




National
Trust

PLANNING FOR PEOPLE



We believe in
growth – but
not at all costs.

www.planningforpeople.org.uk



Planning is for people

The National Trust has championed a strong, effective land use planning system in England since the 1920s. It is the means by which our beautiful and productive countryside, heritage and landscapes are protected; and by which we ensure there are good, vibrant villages, towns and cities in which to live and work.

The planning system can and should change. Indeed it has evolved significantly over the decades in response to new needs. But at its heart is the principle of balance. Planning exists to serve the economy, society and the environment. That principle should underpin any reform.

We support the simplification and streamlining of the planning system, and share an ambition for greater engagement by local people in the decisions that most affect them. We support the provision of land for housing, for developments leading to new jobs, and for new infrastructure. We also, clearly, support a continuing commitment to protecting our environment in its broadest sense.

What we question is the present draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In our view it will not deliver these goals. By being weighted so heavily in the interests of economic development, the NPPF does not deliver the truly sustainable approach that it promises. By failing adequately to define clearly how decisions are to be made, it opens up the prospect of greater uncertainty and delay for participants in the planning system. And by insisting on a default 'yes' to development, it takes power even further away from local people.

Here we set out our positive vision for planning and the changes we believe are necessary to the draft NPPF.

Planning and the National Trust

We are a conservation charity of over 3.9 million members. We were created more than 115 years ago to care for special places, for ever and for everyone. To achieve these goals we look after a quarter of a million hectares of land, over 700 miles of coastline, several hundred historic houses and their gardens and parks, and many thousands of vernacular buildings. Many millions visit and enjoy our places, while over 60,000 people volunteer with us on a regular basis.

We are, therefore, a major business as well as a charity and sometimes too a developer, building visitor facilities, converting buildings for business use, and providing housing to support our conservation work. In fact, over the last ten years the National Trust has built or had consent for over 900 homes to be sold on a commercial basis, as well as a number of affordable homes for rent.

As a participant in the planning system, we recognise the importance of a fair and balanced decision-making process. We support a plan-led system as a means to provide certainty and confidence, and a way to deliver 'smart' growth: good development in the right place which we can be confident meets long term needs. We support streamlining the planning system where appropriate to make it easier to participate in, and we support the shift towards a greater local say.

The Stamford Brook development is sustainable housing on a commercial scale developed by the National Trust working with Redrow Homes and Bryant Homes. It is built on 3,000 acres of land that once formed part of the Dunham Massey Estate in Cheshire. Stamford Brook was designed through a triple-bottom-line approach, balancing environmental, community and financial needs.

On the Lizard in Cornwall and at Studland in Dorset, the National Trust has supported the development of new affordable houses for local people to rent.

When the National Trust develops sites we:

- Adhere to the policies in the relevant local plan.
- Deliver energy efficiency and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
- Build in harmony with the local environment, built and natural.
- Involve the local community throughout the process.

Our vision for planning

Planning exists to create great places for people to live and work, both today and tomorrow. Effective planning should promote good development, which contributes to prosperity and growth. It should not be used merely as a tool to drive short-term economic gain.

A robust planning system guides good, necessary development to the right places. It ensures that poorly designed developments and those in the wrong place don't get built. It protects the things that matter to us all, from open spaces, green fields and productive agricultural land to much-loved historic city centres, towns and villages. And a robust system should deliver the new homes, shops and services that communities want, where they want them.

At the same time, effective planning should minimise the burdens of bureaucracy, cost and delay. It should provide certainty about the ground rules by which decisions are made. But it should ensure freedom within this framework, so that individuals, companies and communities can exercise choice for the long-term in a balanced way.

Any new planning system should therefore:

- **Be balanced**, establishing a framework for integrating economic, environmental and social concerns.
- **Safeguard the public's interest** by recognising the value of and protecting the countryside, heritage and nature.
- **Start from what people value about their place**, and their aspirations for its future.
- **Give people a genuine say**, and not undermine localism by insisting on an automatic 'yes' as the response to development proposals.
- **Work in practice**, by using clear and consistent definitions so that everyone has the same understanding of the rules and we do not see planning by appeal become the norm.

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Long-term thinking and a balanced system

1 *The Planning system should not be used as a blunt tool to 'pro-actively drive development'. Its guiding principle has been to act in the public interest, balancing the needs of people and the environment with those of the economy. The NPPF should be rewritten throughout to make it a balanced document.*

2 *Planning should promote genuinely sustainable development. In particular, the presumption in favour of sustainable development should only apply when plans or proposals can be shown to deliver multiple positive outcomes for people and the environment as well as economic growth.*

3 *Clause 130 of the Localism Bill should be removed. We are opposed in principle to a provision that privileges financial inducements within the decision making process.*

Integrating necessary development with the protection of the countryside, heritage and the natural environment

4 *The NPPF should act in everyone's interest to safeguard the things we value. There should be no weakening of protection for the designated natural and the historic environment. The countryside has value for its own sake. Development of the best and most versatile agricultural land should be strongly resisted on grounds of food security and landscape protection.*

5 *The NPPF should adopt an explicit 'brownfield first' approach. It should be clear that developers should seek to use previously developed land before green field sites are considered. There should be exemptions for brownfield sites of the highest public interest, including for nature and heritage.*

6 *The NPPF should provide a five year supply of land for housing but the requirement to identify an additional 20 per cent of land should be dropped. Delivering confidently a five year housing land supply will be a big step forward. Requiring more than this will put greater pressure on green fields, whether protected or not. The NPPF should promote the provision of affordable housing.*

A genuine say

7 *The default 'yes' and requirement to grant permission where a plan is out-of-date, indeterminate or silent is irresponsible and must be removed. Local authorities should have the ability to refuse development proposals where they would cause harm.*

8 *Localism should be real: communities should be given genuine power to shape their area for the better. It should be clear that neighbourhoods can opt for less development as well as more than in the local plan, and that local authorities who wish to set high standards for development are free to do so through the use of supplementary guidance.*

9 *It is fundamentally wrong that neighbourhood plans should be led and funded by business. It should be a core principle of the reforms that any plans whether at neighbourhood or local authority level should be genuinely community led.*

10 *There should be a limited right of appeal for communities, in circumstances where consent is granted for development that is inconsistent with the plan. This should be guaranteed by the Localism Bill.*

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