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Government wins appeal on Regional Strategies

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The Coalition Government's intended abolition of Regional Strategies can be taken into account when making planning decisions, the High Court agreed today.

The judgment - in a High Court case brought by CALA Homes - confirms that the intended scrapping of Regional Strategies is a 'material consideration' which can be considered by local planning authorities and planning inspectors when making decisions.

The Government has long announced its intention to abolish the strategies through the Localism Bill, which received its Second Reading on 17 January 2011 in the House of Commons and is currently in Committee stage.

Planning Minister Bob Neill said:

"We are determined to return decision-making powers to communities and provide powerful incentives so people can see the benefits of building more homes, and the Bill will help achieve this.

"This judgment makes it clear that planners can take into account the Government's intention to do away with Regional Strategies.

"The Coalition Government made a firm pledge to sweep away these controversial strategies that have proved that top-down targets do not build homes. All they have produced is the lowest peacetime house building rates since 1924 and fuelled resentment in the planning process that has slowed everything down."

The New Homes Bonus Scheme will provide cash for communities that allow new homes to be built in their area. The Community Infrastructure Levy will also provide cash to be spent on local infrastructure.

Notes to editors

1. Regional Strategies were revoked on 6 July 2010 but were re-established on 10 November 2010 after a successful challenge by housing developer CALA Homes.

2. A subsequent challenge by CALA Homes, to halt planners using the intended revocation of the strategies as a 'material consideration' when making planning decisions, has been lost by the developer.

3. The judicial review, brought by CALA Homes, was heard at the High Court in London.
4. Pending abolition regional strategies remain part of the statutory development plan. The weight given to any 'material consideration' depends on the individual circumstances and it is for the decision maker to decide on the appropriate weight.
5. This latest judgement will not affect decisions already made on planning applications.

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