



Cutting red tape

**A submission by Civic Voice to CLG
August 2010**

1. Civic Voice is the new national charity for the civic movement. We work to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. We promote civic pride and we talk civic sense. Civic Voice speaks up for civic societies and local communities across England. We believe everyone has the right to live somewhere they can be proud of. We know how people feel about places because we feel the same way. Civic Voice has been joined by over 250 civic societies in its first few months, with over 60,000 members between them. Among other things civic volunteers are the most numerous participants in the land use planning system.
2. Civic Voice believes regulation has a critical part to play in protecting and improving the quality of our cities, towns and villages. It is essential, however, that regulations are well constructed and designed to support local communities and local councils in taking action to improve the quality of place. Action to achieve this should contribute significantly to civic pride and people's sense of place.
3. We welcome the Government's intention to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and remove pointless or ill considered regulation. To this end we have identified two areas for priority action.
4. First, we believe there are a number of the decisions made by local authorities which currently require express consent from the Secretary of State where it should not be required and local authorities are competent to take the decisions themselves. In some instances there might be provision for the Secretary of State to "call in" the decision so that matters of more than local controversy or significance can properly be addressed. In all cases the local authority should be acting with the consent of a fully engaged local community and this may require complementary changes to regulations to ensure this is the case.
5. We have identified regulations in the following areas as ones to review whether the Secretary of State's express consent should be required:
 - Directions requiring express consent for certain advertisements which would otherwise have deemed consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007
 - Disposal of land held by a local authority for planning purposes for less than "best consideration" under section 233 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
 - Varying or revoking Tree Preservation Orders where an objection has been raised

- Modifying or cancelling Article 4 Directions under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995
- Minor compulsory purchase orders made under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and acquiring listed buildings in need of repair under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Acquiring land necessary to protect, manage or provide access to a building acquired under section 52 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Undertaking urgent works to unlisted buildings in conservation areas under section 76 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Issuing of discontinuance orders under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Serving some completion notices under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6. Second, we believe regulation is often only as effective as the clarity with which it is written and there is an overwhelming need to reduce the jargon and impenetrable language which so dominates policy debate. We would encourage the Government to develop a “crystal mark” specifically designed to improve the clarity of new legislation and for this to accompany any new provisions put before Parliament.

7. We hope this is helpful and should be happy to contribute to further discussions.