

Amended Motion as Agreed by Extraordinary Council, 7 January 2025

Please note that this amended motion will be included within the minutes of the meeting, which will be considered at Council on 25 February 2025.

Three Rivers District Council notes that the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as did the previous NPPF has consequences for Three Rivers' Green Belt.

The new Standard Method has been increased to 839 dwellings a year from 739. That is 13,312 over the 16-year plan period. It is three times as high as the Low Growth Option, requiring around 9,000 more homes over the Local Plan period than had been proposed.

- Paragraph 146 of the new NPPF says "Exceptional circumstances in this context include, but are not limited to, instances where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means. If that is the case, authorities should review Green Belt boundaries in accordance with the policies in this Framework and propose alterations to meet these needs in full, unless the review provides clear evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan." Officers have confirmed that this will require more evidence work to be more robust than the previous review but consider this remains still the best way to protect our Green Belt by looking at suitable sites that are then fed into the green belt review as only then would we know the impact on the remaining green belt thus enabling the removal of sites that undermine the remaining green belt.

- Whilst 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. However, the clear officer and legal advice in light of the NPPF changes a proposal to submit by the 12th March is not feasible and unachievable and would incur unbudgeted expenditure. The proposed Low Growth option has now, due to changes to site requirements to meet planning policies and the withdrawal of sites with reduced numbers, means the number proposed would be circa 4,000. In addition, the new requirement to find 41 gypsy pitches and 6 for travelling show people, would mean that a Regulation 19 submission with all the legally required paperwork would not be able to be submitted, along with the 6 weeks statutory consultation, and to be a legally sound plan as required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. That would mean that the plan would be found as 'unsound' at examination making the Council liable for additional costs and HM Government intervention and a likely requirement to produce a plan within 18 months fully meeting the new NPPF.

- Council also notes that the Three Rivers Joint Residents' Association and the Can't Replace Green Space group both support the Council's current position and that it is impractical to now submit the low growth Regulation 19 and that the agreed way forward at the Council meeting on 10th December as detailed below is best approach to protecting our Green Belt.

Three Rivers District Council therefore resolves to:

1. Confirm the decision of the December 10th Council Meeting.

2. Instruct and delegate authority to officers to conduct all works necessary to work on the best way to protect Three Rivers Green Belt, and thus produce a plan with a lower number than required under the new NPPF, and to undertake the following updated work, and any other, work in support of that namely :

- Green Belt review
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) work
- Sustainability assessment
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Whole Plan Viability Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study update
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Urban Capacity Study Update
- New call for sites
- Gypsy and Traveller sites

3. Confirm the current Local Development Scheme but that officers now work towards a timescale to amend this so that the Council might be in a position to have a Regulation 19 for public consultation no later than 7th November 2025 so to avoid the Christmas break.

4. Instruct and delegate authority to officers to complete compilation of the evidence base and any further work required;

5. Delegate to officers' authority to procure external advice or other work to complete the above; and

6. Note that the administration provided an additional £200,000 in the current year's budget for the extra Local Plan work and will budget for a similar or larger figure in next year's budget in February, as required, as well as bidding for the £70,000 towards its Green Belt review for which it is eligible under the agreed Local Development Scheme but would not be if a regulation 19 was submitted.

7. As soon as possible, set a target growth figure that can be justified by the draft evidence and have a reasonable chance of being adopted.

8. To establish a detailed programme for delivery of this important work.

- Establish clear deadlines for individual studies to ensure they are ready before November 2025
- Develop and publish a detailed timeline for completing each step of the plan.
- Set up a series of Local plan sub committees to review and monitor the programme, and set dates for agreement at P&R and Full council meetings