



## **Government consultation on planning rules applied to fracking: a response by Quakers in Britain**

October 2018

The following is the response given by Quakers in Britain to the UK government's consultation in 2018 regarding the proposal to grant 'permitted development' status to nonhydraulic fracturing shale gas developments. As based on the discernment of Friends at Meeting for Sufferings in February 2017, Quakers in Britain opposes the development of the fracking industry. At that meeting it was minuted that "Fracked gas is not the low-carbon solution some suggest that it is and is incompatible with tackling the climate crisis. It is destructive of the environment, land and communities." The government's proposals would enable companies to fracking for fossil fuels without the consent of local authorities and therefore bypass local opposition. We therefore oppose these proposals.

We encourage Friends and others to respond to this consultation to make your views heard. [You can respond on the GOV.UK website](#). The deadline is 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018. To find out more about how Quakers are opposing fracking and calling for a more sustainable economy, go to [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk).

For more information and support in responding to this consultation please contact Chris Walker at [chrisw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:chrisw@quaker.org.uk) or on 020 7663 1047.

### **Our response**

**Question 1 a) Do you agree with this definition to limit a permitted development right to nonhydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration?**

No.

**b) If No, what definition would be appropriate?**

Quakers in Britain opposes the development of nonhydraulic fracturing shale gas and other unconventional oil and gas industries as they produce fossil fuels that are greenhouse gas intensive and are therefore incompatible with the UK's responsibilities to tackle climate change. We oppose any definition as part of this policy that assigns associated infrastructure as a permitted development.

**Question 2) Should non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration development be granted planning permission through a permitted development right?**

No

**Question 3 a) Do you agree that a permitted development right for non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration development would not apply to the following?**

Yes

**b) If No, please indicate why.**

**c) Are there any other types of land where a permitted development right for non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration development should not apply?**

Due to the climate impact of non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas, a permitted development right should not be applied to associated developments.

**Question 4) What conditions and restrictions would be appropriate for a permitted development right for non-hydraulic shale gas exploration development?**

Quakers in Britain opposes the proposal to extend permitted development rights to non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration, as we oppose the development of this and associated unconventional oil and gas (UOG) industries. UOG industries produce fossil fuel that are highly carbon- and methane-intensive. We believe that the development of these industries are incompatible with the UK's obligations to tackle climate change. The UK government is yet to determine how the development of the UOG industry is compatible with the UK's legally-binding carbon budgets, and the further emissions reductions required by the Paris climate change agreement. The carbon and methane intensity of fracked gas makes it an unsuitable 'transition fuel' within the shift to a net-zero emissions economy that will be necessary if the UK is to meet its obligations under the Paris climate change agreement.

Quakers in Britain also notes that permitted development rights were created for use by homeowners wishing to make minor alterations to their homes, such as a loft conversion or small extension. The proposal to extend these rights to a highly controversial industrial process which is currently classed as a major development is a significant departure from the original purpose and intention of permitted development legislation.

Many of our members have been active in opposing fossil fuel developments across the UK in recent years, including by engaging in local planning processes to object to planning applications by UOG companies. This has provided them with an opportunity to engage with a democratic process to ensure that their concerns regarding local environmental and community issues associated with UOG, including its climate impact, are heard and considered. When combined with the parallel proposal to class fracking as nationally

significant infrastructure, it seeks to remove nonhydraulic fracturing shale gas from the local planning system altogether, undermining the power and influence of local communities to oppose developments that undermine the UK's obligations on climate change.

Currently, applications for exploratory drilling for shale gas are classed as 'major' applications and regularly require reports to demonstrate how their impacts can be made acceptable in planning terms. At present, this type of development generally requires reports on ecological impact, noise, traffic, landscape, air quality and various other impacts. Where applications for exploratory drilling have been approved by local authorities, numerous conditions have been imposed: for example, the planning consent for the Tinker Lane site in Nottinghamshire came with 52 conditions attached. This clearly demonstrates that UOG developments are complex and have significant impacts.

We also note the double standards applied to fracking and to onshore wind, a source of increasingly cost-effective low carbon energy. While local planning authorities are obliged by the National Planning Policy Framework to "recognise the benefits of onshore oil and gas development, including unconventional hydrocarbons [...] and put in place policies to facilitate their exploration and extraction", and may soon be denied any say at all in whether UOG extraction takes place in their area, the same framework sets a high bar for proof of community support for onshore wind.

**Question 5) Do you have comments on the potential considerations that a developer should apply to the local planning authority for a determination, before beginning the development?**

Quakers in Britain opposes the development of non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas. Associated developments should not be permitted in the UK. Until this is the case, local authorities should be fully enabled to block associated developments.

**Question 6) Should a permitted development right for non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration development only apply for 2 years, or be made permanent?**

Due to the climate impact of non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas, a permitted development right should not be applied to associated developments.

**Question 7) Do you have any views the potential impact of the matters raised in this consultation on people with protected characteristics as defined in section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010?**

N/a.