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Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee  
Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

19 September 2024  
20 September 2024

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities – Councillor N Akhtar

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of City Services and Commercial

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title: Consultation Response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework**

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**Is this a key decision?**

No - This report is a response to a government consultation document titled “National Planning Policy Framework”. The decision regarding the Policy Framework will be taken by Government

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**Executive Summary:**

This report outlines the consultation currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and seeks approval to submit a proposed response to that consultation.

Due to the short timescales involved and the complexity of the consultation document, the City Council’s proposed response document is still being finalised. A copy of the draft response will be circulated and published prior to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee meeting on 19 September 2024 and a presentation on the consultation document and the proposed response will be provided at the meeting.

**Recommendations:**

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider the report, and the proposed consultation response and make any comments/recommendations to Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities for consideration at the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities is recommended to:

1. Consider any comments/recommendations from Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee following their consideration of this matter at their meeting on 19 September 2024.
2. Recommend that the Leader of the Council approves the draft consultation response attached at Appendix II in accordance with the Constitution and
3. Delegate the submission of the approved consultation response to the Strategic Lead for Planning before the deadline on 24 September 2024.

**List of Appendices:**

Appendix I – National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation

Appendix II - Draft Response to Consultation – To be circulated and published prior to the meeting.

**Background papers:**

Consultation document - Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system (online only)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system#scope-of-consultation>

**Other useful documents:**

None.

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

Yes. This report will be considered by Scrutiny Coordination Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> September

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No.

**Will this report go to Council?**

No.

**Report title: Consultation Response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework**

**1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 Government is consulting on a series of proposed changes to national planning policy. This includes specific changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and broader reforms relating to planning fees, local plan intervention and the thresholds used for determining applications under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime.
- 1.2 The consultation runs from 30 July – 24 September 2024 and the Government has indicated that a new version of the NPPF will be published before the end of 2024. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the proposed changes highlighting where possible, any implications for Coventry and to seek approval to the submission of a proposed response to that consultation.
- 1.3 The proposed draft response will be circulated and published prior to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 19 September to afford Members the opportunity to consider that consultation in advance of their meeting. In addition, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee will receive a presentation on the consultation and proposed response at the meeting.
- 1.4 Paragraph 6 of Part 2 A of the Constitution sets out how the Council will respond to Government Consultation papers. Due to the short timescale and complexity, it has not been possible to submit a report to either Council or Cabinet. Where time does not permit the submission of a report to Council or Cabinet, the Constitution requires that responses shall be agreed by the Leader, the appropriate Cabinet Member and the appropriate Director following consultation with the appropriate Shadow Cabinet Member. In this case, the appropriate Cabinet Member has the authority, at their discretion, to refer a consultation to the relevant Scrutiny Board In light of the importance and high profile of the consultation process,
- 1.5 With the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities and the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, given the importance and high profile of this consultation and in order to ensure transparency and afford cross party consideration of the response, it has been agreed that Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities will formally consider the proposed response prior to recommending the response to the Leader of the Council, in accordance with the Constitution. The Shadow Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities is invited to attend the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 19 September and the Cabinet Member meeting on 20 September 2024.
- 1.6 Since December 2022, the City Council has been undertaking a Local Plan Review in order to update the 2017 Local Plan. To this end, a Regulation 18 (Issues and Options) consultation was undertaken between July and September 2023. Led by the Local Plan Advisory Panel, officers are now at an advanced

stage of the Local Plan Review process and a Regulation 19 (draft revised Local Plan) consultation is scheduled to commence before the end of 2024.

## **1.7 Proposed Changes – Summary of Key Points**

- 1.8 The following provides a summary of the Government's proposed changes to the NPPF. It does not provide an exhaustive list of every proposal and instead focusses on the issues that are considered the most important for Coventry.
- 1.9 In summary, the consultation proposals have the following significant implications for the City:
- I. Councils at the Regulation 18 stage of their Local Plan (such as Coventry) will have to prepare their plans against the revised NPPF unless a Regulation 19 consultation can commence within one month of the revised NPPF being published. In that scenario, the emerging Local Plan would be prepared in accordance with the current NPPF (December 2023).
  - II. The requirement for social rented housing from new developments would be increased, and First Homes would be removed as an affordable housing tenure. The consultation also seeks views on the most appropriate way to promote high percentage social rent / affordable housing developments. Delivering more affordable housing, particularly social rented housing, is a Council priority and these proposed changes are welcomed.
  - III. The consultation proposals include various changes to national Green Belt policies, including introducing the concept of 'Grey Belt' land within the Green Belt.
  - IV. The Government proposes changes to the national method of determining housing need for individual local authorities. The number of homes the Government calculates to be needed in the city through the "standard method" is 1,527 homes per year or 30,540 over a twenty-year Local Plan period. This contrasts with the current methodology which suggests 3,081 homes per year or 61,620 over twenty years. These proposed changes align with the Council's position and are strongly welcomed.
  - V. The housing need figure would become a mandatory starting point for determining the Local Plan housing requirement for all local authorities and for calculating 5 Year Land Supply. If the proposed approach is implemented, it is significantly more likely that Coventry will be able to demonstrate at least 5 years of future supply. Government anticipate that some local authorities will be unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply as a result, although the Government says, "This is necessary to ensure that we urgently address the issue of chronic undersupply of land that has underpinned the housing crisis and support our drive to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years."
  - VI. It is proposed to strengthen expectations that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas such as Coventry.

- VII. Brownfield (previously developed) land “within settlements” would become “acceptable in principle” for homes and other development needs.
- VIII. Local planning authorities and other relevant public bodies will continue to be under a duty to cooperate with each other and new mechanisms would be introduced to strengthen cross-boundary strategic planning. These mechanisms have not yet been specified but the principle of a return to effective strategic planning is welcomed.
- IX. The proposals include increased support for onshore renewable energy schemes and the updated NPPF would direct decision-makers to give “significant weight” to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation, and proposals contributing to meeting a net zero future. These proposals would strengthen the Council’s ability to deliver the objectives of the One Coventry Plan and are welcomed.
- X. Government proposes to clarify that “significant weight” should be placed on the importance of facilitating new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering development proposals.
- XI. Within the consultation, Government has confirmed it will not implement the Infrastructure Levy as introduced in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Further proposals on the use of S106 agreements to deliver infrastructure are expected next year.
- XII. The proposed changes continue Government support for effective design coding to be prepared by local planning authorities. Government proposes the preparation of localised design codes, masterplans and guides “for areas of most change and most potential”. This approach will be particularly helpful for Coventry and is welcomed.
- XIII. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced the ability of Government to produce National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), which are set to take precedence over local and neighbourhood. The current consultation does not include these policies but it does confirm the Government’s intention to do so from summer 2025.

## **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

### **2.1 Do Nothing (Not Recommended)**

The Council could choose not to respond to this consultation. However, given the significance of the proposed changes it is recommended that it is important to make an appropriate representation to the consultation.

### **2.2 Respond to the Government Consultation (Recommended)**

In light of the significance of the proposed changes, it would be sensible for the Council to provide its view on the consultation proposals as well as any key concerns the Council may have so that this can be considered as part of the Government’s final decision.

### **3 Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 Consultation with Scrutiny Coordination Committee will take place on 19 September and the outcomes of that consultation will be reported at the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities meeting on 20 September before finally being agreed with the Leader of the Council.

### **4 Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 The consultation closes on 24<sup>th</sup> September and subject to approval, the response will be submitted by the deadline.

### **5 Comments from the Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance**

#### **5.1 Financial implications**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

#### **5.2 Legal implications**

There are no direct legal implication at this stage.

Going forward, the main legal implications will relate to the ongoing Local Plan Review and the impact of the proposed changes on the determination of planning applications and related matters.

### **6 Other implications**

#### **6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?**

It is considered that the proposed changes to the NPPF will assist in the delivery against the following priorities of the One Coventry Plan:

- Increasing the economic prosperity of the city and region;
- Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities;
- Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change

#### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There are no risks associated with this report

#### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

No direct impact.

#### **6.4 Equalities / EIA**

A full Equality and Impact Assessment (ECA) will be undertaken as part of the Local Plan Review process as the main vehicle for the delivery of national

planning policy. As part of that analysis, the Council will have due regard to its public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act (2010).

**6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

There are no implications identified of the submission or consultation response, however the consultation references the climate change agenda, and CCC Climate Change Team have contributed to the response.

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

There are no implications identified.

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