

PC 419/22

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING – 21 MARCH 2023

PLANNING REFORMS AND GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Report by: Steve Avery, Executive Director

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a brief report to update Members on the recent consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and to make Members aware of two further consultations that are currently open.

2. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill and reforms to national planning policy consultation

- 2.1 On 22 December 2022 the Government launched a consultation on proposed changes and reform to national planning policy (including changes to the NPPF). There are a number of proposed changes covering housing numbers, plan-making, beauty, increasing build out and climate change among others. Key points to highlight include:
- A marked shift in the Government position's on housing numbers – the Government has sought to further clarify that housing need figures are a starting point and a guide for plan-making (rather than mandatory).
 - From November 2024, the new planning system will set a mandatory timetable for plan-making of 30 months once the five year date is reached. Plans that are submitted by 30 June 2025 will be examined under the current broad planning system. Plans submitted after that date will be prepared and examined under the new plan-making system that is intended to go live in 2024. A transition arrangement proposed to extend the time in which plans can be considered 'in date' begins from November 2024 and this has implications for our own adopted Local Plan (August 2019).
 - Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are proposed to be abolished, and will be phased out with SPDs no longer having status at the point LPAs each require their new Plan to be in place as per the new timetable for plan-making. It is proposed to replace SPDs with 'Supplementary Plans' which would be required to go through independent examination and a more formal preparation process.
 - High level principles and broad scope for the suite of National Development Management Policies (NDMP) is provided. Consultation on draft policies will follow. It is indicated that there will be scope for some locally specific policies. The Government's proposals state that should the new National Development Management Policies be published after an adopted local plan and there is a policy conflict, the national policies would be afforded greater weight in decision-making.
 - Proposed changes to support more on-shore wind energy generation.
- 2.2 The consultation closed earlier this month and a joint response was prepared and submitted by National Parks England (NPE), a copy which is attached as Annex 1. The summary of the NPE response appears on the front of the document:

- The revisions to national planning policy – including the proposed new National Development Management Policies - and the approach to addressing housing needs provide an opportunity to incorporate the relevant sections in the National Parks Circular (2010), already cross-referenced in the current NPPF and NPPG.
- National Parks should be specifically highlighted as a factor in the revised Framework which justify a local housing needs assessment to be undertaken.
- Revisions to national Green Belt policy should not result in development pressures being pushed into nationally protected landscapes (including National Parks).
- The revisions to the NPPF should differentiate between small-scale local wind turbines and larger scale on-shore wind farms.
- The proposed elevation of national policy to the same legal status as the statutory 'development plan' is a fundamental change to the existing Plan-led system. For this change to be justified, National Development Management Policies should be subject to full consultation and scrutiny, with the process for producing and reviewing National Development Management Policies set out in legislation.
- There is justification for elevating the existing NPPF policy wording on National Parks into the National Development Management Policies. It will be important that national policies can be supplemented by more detailed local policies prepared by the respective National Park Authorities through their Local Plans.

2.3 The consultation was undertaken alongside progressing the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB). The key dates moving toward implementation of the Government's proposed planning reforms are as follows:

- Spring 2023 – it is intended that the proposed changes to the NPPF are to be implemented around April 2023.
- Later in 2023 – The consultation also suggests a more comprehensive review of the NPPF in due course, consultation on the suite of National Development Management Policies, and a new Infrastructure Levy that will occur later this year.
- November 2024 – When it is intended for the new planning system will go live.

2.4 These further proposed reforms taking place over the next 18 months illustrate the state of flux in the national planning system and the challenges in progressing plan-reviews and other areas of planning work. In terms of the review of local plans, we have written to the Government to highlight concerns with their proposed transitional arrangements to the new planning system and similar points were also highlighted in the consultation response from the Royal Town Planning Institute – see [here](#).

3. Increasing planning fees and performance

- 3.1 [Increasing planning fees and performance: technical consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – published on 28 February, this consultation seeks views on proposals to increase planning fees and to improve the performance of local planning authorities. Views are invited on proposals to:

- increase planning fees by 35% for major applications and 25% for all other applications
- additional fees for bespoke or 'fast track' services
- make an annual inflation-related adjustment to planning fees
- ring-fence additional fees income
- double fees for retrospective applications
- remove the 'free-go' for repeat applications
- introduce a prior approval fee for the permitted development right allowing the Crown to develop sites within the perimeter of a closed defence site
- build planning capacity and capability within local authorities, including challenges in recruitment and retention, and how these can be addressed
- reduce the Planning Guarantee from 26 weeks to 16 weeks for non-major applications
- improve the quality of the local authority planning service by monitoring more performance measures.

3.2 The consultation closes on 25 April 2023 and it is proposed that a suitable response be delegated to officers, welcoming the increase in planning application fees (something that both local planning authorities and users of the planning service have consistently called for). We do though need to take a closer look at any additional resource implications arising from these proposals.

4. Extending permitted development rights

4.1 [Permitted development rights: supporting temporary recreational campsites, renewable energy and film-making consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – also published on 28 February, this consultation seeks views on:

- A new permitted development right to support temporary recreational campsites.
- Changes to the existing permitted development rights for solar equipment and a new permitted development right for solar canopies.
- Amendment to the existing permitted development right which allows local authorities to undertake certain development. This change would allow bodies to undertake the work on behalf of the local authority.
- Changes to the existing permitted development right allowing for the temporary use of buildings or land for film-making purposes.

4.2 The key interest in this consultation is the proposal to introduce a new PD right to allow the temporary placement of up to 30 tents at any one time on land for up to 60 days a year and for moveable structures on the land related to the campsite use, such as portable toilets. National Parks are not excluded from this proposed new PD right. Officers are also currently assessing the implications for the Authority's Article 4 Direction for pop up campsites should this new PD right be introduced.

4.3 It is likely that NPE will be responding to this consultation and this Authority will also want to respond given the prevalence of campsites in the New Forest National Park and the associated impacts on the designated sites. It is proposed to bring a paper to your next meeting in April so that Members can agree the response before the consultation closes on 25 April.

Recommendation:

Members to note the report.

Contact:

Steve Avery, Executive Director
steve.avery@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment:

No impacts have been identified.