

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

Consultation closes on 24th September.

Proposed response:

West Monkton Parish Council, an active Parish Council in Somerset that has a Neighbourhood Development Plan in place, would like to make the following comments on the proposed changes to the NPPF:

The amendments to the NPPF are focused on achieving large targets for housing and as a result the rules around where development can take place are proposed to be relaxed.

The significance of Local Development Frameworks including Local Planning Authority Local Plan and in turn Parish / Town Council Neighbourhood Plans, that are based on local evidence and the views of the local community, are being diminished by the proposed changes. The Parish Council is of the view that rather than amending the proposed NPPF to make Local Plans less effective, more funding and power should be given to the Local Planning Authority to ensure that proposed development reflects local need and preserves and enhances the character of the local area. Furthermore the Local Planning Authority should have adequate funding and resource to refuse applications where the proposal doesn't meet the criteria of the Local Plan / Neighbourhood Plan, and where planning approval is granted, the Local Planning Authority should have adequate funding and capacity to enforce planning conditions and S106 agreement obligations. The Local Planning Authority should also be resourced adequately to be proactive in identifying prospective planning sites in liaison with developers to assist achievement of housing targets.

Reference to supporting beauty and placemaking in the proposed NPPF have been removed, removing the requirement for proposals to enhance the beauty of the area and contribute to placemaking. The NPPF instead focuses on the delivery of homes, even if the proposal is of detriment to the character of the area.

Making the proposed changes to the NPPF and it coming into effect so quickly will leave our Local Planning Authority extremely vulnerable to applications being made by Developers on land not currently allocated for development. The Local Planning Authority is not being given sufficient time to update its Local Plan, housing need assessments and 5-year land supply. This will inevitably mean that proposals will be put forward by Developers, quite quickly to build on green belt land, the definition for which has been relaxed in the NPPF, and adversely effect the rural nature of Somerset.

There are a number of sites in West Monkton that have been allocated for employment use, to enhance the economic prosperity of the area. The amendments proposed in the NPPF about the presumption of sustainable development will enable developers to submit housing proposals on those sites rather than them being put to much needed employment use. This amendment will not enable the achievement of sustainable development in the local area.