

**Committee: Individual Cabinet Member Decision Making – Planning Services**

**Date of meeting: 27 April 2018**

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|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>                    | Consultation on the draft revised National Planning Policy Framework |
| <b>Lead Officer:</b>               | Suzanne Parkes, Planning Policy Manager                              |
| <b>Portfolio Holder:</b>           | Councillor Karen Randolph – Planning Services                        |
| <b>Link to Council Priorities:</b> | P4   |
| <b>Exempt information:</b>         | None   |
| <b>Delegated status:</b>           | For resolution   |
| <b>Key decision:</b>               | No   |

### **Executive Summary:**

The Government has published its draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for consultation (March 2018) The deadline for responses is 10 May 2018. It is proposed that the final version of the revised NPPF will be published in the Summer 2018.

**Recommendation: that the Council’s response to the draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (as set out in Appendix A to this report) be approved and submitted to the Ministry Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 10 May 2018.**

### **Report:**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Government has published its draft revised NPPF for consultation. The draft revisions build upon and seek to implement into national policy the details of other recent publications / consultations including the Housing White Paper (February 2017) and ‘Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places’. Members will recall that the Council made strong representations to these previous consultations raising concerns in relation to the proposed approach towards delivering growth, calculating housing numbers and the lack of consideration of key constrains including Green Belt. The draft revisions build on the previous proposals and, as such, many of the Council’s earlier concerns remain.
- 1.2 In developing the draft revisions, the Government has also sought to incorporate changes to planning policy implemented through Written Ministerial Statements since the publication of the NPPF in 2012, the effect of case law on the interpretation of planning policy since 2012 and, improvements to the text to increase coherence and reduce duplication.

#### **2. Proposals**

- 2.1 The key thrust of the draft revisions is to underpin the delivery of the Government’s ambition to increase the supply and delivery of new homes

and resolve the national housing crisis. Critically, the changes to be introduced by the draft revised NPPF seek to ensure that more land is brought forward for development, the use of the land is optimised (primarily for new homes) and that permissions are turned into homes as quickly as possible.

2.2 As set out above, the draft revised NPPF incorporates policy proposals on which the Government has previously consulted and some additional new proposals on which this document is consulting. The key changes and proposals are:

- A new document structure of 17 topic-based chapters reflecting the Government's priorities – with a focus upon resolving the housing crisis;
- Clarification on the presumption in favour of Sustainable Development and amendments to the tests of soundness for Local Plans;
- A new standard methodology for the calculation of local housing need;
- A wider definition of affordable housing and a focus on affordable home ownership products;
- Promotion of the role of small sites and their exclusion from affordable housing contributions;
- Introduction of the Housing Delivery Test;
- Greater emphasis on effective and optimal use of land, particularly brownfield land;
- Promotion of minimum density policies, upward extensions, conversions and reallocation of sites to deliver housing;
- Requirements to set out a clear local design vision and expectations;
- Continued strong protection for the Green Belt and clarification of the exceptional circumstances in which releases or development may occur;
- Strengthened protection for ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats; and
- New plan-led approach to viability, seeking standardisation and transparency.

2.3 Whilst the proposed changes to the draft revised NPPF remain the subject of public consultation (until 10 May 2018), the Government has stated that they will be publishing the final version of the new NPPF during 'Summer 2018'. The Council must therefore take this into account when considering the likely impacts that the new NPPF will have upon the emerging Local Plan.

### **3. Next Steps**

3.1 Subject to the agreement of the Portfolio Holder, the Council's response will be submitted by 10 May 2018. After the Council's standard call-in period, the response will be placed on the Council's website for information.

3.2 Whilst the proposed changes to the draft revised NPPF remain the subject of public consultation (until 10 May 2018), the Government has stated that they will be publishing the final version of the new NPPF during 'Summer 2018'.

The Council must therefore take this into account when considering the likely impacts that the new NPPF will have upon the emerging Local Plan.

**Financial and staffing implications:**

The new requirement for Local Plan authorities to review plan policies every five years has the potential to have an impact on resources. The Planning Policy Team will need to be appropriately resourced to respond.

The possibility of a new cycle for producing Local Plans (every five years) will require regular examinations in public and will have financial implications in terms of the general cost of the process. The Council will need to carefully monitor the proposed changes and how their implementation impacts upon the plan making process – responding accordingly as our budget allows.

The introduction of the Housing Delivery Test and the potential consequences of 'insufficient' delivery will require the Council to take a greater and more involved role in monitoring housing completions and build out rates beyond the current local plan annual monitoring regime. Depending upon performance it is possible that our local plans could very quickly become out-of-date and require early reviews. This may require that Officers are more flexible in resourcing this critical area of work.

**Environmental implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Legal implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Equality Implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Risk Management Implications:**

The proposed revisions to the NPPF are the subject of consultation and the deadline for responses is 10 May 2018. The Government intends to publish the final version of the revised NPPF during Summer 2018. The short period between the close of the consultation and intended publication of the final version is a likely indicator that they do not anticipate making many changes. On that basis, the Council should expect the final version of the new NPPF to be very similar to the current draft.

The draft revisions place emphasis on producing Local Plans that deliver and the Council will be accountable for delivering the resultant housing need figures. It is highly likely that the resultant figures will be significantly greater than what has recently been achieved before within the Borough and which the Council has recently consulted on. The consequence of substantial under delivery against an authority's housing requirement as determined through the HDT could result in the Plan being considered out of date and the application of the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. This could feasibly occur within its first few years of adoption.

The current evidence demonstrates that it will be extremely challenging for the Council to meet its Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) figure. If the

Council cannot meet all need then it will need to demonstrate to an Inspector how it has tried to do the best to meet as much need as sustainability possible. This will require the Council to robustly demonstrate that it is optimising our land supply and have assessed all reasonable, available, deliverable and developable housing options.

**Community Safety Implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Background Papers:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Enclosures/Appendices:**

Appendix A: Elmbridge Borough Council's Response to the Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2018) Consultation

**Contact details:**

Suzanne Parkes – Planning Policy Manager - 01372 474810

[sparkes@elmbridge.gov.uk](mailto:sparkes@elmbridge.gov.uk)