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Alan Scott Esq  
National Planning Policy Framework  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
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*By email: [planningframework@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:planningframework@communities.gsi.gov.uk)*

Dear Mr Scott

**National Planning Policy Framework Review:  
*Suggestions for priorities and policies relevant to the proposals for a new, shorter and less bureaucratic National Policy Framework***

I am writing on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion ('SSE') in response to the request for input into the Scoping of the National Planning Policy Framework.

SSE represents some 7,500 members and registered supporters including over 150 parish and town councils, residents' groups, national and local environmental groups and other organisations.

We were established in 2002 in response to the Government's consultation on expanding UK airports and, particularly, to address the threat posed by expansion plans for Stansted Airport subsequently defined in the Air Transport White Paper in December 2003. Our objective is to contain the development of Stansted Airport within tight limits that are truly sustainable and, in this way, to protect the quality of life of residents over wide areas of Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk, to preserve our heritage and to protect the natural environment.

We wish to make a number of comments on the Government's proposals for a review of the present planning policy statements and guidance notes that have in past years dominated decision making by local authority planning development committees, as well as at subsequent appeal inquiries.

We would support all measures that enable members of local communities to effectively influence decisions provided there is an acceptable channel for community participation, discussion and access to reliable information.

We are concerned, however, that certain developments may carry a risk of damage to either or both human health and the environment. Legislation, both European and UK does lay down basic standards for safety but the legislation itself is often complex and information as to the situation locally is frequently difficult to ascertain except by those specialising in the particular issue of concern.

We would assume that larger developments likely to cause health or environmental problems would be referred to the new commission that is to be part of the Planning Inspectorate. In addition, we would assume that environmental and sustainability assessments would still be required. However, many smaller developments would be industrial or commercial applications and would be dealt with locally. It is our view that planning guidance would therefore still be essential. Available at the initial stage, this would facilitate community discussions and clarify the position with regard to possible hazards that required further information and those that were unlikely to cause problems.

We are especially concerned about developments that might lead to excessive noise or to breaches of the air quality regulations. The existing planning policy statements and guidance relating to noise, toxic emissions, and damage to the environment (PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPS23 Planning and Pollution Control, and PPG24 Planning and Noise) do not relate well to the actual legislation where it is relevant and undoubtedly could be improved and possibly simplified, or even incorporated into one guidance note laying down principles for ensuring the protection of both human health and the environment. We believe that any new framework should ensure that, whoever makes the final planning decisions, the following guidance rules should be observed:

1. Developments that are likely to give rise to a significant risk of breaching health and safety legislation should not be approved.
2. Developments likely to damage SSSIs should not be approved.
3. The protection given to the environment by the existing PPS9 should also be incorporated. This would give much needed protection to ancient woods and ancient trees, which at the present time are a national heritage that has been neglected in the planning system.

Yours sincerely



Carol Barbone  
Campaign Director