

ABERDEEN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

(Balmedie, Cove, Danestone, Kittybrewster, Potterton, Peterhead and Woodside
Congregational Churches)

Senior Pastor
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Rev. Graham K Blount
Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office
Scottish Storytelling Centre
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Dear Graham

As Senior Pastor of seven small, mainly new, Congregational Churches in Aberdeen and around the North East of Scotland, we collectively work with some 350 children / youth every week. The Churches are involved in Church Planting. Section 12 of a Consultation Paper on proposed new Development Management Regulations causes me great concern.

I am disappointed that our attention was not drawn to this consultation earlier.

I wish to express my concerns as to the effects of such an alteration to planning applications, which would see Church applications seen as 'bad neighbour developments'.

Yes the 'name' bad neighbour conjures up some horrific thoughts - and the bad press and message that it puts out to the community will add to the difficulty of establishing any new Church.

In my opinion, while this country slips down the slippery slope of anti social behaviour, to brand Churches as anti social, bad neighbours, is unreal. In today's society, a Church is one of the few places where 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self control' are not just taught, but expected and to title us as bad neighbours really is an insult.

In a society where Government is trying to encourage people to volunteer, they now intend to obstruct the establishment of places for volunteers to work out of.

Where society is fighting a drugs black hole, where legalisation is becoming more and more of an option because the fight is being lost, religious bodies, who encourage the sanctity of human life and the human body are being demonised as bad neighbours.

This piece of intended legislation appears to run contrary to what other Government Departments are doing.

Surely Government should be finding ways of encouraging more and more Churches to be an integral part of Society and to encourage their opening in more and more places, not to be obstructive and anti Church, as this appears to be.

In today's society it is difficult enough to establish new Churches without the weight of Government Legislation adding to the difficulties. Surely the good work done by Churches has to be taken into account and surely the thousands of voluntary hours gladly given every week by Christians needs to be praised, not blocked.

I urge that this intended section be rejected and that Government be urged to look at ways of encouraging Churches into growth and to find ways of working in partnership in every community and not to be obstructive nor to send out negative impressions of Christianity.

Please forward my comments to the appropriate body.

Yours in Christ

Andy Cowie