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PRESS RELEASE

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A Change Of Direction For Planning Policy

The Government has published a new Circular and Direction which aims to simplify the planning process by consolidating referral requirements. As part of the new guidelines the current Departures Direction will cease to exist as of Monday 20th April and will affect all new applications lodged on or after this date.

Previous regulations required that certain types of development had to be referred to the relevant Government Office before planning permission could be granted, but after the 20th April three specific types of development (see notes) will no longer need to be referred even when they depart from the Development Plan for the area.

Comments Gary Halman, Partner at HOW Planning: "This is a significant change introduced by the Government. It will reduce the number of applications that have to be referred, leaving more to be determined entirely by local planning authorities. There will, as a result, be less scope for intervention by the Secretary of State, with less call- in inquiries; indeed that is one of the stated objectives of the changes. This will be welcome news for developers promoting applications which might have been caught under the old rules, as the risk of expensive and lengthy public inquiries is reduced.

The new Circular and Direction also sets out those types of developments which Local Planning Authorities (LPA) must refer to the Secretary of State for her consideration.

These include development proposals in Green Belt areas and those affecting playing fields. The purpose of the new Direction is to simplify and streamline the planning process by consolidating referral requirements. The types of developments outlined in the new Direction include proposals for: green belt; developments outside town centres; playing fields; flood risk area; and World Heritage sites.

