

WESTON AND CREWE GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MEETING: 12 FEBRUARY 2026

Proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

This is a weighty and complex tome – 125 pages along with the accompanying consultation 123 pages!

The first NPPF was issued by Central Government in 2012. The latest draft is the sixth revision and the first fundamental restructuring of the document since that date and is far reaching in its content.

It's currently out for consultation (deadline 10th March) and contains revised Plan Making and National Decision-Making Policies rolled into one document.

In the context of Plan Making, it applies to the new style Local Plans activated under the recently approved Planning and Infrastructure Act.

The New NPPF is likely to come into force sometime in the Spring following the current consultation process. According to the National Planning Press consideration is already being given to softening some of the policies.

The whole idea is to speed up and simplify the planning process and to encourage more housebuilding to meet the recently adopted increased housing target of 1.5 million new homes over the term of this Parliament.

This document is far too complex and technical to try to explain in detail

The main thrust in terms of general principles is set out below.

- **Achieving Sustainable Development.** Development proposals **within settlement boundaries** should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be outweighed by any adverse effects – e.g. an unacceptable impact in relation to the safeguarding of land for a particular use. **It relaxes development proposals for land outside settlement boundaries.** These include where a Council can't demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply: development within walking distance of a modal railway station even if the land is within the Green Belt: major development for storage and distribution services: the introduction of the GREY BELT – this relates to certain areas of Green Belt which don't play a meaningful role in safeguarding and separating existing built up areas.
- **Strategic Planning – Spatial Development Strategies.** This basically overarches the Local Plan and sets out the broad planning strategies to be followed in the preparation of Local Plans – a positive vision for future growth over a period of 20years. This is already underway for the newly formed combined authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Warrington.
- **Local Plans.** These should provide a spatial strategy for a period of no less than 15 years and be prepared within 30 months. Preparation work for the new Cheshire East Local Plan post 2030 is already underway. Realistically it's likely to take much longer than this.
- **Neighbourhood Plans.**
 - It confirms that Neighbourhood Plans still form a part of the Statutory Development Plan. They must be focused and support national housing and development goals and can't undermine the delivery of the overall Local Plan.
 - Increased weight will be given to Local Design Guides and Codes. The proposed framework seems to echo that adopted by AECOM for the Weston & Crewe Green Neighbourhood Plan. This is contained within updated Central Government Guidance announced for new homes.
 - No change to the withdrawal of Central Government funding for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Weston & Crewe Green have already benefited here to the tune of £15,000 (£5800 grant from Locality plus the likely cost of the AECOM Design Guide) for our latest Neighbourhood Plan. The fact that Central Government have now withdrawn grant aid will certainly prevent many of the smaller parish councils from ever achieving Neighbourhood Plan status. This is

an extremely serious issue, and Central Government should be urged to reintroduce grant aid.

Given the advanced stage of preparation of the Weston & Crewe Green Neighbourhood Plan it will be decided within the old rules.

We've now been given and accepted the name of the Independent Examiner – Patrick Whitehead. He is extremely experienced carried out the scrutiny of the modification of the Weston & Basford Neighbourhood Plan some 2 years ago. The Draft Plan will presumably be forwarded to him by Cheshire East once they've completed their Regulation 16 Consultation later this month. He will then proceed to examine the Plan and confirm whether a Referendum should take place.

Whilst this process has some way to go, to ensure that the new Neighbourhood Plan will carry adequate weight in the decision-making process, an intensive dialogue will be required at a senior level with Cheshire East to ensure that officers give weight to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies once adopted and take account of these policies when drafting the new Local Plan.

The key messages for Weston & Crewe Green Parish Council resulting from the new draft NPPF.

- The power and decision-making process is being shifted upwards away from the local and Neighbourhood Plan Level. There is no detailed guidance on the importance of local consultation and how this is to be implemented. This will be particularly relevant in relation to both the proposed Spatial Development Strategy and the New Local Plan.
- The Planning Role for the Parish Council will be even more demanding and uncertain. We'll need to be extremely vigilant in relation to any development changes locally and engage actively in appropriate consultation as we try to do now. Speed in responding to any development will be of the essence – particularly in relation to the new Local Plan.
- The Council will need to maintain an ongoing dialogue with Cheshire East at the highest level to ensure compatibility in relation to the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Planning process.

Suggested comments of Weston & Crewe Green Parish Council to Central Government on the draft NPPF:

These are currently being formulated in accordance with the guidelines set out in the consultation associated with the draft NPPF and will be forwarded to members if the Parish Council in due course.

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AGENDA ITEM 11 FINANCE

Meeting Date 12 February 2026

Payments approved in accordance with Financial Regulations / Payment Schedule since last meeting FOR INFORMATION						
Payee	Reason	Gross £	VAT £	Net £	Budget	Within Budget
Unity Trust	Fees	6.00		6.00	Banking	Yes
Mark Robinson	Salary and Office Allowance (Jan)	1,319.40		1,194.40	Clerk's Salary	Yes
				125.00	Clerk's Office Allowance	Yes
Scottish Power	Electricity	221.62	10.55	211.07	Electricity	Yes
Payments FOR AUTHORISATION						
David Williamson	Lengthsman (Nov/Dec)	990.00		990.00	Lengthsman	Yes
Cheshire East Council	Footpath Maintenance	1,000.00		1,000.00	CIL monies	Yes