

Agenda Item 2: Motion

Motion proposed by Councillor Oliver Cooper and seconded by Councillor Vicky Edwards

As this motion would have the effect of rescinding a decision of Council of 10 December 2024 (agenda item 11b, Local Development Scheme), in accordance with Council procedure rule 22, the motion has been supported by Councillors Oliver Cooper, Vicky Edwards, Debbie Morris, Philip Hearn, Andrea Fraser, Chris Alley, Ciaran Reed, Lisa Hudson, Mike Sims and Reena Ranger.

The motion is for consideration under Council procedure rule 11.6, to be noted by Council and referred to a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee and accordingly is not for Council to debate.

“Three Rivers District Council notes that the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has unprecedented consequences for Three Rivers’ Green Belt.

Most importantly, the new NPPF requires councils to revise Green Belt boundaries and makes housebuilding targets mandatory for Local Plans submitted under it.

By contrast, under the previous NPPF (dated 20th December 2023), there was no requirement to review the Green Belt boundary and housebuilding targets were not mandatory. This allowed councils to propose significantly less building on the Green Belt than implied by the Standard Method: as Three Rivers proposed until 10th December.

The new NPPF, published on 12th December 2024, differs from the previous draft dated 30th July 2024 in several crucial ways. **These requires and allows a change of approach by Three Rivers.**

- The new Standard Method has been increased to 839 dwellings a year. That is 1,750 dwellings higher than the July draft NPPF over the 18-year plan period and 3,600 higher than the previous Standard Method over the plan period. It is three times as high as the Low Growth Option, requiring over 10,000 more homes over the Local Plan period than had been proposed.
- Paragraph 146 of the new NPPF makes it more difficult than the July 2024 draft did for councils to argue that they should not review Green Belt boundaries. It now says that the Green Belt must be considered for allocation unless it would (new words emphasised) “fundamentally undermine the purposes (*taken together*) of the *remaining* Green Belt”. As a result, fundamentally undermining only one purpose is not sufficient to exempt sites, as Three Rivers had presumed.
- Paragraph 234(b) of the new NPPF allows councils to opt to have Local Plans examined under the previous NPPF provided they are submitted for Examination before 12th March 2025, not 12th January 2025 as Three Rivers had presumed.

In light of this, Three Rivers both must and can change its approach to avoid the new Local Plan being examined under the revised NPPF.

Three Rivers District Council therefore resolves to:

1. Conduct a Regulation 19 consultation on the Low Growth Option draft Local Plan over a period of six weeks to close before 28th February 2025, and to delegate to officers authority to decide the details including dates for which that opens, but in any event to open at the earliest date practicable;
2. Instruct and delegate authority to officers to conduct all works necessary to:
 - a. conduct the Regulation 19 consultation above; and
 - b. submit the Local Plan to examination by 12th March 2025 and to comply with paragraph 234(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework, so that it is examined under the previous National Planning Policy Framework dated 20th December 2023;
3. Amend the Local Development Scheme to reflect the above, namely to conduct a Regulation 19 consultation in January-February 2025 and submit to examination by 12th March 2025;
4. Instruct and delegate authority to officers to complete compilation of the evidence base and any further work required for the Low Growth Option to be examined;
5. Delegate to officers authority to procure external advice or other work to complete the above; and
6. Approve a supplement to the budget of a maximum of £250,000 in the financial year 2024-25 to complete the above, to be removed from unearmarked reserves, and for all unspent monies to be returned to unearmarked reserves.

Proposed by Cllr Oliver Cooper
Seconded by Cllr Vicky Edwards”