

Response to Elizabeth Ord following publication of the Report on Planning Guidance on Fracking by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee of the House of Commons

The HCLG report is an important document as it based on the evidence of a broad cross section of stakeholders and strikes a good balance between the various arguments and poses some key questions for government to answer. Despite the unfortunate timing of the WMS on May 17 while the HCLG committee was still sitting and just 7 days after the consultation on the NPPF closed, government state that the report “will influence the direction of travel” and therefore appropriate reliance on the report could be made by the Inspector.

Of particular note are the points made in para 8 of the conclusions regarding climate change and the inconsistency between NPPF and the 2008 Climate Change Act underlined by the Environmental Audit Committee report 2015.

Another contradiction highlighted by the report exists between the Localism Act 2011 and the WMS which would seem to unreasonably restrict local plans.

The report endorses the view of the Joint Authorities in the MWJP regarding the definition of Fracking and urges government to make the necessary changes.

In addition the report supports the MWJP which offers an “appropriate template” on the question of cumulative impact and is very clear that consideration of Fracking under NSIP would be a bad idea.

In conclusion I would say that because the HCLG report is so broadly supportive of the approach taken throughout the development of the MWJP this does not require any modification and great comfort could be taken from the conclusions in the report.

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