



OFFICE OF THE  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Chief Planning Officers in England

John Stambollouian  
Head of Development Control Policy  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
4/H2 Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Direct line: 0207 944 3940  
Fax: 0207 974 5004  
GTN: 3533 3940  
John.Stambollouian@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

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Dear Colleague

**CIRCULAR 11/95: USE OF NEGATIVE CONDITIONS**

I am writing to draw your attention to the advice in paragraph 40 and the footnote on page 16 of the Annex of Circular 11/95 on The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions. The advice is on conditions worded in a negative form, prohibiting development until a specified action has been taken.

Following the High Court case *Merritt v SSETR and Mendip District Council* we need to amend the advice in Circular 11/95. Until we are able to amend the Circular, please would you note the following advice when imposing negative planning conditions.

The advice in Circular 11/95 on conditions depending on other's actions (Annex paragraphs 38 and 39), says that it is unreasonable to impose a condition worded in a positive form which developers would be unable to comply with themselves, or which they could comply with only with the consent or authorisation of a third party. Similarly, conditions which require the applicant to obtain an authorisation from another body should not be imposed.

Although it would be *ultra vires* to require works which the developer has no powers to carry out, or which would need the consent or authorisation of a third party, it may be possible to achieve a similar result by a condition worded in a negative form, prohibiting development until a specified action has been taken.

The way the advice is currently worded in paragraph 40 is that such a condition should only be imposed on a planning permission **if there are at least reasonable prospects** of the action in question being performed within the time-limit imposed by the permission.

As a result of the Judgement in *Merritt*, paragraph 40 should be amended to read, "It is the policy of the Secretary of State that such a condition may be imposed on a planning permission. However, when **there are no prospects at all** of the action in question being performed within the time-limit imposed by the permission, negative conditions should not be imposed. In other words, when the interested third party has said that they have no intention of carrying out the action or allowing it to be carried out, conditions prohibiting

development until this specified action has been taken by the third party should not be imposed."

The foot note at the bottom of page 16 should be replaced with: "A policy of refusing permission where there was no reasonable prospect of planning conditions being met could be lawful, but sound planning reasons for the refusal should be given and it should be made clear that this was only a starting point for consideration of cases."

Yours sincerely,

**JOHN STAMBOLLOUIAN**