

The Cavehill Conservation Campaign

The Cavehill Conservation Campaign exists to maintain and, where possible, to enhance the Cave Hill and the adjacent Belfast Castle Estate. We are linked to Belfast City Council through our relationship with the Belfast Hills Partnership.

Bill No 17/11-15. Bill Type: executive. Bill Sponsor: Minister of the Environment

We object to the proposed Planning Bill on the following grounds.

We object that Clause 1 (Statement of Community Involvement) allows planners to continue policy on community involvement. Elected representatives should be the arbiters of what is in the public interest.

We object that Clause 2 allows planners/commissioners to set down policies on economic development. Planners and commissioners are not qualified to develop or follow sound economic development policies. They do not consider housing, health, education, community sustainability, regeneration, public services, public order or economic development as material considerations in making planning decisions.

We object that Clause 3 (Meaning of Development) does not make a distinction between land/building development and economic policy. Nor does it define economic or the scope of planners' role in promoting economic development

We object that Clause 4 (Publicity etc in relation to applications) and Clause 5 (Pre-application in community consultation), allow developers/speculators (rather than Planners or Council) to undertake and report on community consultation. This would be a dereliction of duty as developers/speculators have a vested interest in ensuring that their application is successful.

Thus we hold that:

Clause 1 perpetuates fundamental weaknesses in the current system

Clause 2 is beyond the competence of planners but it does not go far enough in promoting reform.

Clause 3 does not define economic development.

Clauses 4 and 5 skew the system in favour of developers and speculators. This is contrary to the public interest.

Edward McCamley

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