

< 第一回 >

In this series of lectures, I want to look at the British planning system, which as we will see is quite different from the system you have in Japan. Sorry I have to speak in English, but all of time I were be using overheads to illustrate the talk.

I am looking at the British planning system, and today I want to look at how we control land use planning in Britain. Then over the next four weeks I want to look at certain issues, housing, industry and business, shopping and transport. Now obviously they are all linked together but I want to look at them separately.

Every week I will give a handouts of two sides to explain the main points, so we start today with the British planning system. Now what I want to look at is how we reach a planning decision. In Britain before any development can be carried out the landowner must obtain planning permission from the Local Authority. We have to apply for planning permissions for any building changes or any new building developments. The diagram shows the planning system in Britain and I will work through this system of applying for planning permission.

The Local Authority consider the application and say yes or no. It is possible to appeal if the answer no. So anybody who wants to make any changes to the land they own must complete planning application forms and submit is to the Local Authority. If I want to build an extension to my house or if a developer wants to build fifty houses, or a thousand houses, we all have to apply for planning permission.

It does not matter if you are in the city of London and the biggest bank in the world, you have to go to though the same system. Also, local authorities have to apply for planning permission if they want to make changes, such as pedestrianisation of the main shopping street.

Consider the case of Newcastle Football club who applied in 1992 to redeveloped their ground. They wanted to build very high stands but people at one end of the ground objection because they would lose a lot of light and their view would be obstructed.

Three sides have high stands with but a lower stand on the one end. So that these planning controls apply to everyone.

However, for most people the way they come across planning control is house extensions. For many people including me, they want to build another bedroom on the side of their house and they have to apply for planning permission to build that extension.

The LA will probably insist that the bricks, windows and roof tiles match the existing building before they agree to the extension.

Who makes the planning decision? It is the Local Authority. The country is divided into over 200 local authority areas department. In London there are thirty two boroughs

with each one dealing with planning applications and all planning matters. In Britain you can take a degree in town planning and make a career in Local government or in private practice. Each local authority would have between 25 to 50 planners who would carry out the planning work. They would draw up district plans and consider all planning applications. Local government is governed by councillors. There are elections every three years for local councillors. A group of those councillors would form the planning committee. This planning committee make the decision on the application. The professional planners advice the committee of councillors but they do not make the decision yes or no. Most of the time the councillors on the planning committee accept the planners view, but not always. Big developments might be debated at the whole council level.

Now the planning application has come to the local authority how do they deal with it? There are procedures will always apply to an application and other controls that might or might not apply. I will work through the system a planning department would normally consider in order to assess an application. At the end of the day it is a yes or no decision and so they have got to look at each application carefully. First of all they would consult all the local plans. Every LA develops future plans for the LA and planners would see if the application fitted in with the plans for the area. If it does, then there is a chance of it being successful, but if it does not, then the application is likely to fail. For example, Reading university own agricultural land close to Reading. They want to build housing on this land but the local plan states there will be no development south of the M4 motorway. The land is far more valuable as housing land but it cannot be development because it does not fit the local plan. Secondly, local planners would go to visit the site. Probably once for a house extension but for a big development they will go more often. They would put up a large red notice in front of the site telling everybody there are going to be changes to this building or at this site. So everyone passing the site knows an application has been made. Also LA advertise in the newspapers about every application. The notice will be there for six or seven weeks. Thirdly they would consult Government Policy, both any legislation and PPGs. The main source of information on Government Policy comes from these planning policy guidance notes PPGs. These are essential ,because with over 200 planning department making decisions about planning applications, consistent rules need to apply. Anything about greenbelt policy is in PPGs. Each LA knows what government guidance to follow for each application. Fourthly LA planners would meet with other interested parties. Anybody can go to visit the planning department and talk to the planners and look at all the information about any application. All the information is available for free to everybody to see. People can go to

look at the plans and see whether they want to make an objection. Sometimes a neighbor will object to a planning application for a house extension because it overlooks their garden. With a large application like Terminal 5 or Heathrow Airport a large number of objections would be expected from environmentalists and people who live close by. Terminal 5 went to a public inquiry which took a very long time to work through.

Finally the planners will negotiate with the applicant especially for a big development. For these bigger applications, planners will apply a green belt and obligations. A large development will add costs to the infrastructure of the local authority in the future. So quite often the LA asks the developer for some contribution towards the infrastructure, while there might be a play ground for children, or some traffic lights.

Near to my house, there was a new development of about 50 houses and as part of the agreement for building the houses, the developer agreed to install traffic light at a cross roads. This is sometimes called planning gain as the local authority is gaining extra infrastructure by allowing this development to take place. Vodafone who have combined all their offices in Newbury with one large head office, just to the north of Newbury. They negotiated with the LA and agreed to build some new infrastructure and a policy of encouraging workers to come to work using public transport by paying them more money.

The local authority planning department would work through this procedure and they would then make a recommendation to the local authority planning committee. The planners do all the work and then advise the planning committee. The planning committee will meet about every week and they will say yes or no to the application. It might be yes with the agreed changes. If it is no the reasons for the rejection will be explained. The target is for an application decision in 8 weeks and in most cases this works. However more complicated decisions take longer. The longest recent case was 8 years (1993 to 2001) for approval of Terminal 5 of Heathrow Airport.

There are also a number of controls that might or might not be applicable to a planning application. There is heritage planning listed buildings, conservation areas, national parks, green field development. Firstly heritage planning with listed buildings and conservation areas.

Heritage planning is important for Britain in the preservation of single buildings areas within a town, old industrial sites, old bridges and indeed any building or area that is of historic interest. The criteria we have for listing buildings is anything built before 1840 plus examples of buildings built since 1914. People living in buildings over a hundred years would have very severe restrictions on how they could change the buildings. By 2000 there were nearly 600,000 listed buildings. It is worth noting that in Britain there

are no natural disasters to destroy buildings. Buildings will stand for hundreds of years unless they are knocked down. Heritage sites also include historic gardens and monuments. A person living in grade one listed building would have severe restrictions on any changes. Some unusual listed buildings include, red telephone boxes, industrial buildings and bridges. There are also a large number of conservation area being preserved. Often rather than 1 buildings it is a whole area that is of interest. There are about 10 thousands of those conservation area in Britain. If a person lived in one of the houses in a conservation area, there would be sever restriction on what changes could be made.

Secondly there are national parks. People living in a national park are restricted on what they can do with their building. National parks are not owned by the state. They are areas of outstanding natural beauty, which it is felt should be preserve. They are areas with towns, villages, and industries but also areas where people go for the natural beauty. People visit the areas for sightseeing. There are several National Parks in Britain as well as areas of outstanding natural beauty, heritage coasts and woodland areas.

Another planning constraint is the green belt It was first set out in the Abercrombie London plan 1944 which also was the birth of Town planning in Britain. In 1920 to1930s there was suburbanization around London. What he said was that without any constrains this development will continue to spread. He proposed an area around London for same new development then a belt of no development, the green belt. The greenbelt policy has held for the last 60 years. There has been very restricted development in these areas. This has provided a break, in development out side London. London did have a population of about 9milion in 1950and it now has a population of less than 8 million/ London did not grown like Tokyo. Also, in his plan was the idea of new towns that were close to London. Overspill population from London could go to these new towns that were outside the greenbelt. The greenbelt was a good idea, but it put extra pressure on areas just beyond the green belt like Reading which is at the first motorway junction after the green belt. The idea of a green belt has been taken up my many towns and cities in Britain. Also, a second generation of New towns was developed in other parks of Britain in the 1960s. A map showing green belt areas, areas of outstanding natural beauty, national parks, coastal areas and forest areas means that a large part of Britain has strong planning constraints. It puts extra pressure for development on other areas.

Another big issue in Britain at the moment is between brown field development and Greenfield development. Brown field development is on old industrial land where the

factory has closed down and is in need of redevelopment. Some of these sites have been used for shopping site, but the government want housing on these sites. However people really prefer houses on a greenfield site where the development is on new agricultural land. The government is trying for 60% new development on brownfield, 40% on green field. There is a problem in the Southeast of England where there are few brownfield sites. There is some European legislation, particular on the environment which large developments have to consider.

One further point is than in Britain, a local authority has no finance to actually carry out any development. What they can do through their planning control is to encourage development to take place. Every town center in Britain has been pedestrianised. A local authority will draw up the plan and then apply to the government for finance. Also if a local authority wants a new shopping area to be developed, it has to encouraged and negotiate with a private company to carry out the development.

When a planning application has been assessed by a planning department, the planning committee make a decision yes, you can develop, or no you cannot develop. If the application is refused, they can appeal to the government ministry in charge of planning, who might decide to set up a public inquiry. At a public inquiry, both sides would put their arguments to the inspector. He would listen to all the evidence and then write a report. The minister would read the report and the inspectors recommendations and then make a final decision. Two examples, one with a quick decision, and one that took several years. In the first example there was an applications in 1988 to build a regional shopping center just south of Reading. The site was just south on the M4, and so there was good access. But the LA turned down the application on the grounds that it would generate a large amount of traffics and also it would have severe impact on the other towns nearby. The company appealed and it were to a Public Inquiry with the inspector listening to the argument from both side. He wrote a report which went to minister who then turned the application down in 1989 for the same reasons as the LA. The second examples is Heathrow Airport terminal 5 which were straight to a public inquiry. Terminal 5 will handle 30 million passengers per year and will therefore have a very large impact. At the moment, Heathrow is one of the biggest airports in the world with 60 million passengers. The new terminal will increase it to 90 million passengers per year. It is a huge development and it will generate a huge amount of extra traffic and extra flights. Therefore many organizations and individuals objected to the proposal. The environmentalists said we don't need more flights or terminal space and the terminal would do environmental damage to the area. People who live near the airport objected because of the noise level. BAA submitted the

application in 1993 and approval given in 2001. It took 8 years to gain planning permission. The Public Inquiry met for 3-4 years and the Inspector wrote a very long detailed report because of all the evidence given to the Inquiry. With all this delay, Terminal 5 will not be open until 2011, which is 18 years after the submission of the planning application. Now it could be argued that the planning restrictions on Heathrow Airport how damaged the airport and maybe the UK economy government is keen to see London as one of the major cities in the world, which must have a top rate airport at Heathrow. The new terminal space is needed, but it took 8 years for planning permission to be given.

The LA planning committee and to a lesser degree the professional planners, do have considerate power in the control of planning applications. It might seem these is room for corruption. In fact there have been very, very few cases in the past 60 years. The whole process is very open and many people are making a contribution to the final decision. LG provides itself on its proberty. As a check, there is an ombudsman for local government who can look for maladministration if someone is dissatisfied with there treatment. The ombudsman does not look at the decision, but to see is the rules have been followed.