component. This is specially problematic where a planning authority has limited staffing resources. The provision of planning services by a statutory planning authority should be a public service, where all applications are treated equally.

We object to payment of fees being linked to decision deadlines. This puts inappropriate pressure on a planning authority to make a quick decision, when additional time may be required to allow for a full assessment of the application and/or for discussions with an applicant on possible scheme modifications, especially as large commercial applications may be complex. A local authority should not be penalised financially for undertaking necessary work in relation to assessment of a planning application.

Note: The Highbury Group on Housing Delivery comprises an independent group of specialists from the public, private and independent sectors with a membership drawn from housing, planning and related professions; it offers advice and makes representations to Government and other agencies on a variety of subjects, with the aim of maintaining and increasing the output of housing, including high quality affordable housing. The views and recommendations of the Highbury Group as set out in this and other papers are ones reached collectively through debate and reflect the balance of member views. They do not necessarily represent those of all individual members or of their employer organisations. The group's core membership and previous statements and research presentations are on the group's website:

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