



Article of: Head of Planning and Regulatory Services

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Anne Fennell

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**SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON LEVELLING-UP AND
REGENERATION BILL: REFORMS TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY / CHANGES
TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

1.1 To inform Members that Officers of the Council have responded to the Government consultation on proposed planning reforms and the proposed update to the National Planning Policy Framework, which ended on March 2nd 2023. The response is attached as Appendix 1.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Between December 22nd 2022 and March 2nd 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) sought views on how they might develop new national planning policy to support their wider objectives. The consultation is now closed but the documents which were consulted on are still available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy>

2.2 The consultation sought view on the proposed approach to updating the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the proposals to prepare National Development Management Policies, ways in which the Government might develop policy to support levelling up, and how national planning policy is currently accessed by users.

2.3 The introduction to the consultation stated that "the Government is committed to levelling up across the country, building more homes to increase home ownership, empowering communities to make better places, restoring local pride and regenerating towns and cities". This comes on the back of the February 2022 Levelling Up White Paper which emphasised the Government's commitment to making improvements to the planning system to achieve this, by giving communities a stronger say over where homes are built and what they look like. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill which is currently before Parliament is seen as the means to put the foundations in place for delivering this by creating a plan-led system with a stronger voice for communities. The Government believe that if they are to remake the planning system, changes are needed to national policy and guidance, regulations and wider support for local authorities, communities and applicants.

2.4 The NPPF was introduced in 2012 to consolidate the Government's planning policies for England. It sets out national policy objectives, providing a framework within which Local Plans are produced, and clear national policies to be taken into account when determining planning applications and other planning decisions. The Council have a statutory duty to have regard to these national policies, and the Framework is drafted with the expectation that plans will be consistent with the policies contained within it. It is also a 'material consideration in decision-taking. The consultation sets out specific changes that the Government propose to immediately make to the Framework (subject to and following the consultation). Specifically, this includes changes to:

- make clear how housing figures should be derived and applied so that communities can respond to local circumstances;
- address issues in the operation of the housing delivery and land supply tests;
- tackle problems of slow build out;
- encourage local planning authorities to support the role of community-led groups in delivering affordable housing on exception sites;
- set clearer expectations around planning for older peoples' housing;
- promote more beautiful homes, including through gentle density;
- make sure that food security considerations are factored into planning decisions that affect farm land;
- and enable new methods for demonstrating local support for onshore wind development.

3.0 ACTION TO BE NOTED

3.1 As the consultation proposed relatively significant changes to the current planning system which will have implications for how planning applications will be determined and the approach to local plan-making, it was important that the Council responded, particularly in their capacity as the local planning authority. However, the short timescale for a response, the sheer length of the documents and number of issues raised did not allow time for consideration by Cabinet. Instead, a response was prepared by Officers for the consideration and agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, under delegated powers which can be used in this circumstance.

- 3.2 When submitting comments, it was made clear that it was an Officer response and was not intended to represent the views of the Council as a whole. Members were sent an email on 7th February 2023 to make them aware of the consultation and the proposed approach and which invited them to submit comments directly in their own capacity if they so wished.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this article and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this article.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This Article is for information only and makes no recommendations. It therefore does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers.

7.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct implications for health and wellbeing arising from this article.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

This report does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Response to DLUHC from Officers of West Lancashire Borough Council on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy and National Planning Policy Framework change