

**Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy Decision – 16  
September 2024**

**Proposed consultation response to proposed changes to  
the National Planning Policy Framework**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The report sets out and summarises the main proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and how they could impact on New Forest District Council. The report also contains, as an appendix, the proposed response to consultation on changes to the NPPF to be sent under delegated authority by the Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder. Members of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Local Plan Member Working Group both provided comments on the response that have been reflected in this final version.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>That the response as set out in Appendix 1 to this report be submitted as the New Forest District Council formal response to the Governments consultation on the revisions to the NPPF.</b>
Reasons for recommendations	<p>The drafted response aims to assess the potential impacts of the changes to the NPPF on planning in New Forest District, outside of the National Park, and the implications for the provision of Council planning services.</p> <p>The government has indicated that it will introduce formal strategic planning mechanisms through new legislation – although not an immediate short-term measure.</p> <p>The recommendation aligns with priorities across the place, people and prosperity elements of the council’s Corporate Plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place Priority 1: Shaping our place now and for future generations.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.</li> <li>• Prosperity Priority 2: Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow</li> </ul>
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Derek Tipp – Planning and Economy
Strategic Director	James Carpenter – Strategic Director Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	<p>Tim Guymer Acting Assistant Director for Place Development <a href="mailto:tim.guymer@nfdc.gov.uk">tim.guymer@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p> <p>James Smith Planning Policy Team Leader <a href="mailto:james.smith@nfdc.gov.uk">james.smith@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>

## Introduction and background

1. The new government has prioritised planning reforms as part of its first actions since the election. The reforms aim to address the housing crisis and facilitate economic growth and are wide ranging. A full list of policy objectives is included in Chapter 2 of the consultation document.
2. Of particular relevance for the New Forest are suggested changes to government policy with respect to:
  - The assessment of housing need
  - Green Belt policy
  - Affordable housing policy
  - Planning application fees and cost recovery for local authorities related to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP).
3. The government has set out a proposed new standard method for calculating housing need and proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework for consultation. The proposed consultation response is appended to this report. The consultation response will need to be submitted by the 24 September and the

government has indicated that it intends to publish the revised NPPF this year.

4. When finalised the new NPPF will guide the preparation of local plans and be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
5. This report aims to summarise the changes before commenting on some of the implications for the New Forest. The report and comments are made in relation to the part of the district outside of the National Park for which the District Council is the Local Planning Authority. The impacts on the National Park are, however, reflected in the response, taking account of the duty for statutory bodies to seek to further the statutory purposes of the New Forest National Park. The National Park Authority has the opportunity to provide its own response to the consultation.
6. After the 'Corporate Plan' priorities heading below, the report headings largely relate to the chapter headings in the consultation document<sup>1</sup>.
7. Due to the broad scope and number of proposed changes it has not been possible to provide a detailed commentary on every aspect of the current consultation, but this report summarises the key issues for the planning area.
8. On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made a statement to parliament outlining the need for a review of spending on transport infrastructure projects and that the A303 Stonehenge Tunnel, A27 Arundel Bypass and Restoring Our Railway programme will not be going ahead. There is a lack of clarity on the implications for this for infrastructure investment on the Waterside, including the widely supported upgrading of the A326 as well as the potential reopening of the Waterside railway line for passenger trains.
9. A separate letter will be sent to the Secretary of State expressing concern that infrastructure investment is being reviewed by the government and highlight the important role that such infrastructure could have in the Waterside. In particular, the significant role that the proposed improvements to the A326 is expected to have in enabling the full potential for the Freeport to be delivered.
10. In addition, this letter will also take the opportunity to emphasise the need for key statutory consultees, including Natural England and the Environment Agency, to be resourced effectively to engage in the planning process. This is particularly relevant for this district, which

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<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66acffddce1fd0da7b593274/NPPF\\_with\\_footnotes.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66acffddce1fd0da7b593274/NPPF_with_footnotes.pdf)

has a number of environmental considerations which require proactive engagement from such consultees.

### **Corporate Plan priorities**

11. The recommendations support all Corporate Plan objectives to a certain extent, either directly or indirectly. However, they are particularly relevant to the following objectives:
  - Meeting housing needs
  - Shaping our place now and for future generations
  - Protecting our climate, coast and natural world.
12. In particular, the national policy context influences the ability of the council to provide effective planning services, balancing the social and economic needs of the population with environmental protection and planning in the context of climate change.

### **Planning for the homes we need – reversing previous changes**

13. The NPPF was last revised by the previous government in December 2023. The government is now proposing to reverse the changes that were made to the document at this time as it considers that those changes run counter to the government's ambitions on increasing housing supply.
14. Of particular note are the following changes:
  - Removal of key caveats from paragraph 60;
  - Removal of the addition to paragraph 61 setting out that the outcome of the standard method is an advisory starting point for establishing a housing requirement for the area and further context on the exceptional circumstances where the use of alternative approaches to the standard method may apply;
  - Removal of paragraph 62 referring to accommodating the urban uplift within those cities and urban areas themselves;
  - Removal of paragraph 130 that sets out that significant uplifts in density may be inappropriate if this would result in development wholly out of character with the area and that this could be taken into account when local planning authorities consider their ability to meet their housing needs; and
  - Reversal of the changes to the requirements to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, regardless of plan status.
15. It is considered that some of these changes can be supported but others have significant implications for the New Forest.
16. The calculation of housing need has always been the starting point in setting a housing requirement figure in a local plan since the NPPF

was introduced and Regional Spatial Strategies abolished. The New Forest has wide ranging constraints which justify not meeting housing needs in full and these are not repeated here. Past local plans have not met need in full and the removal of text from paragraph 61 itself is unlikely to have any significant effect on the final housing requirement figure in the next local plan. However, it is considered that the removal of the words<sup>2</sup> from paragraph 60 would not be an accurate reflection of the reality of being able to meet need in a constrained area such as the unique area of the New Forest, and that the reversal of this change is not supported.

17. The existing standard method for calculating housing need, which relies on the 2014-based household projections, is proposed to be replaced with a stock-based approach and the urban uplift (which affected cities including Southampton) would no longer be relevant. Notwithstanding this, the urban uplift was not based on any demographic (or other) assessment of need and in many cases across the country the urban uplift could not be met within the urban area and so the introduction of paragraph 62 simply meant that unmet housing need would remain unmet.
18. The intentions of paragraph 130 (now proposed to be deleted) are unclear and given its recent introduction it has yet to be fully tested in a range of circumstances through the local plan-making process. It could have been applied to greenfield development to prevent any development, although it is understood that this was not the purpose of the paragraph. There are other parts of the NPPF that encourage densification, particularly in relation to encouraging viable sustainable modes of transport, and the paragraph could have been used to restrict potential development in accessible suburban areas with good public transport. The NPPF contains other protection-based policies in relation to landscape and heritage considerations and therefore there is no objection to the removal of this paragraph.
19. It is considered that the need to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply with a 5% buffer undermines the plan-led system and that the reinstatement of the previous NPPF requirements is not supported. Further to this, both past under-delivery and past over-delivery should be taken account of through the 5-year housing land supply calculation.

### **Planning for the homes we need – maintaining effective cooperation and the move to strategic planning**

20. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 will revoke the Duty to Cooperate in relation to the reformed plan-making system. However, the Duty remains in place for now and in the short term there are

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<sup>2</sup> The words proposed to be deleted are shown in bold - 'The overall aim should be to meet **as much of** an area's identified need **as possible**,..'

proposed amendments to the NPPF that immediately strengthen the recognition of the need for strategic planning, in particular that *'unmet development needs from neighbouring areas are accommodated in accordance with paragraph 11b'*.

21. In the longer term, the government is planning to legislate to enable universal coverage of strategic planning (within this parliament). This will support elected Mayors in overseeing the development and agreement of Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) for their areas. The government will also consult on appropriate arrangements for developing SDSs outside of mayoral areas.
22. It is considered that the lack of effective strategic planning is not helpful when considering future needs within New Forest District. The majority of the land area is within the National Park and there are significant other constraints, not least relating to nature conservation and Green Belt along with it being a coastal authority. It would be extremely challenging to meet identified needs for housing and economic development within the district and unless those needs are met in less constrained areas elsewhere there will be significant adverse impacts for the residents and businesses in the district.
23. Overall, there is a need to think of strategic planning on a wider scope rather than just neighbours and it will be important that the council and key partners engage with the government as it develops its proposals prior to introducing formal legislation.

### **A new standard method for assessing housing needs**

24. The existing standard method for calculating housing need relies on use of the 2014-based household projections. These have been criticised by those who consider that they rely on out-of-date data and in many cases the households predicted have been significant over-estimates. There are others that argue that as there has been a consistent shortfall in housing, households have been prevented from forming and therefore updating to more recent household projections would reinforce the under-estimate of housing need.
25. The government is now proposing to move to a stock-based approach that will mean that every council will take that starting point of its housing need calculation a 0.8% annual increase in housing stock. A multiplier will then be applied which will give much greater emphasis to relative affordability. This approach will lead to a very significant increase in the identified housing need for the district to some 1,465 dwellings per annum (compared to the current local plan target of 521 dpa). Nationally, the sum of local authority housing need will be approximately 370,000 dwellings per annum.

The government considers that this level of housing will be required to deliver 1.5 million new homes during this parliament.

26. As referenced above, whilst ensuring the council takes every opportunity to meet needs within its own boundaries, it will still be extremely challenging to fully meet housing needs within the district and therefore the method for calculating that need is not likely to have a significant impact on the housing provision figure in the new local plan. However, there are a couple of observations that it would be relevant to include in the consultation response in relation to the method of calculation.
27. The use of a stock-based approach is crude and not well related to the specific housing needs of an area, including accurately reflecting areas with significant over or under occupation of dwellings. Furthermore, it takes no account of constraints that may prevent that need being met. The government should develop a more nuanced evidence-based approach, preferably based on the household projections, but also taking account of constraints – including the presence of national parks as is the case with New Forest District. It is considered that the total of 370,000 dwellings per annum is not appropriate and the government should work to a total of 300,000 dpa.
28. It also fails to recognise that local authority boundaries do not necessarily align with equal opportunities to accommodate additional growth – indeed New Forest District’s administrative boundary for planning has been gradually reduced over the last fifty years due to local government reorganisation and the creation of the New Forest.
29. Whilst the council remains concerned about the increasing unaffordability of housing in relation to local income levels, it is not convinced that the multiplier based on affordability is logical or reasonable in relation to the New Forest. Now that it is proposed to increase the multiplier it will have no impact on the number of homes to be planned for in the new local plan, given the constraints. Even if the government is successful in achieving delivery of 1.5m homes in the lifetime of this parliament, it is very unlikely that this would bring prices down in the New Forest making them more affordable. The New Forest attracts migration from throughout the country due to the presence of the National Park and the coast and only if so many homes were built that it was no longer so attractive would it be likely that house prices would fall. It is the external demand from beyond the district, together with the designation of the National Park itself

that restricts delivery of major development, which has resulted in the disconnect between local incomes and house prices.

### **Brownfield, grey belt and the Green Belt**

30. The government proposes to strengthen the policy approach to brownfield development by adding to the NPPF in relation to commentary on brownfield land within settlements, 'proposals for which should be regarded as acceptable in principle'.
31. The consultation is seeking views on whether the definition of Previously Developed Land should include hardstanding and glass houses. The government want to understand how expanding the definition might affect the availability of horticultural land.
32. Some of the most significant proposed reforms are in relation to the Green Belt, both in terms of plan-making and decision-making. This includes a new definition of 'grey belt' land. This is proposed to be defined as,  
  
*'Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the green belt comprising Previously Developed Land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes (as defined in para 140 of this Framework), but excluding those areas or assets of particular importance listed in footnote 7 of this Framework (other than land designated as Green Belt).'*
33. As part of the solution to the lack of identified land for development the government is proposing a targeted release of grey belt land. This will support local planning authorities to facing acute housing and development pressures to meet their needs, while securing environmental improvements, affordable housing and other infrastructure improvements. Where a local planning authority is unable to meet needs, it should undertake a Green Belt review. This should look to release poor quality grey belt land from the Green Belt through both local plan making and decision making. The release will be subject to sustainable development principles and to clear 'golden rules'.
34. In relation to plan-making, the government is proposing a sequential approach to guide the allocation of sites within the Green Belt. Firstly, local authorities are required to consider the release of previously developed land, before moving on to other grey belt sites and finally to higher performing Green Belt sites where these can be made sustainable. Land that is safeguarded by other existing



environmental designations will remain protected. The consultation makes clear the government's expectation that local planning authorities should seek to meet their development needs in full, but the release of land should not be supported where doing so would fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the plan area as a whole. The proposed NPPF amendment clarifies that *'exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to, instances where an authority cannot meet its identified need for housing, commercial or other development through other means.'*

35. In the short term, in relation to decision-making, the government is proposing to amend national policy so that housing, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate if it is on grey belt land in sustainable locations, the 'golden rules' apply and the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply.
36. The 'golden rules' that government proposes to introduce in relation to development in the Green Belt, for both planned releases in a local plan and through planning applications are as follows:
  - In the case of development involving the provision of housing, at least 50% affordable housing (with an appropriate proportion being for social rent), subject to viability;
  - Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
  - Provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public.
37. The government is proposing specific guidance on viability in relation to Green Belt release, which is set out in a new Annex 4 of the NPPF. This involves establishing a benchmark land value on the basis of the existing use value of the land, plus a reasonable and proportionate premium for landowners. The consultation is seeking views on what the benchmark land value should be. The guidance indicates the circumstances where planning permission should be refused if the policy requirements cannot be met, and land released from the Green Belt is transacted above the benchmark land value. Government is also proposing enhanced use of compulsory purchase powers where such land is not brought forward on a voluntary basis.
38. It is considered that the clarification of the emphasis that should be placed on brownfield development within settlements reflects sound planning principles and should be supported. However, it is suggested that it would be appropriate to express concern about the potential to consider hardstanding and glasshouses within the definition of 'previously developed land'. This could easily lead to

large and small scale glass houses and their related hardstanding being considered as appropriate for release for residential development. Given the significant increase in land value it could be difficult to maintain a sustainable horticultural industry and may lead to development in relatively unsustainable places.

39. The proposed changes to Green Belt policy are significant and need to be seen in the national and regional contexts as well as from a New Forest perspective. The New Forest District has some relatively small areas of Green Belt around New Milton and Lymington. There are larger areas of Green Belt around Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, but the vast majority of the land designated as Green Belt in the South East is around London.
40. New Forest District Council previously released some of the poorer performing land from its Green Belt as part of the preparation of the Local Plan adopted in 2020 and there have been other past releases through local plans in adjoining authorities. However, many authorities have not proposed any release and given the additional protection that Green Belt land has through planning applications this has led to inconsistencies of approach across the country and been a contribution to the shortage of housing supply. This has the effect of pushing unmet housing need away from the Green Belt areas, which in themselves may not be of good environmental quality or have public access, to areas beyond the Green Belt.
41. The clarification that meeting development needs should require consideration of Green Belt release through local plans is welcomed. However, there are some concerns with the proposed definition of 'grey belt' land. Whilst the definition of previously developed land in sustainable locations is relatively clear (subject to the definition of a sustainable location), the proposal to include land that makes a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes introduces ambiguity and a judgement based on evidence. Whilst this might be appropriate as part of the plan-making process, where the cumulative impact of release can be assessed, it is considered that it should not apply to planning applications. Further to this, there are reservations about the appropriateness of single dwellings being justified by this policy as opposed to more quantifiable contributions to wider development needs.
42. The government wants to ensure that where land is released from the Green Belt, the maximum public benefits are achieved, and that the overall strategic function of the designation is not undermined. The requirements related to affordable housing, infrastructure and

public access to green spaces are welcomed. As is the guidance on viability. This is a radical change of approach, and the government is seeking views on what the benchmark land value should be.

43. The change in approach on land value and use of compulsory purchase powers could ensure that where land is released from the Green Belt it can come forward to provide a larger proportion affordable housing with the viability caveats, that have previously allowed developers to not meet policy requirements, largely removed. This could effectively reduce the cost of land that is released from the Green Belt.

### **Delivering affordable, well-designed homes and places**

44. The government intends to maintain local decision-making on the appropriate mix of affordable housing but makes it clear that there will be increased emphasis on social rented housing and that expectations for this tenure will need to be specified as part of broader affordable housing policies. Allied to this will be the removal of prescriptive requirements relating to affordable home ownership products.
45. The proposed amendments to the NPPF will remove the requirements to deliver at least 10% of the total number of homes on major sites as affordable home ownership and that a minimum of 25% of affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes.
46. References to 'beauty and beautiful' that were added to the 2023 NPPF will be removed, but references to well-designed buildings and places remain, recognising policy and guidance for national and local design guides/codes.
47. Officers welcome these changes on the basis that as they are they will help the council ensure that the affordable housing provided through new development will be available to help those most in need. The removal of the most recent references to 'beauty and beautiful' will avoid the difficulty of definition and potential ambiguity in decision-making.

### **Building infrastructure to grow the economy**

48. The government aims to speed up delivery of critical infrastructure to help drive economic growth. It aims to do this through proposed changes to the NPPF but is also seeking views on whether the definition of projects that are of national significance is fit for

purpose, given recent technological advancements and industrial innovation.

49. The proposed changes to the NPPF are intended to provide particular support for laboratories, gigafactories<sup>3</sup>, digital infrastructure and the freight and logistics sector by making it clearer that identified needs should be met, both through plan-making and decision-taking. The government is suggesting that the NPPF amendments could be supported by enabling infrastructure projects falling into the above sectors to request that they are directed into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects consenting regime (rather than requiring a planning application to the local authority).
50. It is considered that the proposed changes to the NPPF are too permissive and there should be some recognition that there may be constraints which would make some of the economic development inappropriate in some locations. There should therefore be greater recognition that there will inevitably be some unmet needs arising and given the larger than local authority area requirements for some industries with large buildings (height/footprint) it would be better if these issues are addressed at a sub-regional or regional level. This emphasises why some form of strategic planning is essential so that needs are met in the most appropriate places and not just where a particular site is promoted, either through a planning application or as a proposed local plan allocation.

### **Delivering community needs**

51. The government proposes to amend the NPPF to indicate that *'Significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development.'* This is to facilitate the provision and modernisation of key public services infrastructure such as hospitals and criminal justice facilities.
52. The government is proposing a change of emphasis in transport planning through proposed references in the NPPF to 'vision-led' transport planning as opposed to the more traditional 'predict and provide' approach. The aim is to ensure that places are designed around the needs of residents and movement rather than to accommodate the worst-case traffic scenario.
53. The change in relation to public infrastructure reflects some of the concerns about the condition and adequacy of public service buildings

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<sup>3</sup> Battery cell manufacturing plants

and it is considered should be welcomed. The change of emphasis to transport planning is welcomed and reflects the change of emphasis in the Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 and reduces some of the disparity between national and local planning and transport policy.

### **Supporting green energy and the environment**

54. The government proposes to revise the NPPF and change the NSIP regime to increase support for renewable energy schemes, tackle climate change and safeguard environmental resources. It considers this to be vital to meet the commitment to reaching zero carbon energy generation by 2030. The proposed NPPF changes would significantly change the national policy context (albeit largely reverting back to pre-Dec 2023 position), making it more permissive for onshore wind proposals and giving increased weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon development.
55. The government is proposing to increase the thresholds at which onshore wind and solar power projects are subject to the NSIP regime. This is to reflect the better technical efficiency of electricity generation that has evolved as the technology has developed, meaning that smaller-scale projects are being captured by the current 50MW threshold. It is proposed to increase the thresholds to 100MW for onshore wind and 150MW for solar projects so that projects are required to follow a proportionate process to secure consent and focus the NSIP regime on projects that are large-scale and nationally significant. The NSIP regime is typically more complex and expensive than local decision-making through the planning application system.
56. The consultation is asking some fairly open-ended questions about how climate change can be reflected in strengthened policy and views on potential improvements to flood risk policy to make it more proportionate. It is also seeking views on extending the NSIP regime to capture water resources infrastructure projects of national significance.
57. It is suggested that the proposal to reduce the barriers to onshore wind and giving weight to the benefits of renewable and low carbon development should be supported as important steps to enable national zero carbon targets to be met. Similarly, returning some of the smaller scale renewable energy proposals to local decision-making rather than the NSIP regime is welcomed.
58. New Forest District Council has recently adopted a Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document. Amongst other provisions, it

seeks to measure the potential energy requirements from new development and renewable energy generation potential for new buildings, with the aim of providing information to assess compliance with adopted local plan climate change related policies. It is proposed that the consultation response should include the suggestion to government that it should allow local authorities to set higher energy efficiency standards than current building regulations, or it should amend the building regulations to provide minimum carbon related performance standards for new buildings.

### **Changes to local plan intervention criteria**

59. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 contains powers for the Secretary of State to intervene if a local planning authority is perceived to be failing or omitting to do anything it is necessary for it to do in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a development plan document. Policy criteria were set out in the 2017 Housing White Paper. The government is now consulting on whether the policy intervention criteria should be revised to those suggested in the consultation or removed entirely with reliance on the text of the legislation without further policy criteria.
60. It is suggested that proposed policy criteria against which the decision to intervene would be assessed are helpful rather than just relying on the judgment of the Secretary of State in line with the existing legislation. Further, this should align with the gateway assessments for local plan preparation as provided for in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act which are designed to ensure a more supportive approach to plan-making through regular reviews by a Secretary of State appointed qualified person.

### **Changes to planning fees and cost recovery for local authorities related to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects**

61. Current planning fees do not generate enough income to cover the full cost of some planning applications. The government estimates that there remains an overall funding shortfall for local authority development management services of £262 million. The applications with the greatest shortfall in cost recovery are householder applications and the government is consulting on proposals to increase householder application fees from £258 to £528 to meet broad cost recovery levels, or alternative options (including no fee increase).
62. The government is also seeking views on whether there are other applications for which the current fee is inadequate and the potential

to introduce fees for applications where there is currently no charge. Also, whether fee levels should be locally determined and whether fees should be increased to fund wider planning services.

63. Evidence from local authorities has highlighted that engagement with the development consent process through the NSIP regime can be time consuming and resource intensive. There is no statutory power for local authorities to charge fees for the work required on these applications, rather a reliance on the goodwill of an applicant to enter into a planning performance agreement. There can be ongoing resource requirements to discharge of conditions or obligations. The government is consulting on whether to make statutory provision to require local authorities to recover costs in relation to applications and proposed applications.
64. It is considered that the proposed increase in householder application fees to £528 is appropriate and welcomed. Given that larger applications tend to generate a fee which meets cost recovery there are no other applications where an increase would be justified. However, applications for listed building consent, consent to undertake demolition in a conservation area and works to trees in a conservation area or protected by a Tree Preservation Order generate a major call on resources for the District Council and it would be appropriate for fees to be charged for the determination of these applications.
65. Given the particularly complexities of planning in the New Forest Plan Area, its high property prices and the need to provide sufficient salary levels to attract staff, the ability for a local authority to set all, or some of its fees locally, albeit with a nationally-set fee as the default. It would be appropriate if a proportionate increase was made to enable a part of the fee to be used to help fund the enforcement function.
66. Should the council have to engage in NSIP applications as a consultee this would be for large scale development (of national significance) and it would likely draw significant resources to ensure it could engage effectively. It is suggested that a statutory obligation requiring full cost recovery for relevant services provided by local authorities should be introduced and should cover all the necessary disciplines to address the relevant material planning considerations.

### **The future of planning policy and plan making**

67. The consultation sets out proposed transitional arrangements for emerging plans at more advanced stages of preparation, giving

clarity on which version of the NPPF they will be examined against. Furthermore, the government has clarified that it currently intends to implement the new plan-making system as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act from summer or autumn 2025 and plans submitted for examination before December 2026 will be examined under the existing 2004 Act.

68. The initial transitional arrangements for plans at advanced stages of preparation will not apply to New Forest District Council, given the timetable for its Local Plan Review. However, the deadline of December 2026 will have to be achieved for plan submission or there is the potential for a period of uncertainty (and potential delay) whilst the new process in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act is followed. The government has indicated that it will publish further details of its intentions around plan-making reform in due course.

### **Options appraisal**

69. Officers have considered the proposed reforms and the likely impact they would have on the provision of planning services by the council. Alternative responses were considered in the drafting of the report.

### **Consultation undertaken**

70. The proposed response has been circulated to relevant planning, housing and climate change officers for information and comment.
71. An all-Member briefing was held on 3 September 2024 with views expressed reflective of the issues identified above.
72. A detailed discussion took place on the draft response at the Local Plan Member Working Group meeting held on the 9 September. General support to the proposed responses was offered by the Working Group, that also provided suggested amendments. These are summarised in an update report that was considered at the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 12 September, and subsequently incorporated into the final version in Appendix 1.
73. The proposed response was also discussed at the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 12 September where overall general support was given. Specific comments were raised around meeting the identified housing need and the use of relevant experts in support of the Local Plan review, as well as what the impact of having a National Park in the District would have on the local plan requirements.



## **Financial and resource implications**

74. The council would benefit from the positive financial implications should the scope for planning fees be widened and fees for householder applications be increased. On the other hand, the NPPF as currently proposed also places increased burdens on the council with regard to reviewing Green Belt, and in potentially contributing to significantly increased levels of development activity with consequential impact on council resources.

## **Legal implications**

75. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations, albeit the proposed reforms being consulted upon will, if carried forward to a final version, have a material impact to the legal framework within which the planning system operates within

## **Risk assessment**

76. As the report and recommendations relate to a government consultation a formal risk assessment is not required.

## **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

77. As the report and recommendations relate to a government consultation an environmental impact assessment is not required. As detailed in the report, there are potential direct and indirect environmental, climate and nature implications arising from the proposed changes to the NPPF and planned wider reforms.

## **Equalities implications**

78. As the report and recommendations relate to a government consultation an equalities impact assessment is not required.

## **Crime and disorder implications**

79. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from the recommendations.

## **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

80. There are no implications arising from the recommendations.

## **New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications**

81. The national planning reforms the subject of the current consultation will apply to and affect all part of the district, including that within the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Whilst the government is clear that the protections directly afforded these areas are largely unchanged, the potential increased development pressures on areas close to such areas is material and covered in the proposed response to the consultation. It is expected that the National Park Authority and Cranborne Chase Partnership Board will provide their own responses to the consultation.

### **Portfolio holder endorsement**

82. I have agreed to the recommendations of this report.

**Signed: Derek Tipp**

**Dated: 16 September 2024**

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Proposed NPPF Consultation Response

### **Background Papers:**

[Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system](#)  
[National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation](#)  
[Outcome of the proposed revised method – available on MHCLG website](#)

Date on which notice given of this Decision – 16 September 2024

Last date for call in – 23 September 2024