



The Planning
Inspectorate

PINS NOTE 23/2014

To: All Inspectors (England)

Date of Issue: 23 December 2014

Currency: review at 6 months after issue

Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework – Communities and Local Government Committee Report

Action

1. Inspectors should be aware of the publication of the Communities and Local Government Committee's report on the Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹.
2. Until the government responds and/or takes forward any subsequent changes to national policy or guidance the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance remain extant.

Background

3. The Communities and Local Government Committee was closely involved in the development of the NPPF having, at the request of Greg Clark MP, conducted an inquiry into the draft NPPF. Two years on from the launch of the NPPF, the Committee considered it timely to establish how effectively the NPPF was operating in practice and whether any changes needed to be made. Details of the terms of reference for the inquiry may be found [here](#). The Committee had three areas it wished to examine:

- planning for housing
- town centres
- planning for energy infrastructure (excluding energy infrastructure covered by National Policy Statements)

¹ [Communities and Local Government Committee: Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework – Fourth Report of Session 2014-15](#)

4. The committee reported that the evidence to the inquiry highlighted a number of concerns which pointed to the need to strengthen, rather than withdraw the NPPF and has suggested a number of changes that should be made both to the NPPF itself and the way it is applied.

5. The report provides a summary of these suggested changes which are:

- To take steps to ensure that the planning system delivers the sustainable development promised in the NPPF. To ensure that the same weight is given to the environmental and social as to the economic dimension; that permission is only given to development if accompanied by the infrastructure necessary to support it; and that the planning system places due emphasis on the natural environment.
- That all councils must move more quickly to get an adopted plan in place: this will give communities increased protection against the threat of undesirable development. The committee has called for a statutory requirement for councils to get local plans adopted within three years of legislation in this regard being enacted.
- The committee reports that provisions in the NPPF relating to viability of housing land are leading to inappropriate development and loopholes must be closed. There must also be clearer guidance about how housing need should be assessed and local planning authorities should be encouraged to review their green belts as part of the local planning process.
- Changes should be made to ensure the NPPF gives greater protection to town centres: The report calls for an end to permitted development that allows shops and buildings used for financial and professional services to become homes without requiring express planning permission.

6. The committee is supportive of neighbourhood plans and commends those communities who have got, or are working to get, a neighbourhood plan adopted. The report states that “nothing could do more to undermine confidence in neighbourhood planning than for a view to pervade that neighbourhood plans are being ignored in planning decisions”.

7. Please contact XXXX if you have any queries on this Note.

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Acting Chief Planning Inspector