



Historic England Response to the Technical Consultation on Development Corporation Reform

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

Historic England welcomes the opportunity to comment on the current consultation.

It is acknowledged in the consultation document that different types of development corporations have been put in place to serve different functions. Whilst recognising that this consultation is an essential element in considering the future of development corporations, we would suggest that a more comprehensive review of the roles and functions of the different, existing corporations is required, in order to understand how successfully they have functioned and achieved their objectives using their existing powers. Any proposal to give future development corporations a more consolidated and/or consistent range of powers should be informed by a review of how existing development corporations have delivered against their aims. Such a review would enable the intended, and unintended, consequences of any future changes to be better understood.

Question 1: Are there measures that you would like to see implemented to further facilitate private sector involvement and investment in development corporations? What changes would you like to see?

Paragraph 2.4 of the consultation document states that "development corporations exercise significant public duties, for example in relation to planning and compulsory purchase. Any measures to increase private sector involvement would need to ensure that the integrity of decision-making around these functions was fully maintained." Whatever changes are proposed and/or merit further consideration, we support this statement; that in order to ensure integrity of decision-making, when exercising their public duties, development corporations should be subject to the same scrutiny and oversight as other decision-making bodies.

Question 3: Do you agree that all development corporations should have the ability, where appropriate, to exercise the plan-making and development management functions of a local planning authority?

As noted in the consultation document, there are a number of different types of development corporations, which due to their nature and objectives have different roles and powers. Whilst there is an appreciation of the need for clarity and consistency in approach by all the different variants of corporations, we believe it is appropriate to focus on what the aims and objectives of any proposed new corporations might be, as they may not align with existing development corporations or indeed with each other. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to seek to introduce a consistent suite of powers. Consideration should also be given as to how they engage with existing decision making structures and plans. There is a potential for further fragmentation of delivery if there is insufficient cooperation and engagement between organisations, such as development corporations and existing local authorities. For example, either a lack of clear shared objectives between development corporations and the relevant local authorities or a lack of certainty as to their respective roles and responsibilities might jeopardise delivery of large scale development and any infrastructure needed to support it.

Question 4: Do you agree that all development corporations should be able to secure contributions from developers using a range of mechanisms, such as CIL, SIT and Section 106 planning obligations, where they have taken on the corresponding planning powers from the local planning authority?

As noted in our response to Q3, different corporations have different functions so it would not appear prudent for a form of levy to be given automatically to all corporations. What is important is that there is accountability and responsibility for funding which is obtained through development to be appropriately managed and directed to the stated purposes by those in a position to ensure that this can be achieved.

Question 5: Are there any other measures relating to planning powers and/or increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of planning in development areas designated to be overseen by development corporations?

Should corporations have plan and/or decision-making powers, where there are impacts on the historic environment it is important that they have access to specialist advice in those matters **and** give it appropriate weight in their plan/decision-making. Likewise, it is important that the need to consult/notify statutory consultees is maintained.

Question 8: Is there anything else that you would like to see new legislation or policy address regarding the aims, objectives, remit, powers and restrictions of development corporations?

It is important that the duties of a development corporation and the delivery of its objectives, are integrated with, and complimentary to, those of surrounding plan authorities.

Simon Ramsden
Senior National Planning Adviser
simon.ramsden@HistoricEngland.org.uk
07776 138 605

Historic England
4th Floor
Cannon Bridge House
25 Dowgate Hill
London
EC4R 2YA

16 December 2019