



Spatial Economics Research Centre

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Planning Hypocrisy

Lots of attention today on the Vickers' report on banking. I won't have time to read it properly today but a (very quick) first pass suggests that, understandably, it focuses on the macroeconomy implications but has nothing to say about the impact on the London economy (which would be the main interest from a spatial economic perspective).

In the meantime, the planning debate rumbles on - and here I did have a couple of observations arising from the weekend's coverage.

First, to the accusation of ministerial hypocrisy over the planning reforms because they have [opposed planning applications in the past](#). Am I alone in being unable to see anything contradictory in ministers exploiting the current system to stop their constituencies facing the costs of new development, while arguing that the system should be reformed to try to rationalise these debates within communities (via [neighbourhood plans](#)) and spread those costs more widely (via the [NHB](#))? It is perfectly rational for current residents to oppose development. As I suggested some time ago, ministers may have been [silly to suggest otherwise](#), but that doesn't invalidate the overall thrust of the reforms. Sure, I understand the politics, but ...

Second, and I confess to find this one even more annoying, is the continued suggestion that the planning reform is unnecessary because a high proportion of planning applications are granted. Here's the Guardian again: "Housing statistics show that planning permission is not the main obstacle to house building – capital funding for builders and mortgages for buyers are: 80% of residential building applications were granted last year, more on appeal." [As I have explained in more detail before](#): approval rates tell us *nothing* about whether planning holds back development because the rules affect *both* the submission and approval rates. If planning rules are so draconian that no one applies to build houses, approval rates would run at 100%. Would that mean planning was not a problem?

Several months ago, I raised my [concerns about the nature of the debate around planning](#). Sadly, it's not clear that things are improving.

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Monday, September 12, 2011](#).

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