

# **Response to the Government's consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance**

## **Summary**

The Government is undertaking a consultation in respect of proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance. The consultation began on 5<sup>th</sup> March and ends on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

The consultation sets out proposed changes across a range of subject areas. Of particular note are proposals to strengthen the role of joint working in the plan making process, to clarify the circumstances in which exceptional circumstances may be present to review Green Belt boundaries and to introduce a standard methodology for calculating housing need.

Members are requested to consider the proposed consultation response set out in the letter at Annex 1 of this report as the Borough's formal representations on the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.

## **Portfolio - Regulatory**

**Date Portfolio Holder signed off report – 20 March 2018**

### **Wards Affected**

All

## **Recommendation**

The Executive is asked to RESOLVE that the letter contained in Annex 1 be authorised as Surrey Heath Borough Council's formal representation to the Government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.

### **1. Resource Implications**

1.1 There are no resource implications beyond that provided for within the agreed budget for 2017/18.

### **2. Key Issues**

2.1 On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Government commenced a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Of particular note are proposals to strengthen the role of joint working in the plan making process, to clarify the circumstances in which exceptional circumstances may be present to review Green Belt boundaries and to introduce a standard methodology for calculating housing need. The consultation also introduces the concept of 'Annual Position Statements' as a means to demonstrate a five year housing land

supply. Comments in respect of the proposed changes to the NPPF and NPPG are set out below.

#### *Proposed changes to the NPPF*

- 2.2 Surrey Heath Borough Council welcomes proposed changes to the NPPF which amplify the role of cooperation within the plan making process. Revisions to the 'positively prepared' and 'effective' tests of soundness for Local Plans are particularly well received. These revisions have the potential to enable unmet need and any other strategic matters to be dealt with more effectively as part of the plan making process, however this is dependent upon the NPPF continuing to recognise the value of defining Housing Market Areas, which provide a robust starting point for authorities to undertake meaningful co-operation and ensure that in the first instance, any unmet need arising within a local authority area can be met in the most suitable location.
- 2.3 The Council also welcomes proposed changes to the NPPF to clarify that exceptional circumstances to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries will only exist once all other reasonable options for meeting identified need for development have been fully explored, including undertaking discussions with neighbouring Authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified development needs.
- 2.4 Objections have been raised in respect of proposals which make provision for 'entry level exception sites'. Such sites are expected to incorporate a high proportion of entry level homes for discounted sale or affordable rent on land outside of defined settlements. It is unlikely that entry level homes will constitute an 'in perpetuity' affordable housing product; as such their implementation will undermine adopted spatial strategies for short term benefit only. The proposals may also undermine the delivery of rural exception sites, which will impact detrimentally upon the Council's capacity to provide affordable housing to meet local needs in perpetuity.
- 2.5 Proposals also endeavour to better support the delivery of small sites for housing. Although the Council welcomes these proposals in principal, concern has been raised that some of the mechanisms identified may give rise to delays in the plan making process and could result in sites not being built out to their full potential. Surrey Heath is a constrained Borough and it is essential that the capacity of available, suitable sites are maximised.

#### *Proposed changes to the NPPG*

- 2.6 In respect of proposed changes to the NPPG, the Council welcomes the proposed standard methodology for calculating housing need, notwithstanding concerns expressed in respect of the absence of a requirement to identify the housing market area in which a local authority is situated. The Council has raised concerns that a number of

the proposed changes, including the introduction of 'Annual Position Statements' as a means to demonstrate a five year housing land supply, are unclear and are likely to add a new layer of complexity to planning practice. In the absence of clear, concise guidance, it is likely that the proposals would place a significant burden on Local Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate, with the potential to delay, and in some cases, undermine the plan-making process.

### **3. Options**

3.1 The options are to:

- (i) Agree the response contained in Annex 1 as Surrey Heath Borough Council's formal representation to the Government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.
- (ii.) To agree the response contained in Annex 1 as Surrey Heath Borough Council's formal representation to the Government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance with any additional comments from Executive.
- (iii.) To not agree the response.

### **4. Proposals**

4.1 That the report and consultation response are noted.

### **5. Supporting Information**

5.1 The Government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework>

### **6. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities**

6.1 The proposals may affect the Council's ability to deliver Objectives 1 and 2 of the Corporate Plan (*making Surrey Heath an even better place where people are happy to live and to support and promote our local economy so that people can work and do business across Surrey Heath* respectively) by adjusting the national policy and guidance which provides the framework for the production of the Surrey Heath Local Plan.

### **7. Policy Framework**

7.1 The existing policy framework is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The consultation relates to changes to both the NPPF and NPPG.

<b>Annexes</b>	Annex 1: Response to the Government's proposed changes to the NPPF and NPPG
<b>Background Papers</b>	
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### Consultations, Implications and Issues Addressed

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Consulted</b>
Revenue	✓	<u>12/03/2018</u>
Capital		
Human Resources		
Asset Management		
IT		
<b>Other Issues</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Consulted</b>
Corporate Objectives & Key Priorities	✓	<u>12/03/2018</u>
Policy Framework		
Legal	✓	<u>12/03/2018</u>
Governance		
Sustainability	✓	<u>12/03/2018</u>
Risk Management		
Equalities Impact Assessment		
Community Safety		
Human Rights		
Consultation	✓	<u>12/03/2018</u>
P R & Marketing	✓	<u>12/03/2018</u>

**Review Date:**

**Version: 1**