



**Housing Policy Working Party
 Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 23rd
 March 2016 at 2pm in the Members Room**

Present

Councillors	Tony Boto (Chair)	TB
	Rupert Reichhold (Vice-Chair)	RR
	Helen Harrison	HH
	Steven North	SN

Also in attendance

Executive Director	Sharn Matthews	SM
Housing Services Officer	Louise Bagley	LB
Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager	Carol Conway	CC
Environment Protection Manager	Karen Pell	KP
Environmental Health Protection Manager	Jenny Walker	JW
Housing Enabling Officer	Aine Cooper	AC
Homes Direct Representative	Beverley Tebbutt	BT
Planning Policy and Conservation Manager	Richard Palmer	RP

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	Apologies	
	Apologies were received from Cllr Peacock, Cllr Lewis, and Paul Bland	
2.	Minutes of the meeting of 17th February 2016	
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The minutes were approved and signed by the chairman 	

3.	Matters Arising	
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beverley Tebbutt from Homes Direct was welcomed. • A training session on the council's statutory obligations in respect of allocations and homelessness is being held on Monday 18th April for members of the Housing Policy Working Party • The visit to the opening of the Castle Court development on 20th April was discussed 	
4.	Housing and Planning Bill and NPPF update	
4.1	<p>RP advised that the full NPPF consultation response was taken to Planning Policy Committee (PPC) on 22nd February. The PPC were largely supportive of the response and some key points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining an element of perpetuity regarding the provision of starter homes • Concerns over the restriction of the first time buyer age limit • Registered brownfield sites have previously been recorded under different methodologies • Safeguarding the best employment land against loss to residential development • Concerns over delivering rented/shared ownership properties if a greater number of starter homes are built on exception sites <p>The council's response to the consultation including comments by the HPWP and approved by the PPC is attached as Appendix 1.</p>	
4.2	<p>A workshop on the DCLG Technical Consultation on the Implementation of Planning Changes is being held on Tuesday 29th March at 2pm, followed by a briefing for Development Management Committee members on Wednesday 30th March. Appendix 1 of agenda item 7 of the PPC on 4th April provides an analysis of the proposed changes to which responses are invited.</p>	
	RP left the meeting at 2.30pm	
5.	Welfare Reform Update	
5.1	<p>The Autumn Statement and Spending Review 2015 introduced a cap on the amount of rent to be covered by housing benefit in the social rented sector for all new tenancies from 1st April 2016, with housing benefit entitlement changing from 1st April 2018.</p> <p>This will impact in ENC in respect of any social tenancies above the LHA cap and it is believed will also affect people of pension age. In addition single people under 35 (currently</p>	

	under 25) will have their housing benefit limited to the Shared Accommodation Rate which means they will only be eligible to claim rent at a single room rate. Details of the changes are attached at appendix 2	
6.	Housing Allocations Policy Review – Medical Awards and Accessible Properties	
6.1	CC presented a discussion paper and explained that the Medical and Social Needs Panels decide whether to award priority cards or enhance an applicants banding. A priority card is initially awarded for six months, and is given when there is an urgent medical or social need to move. There are also exceptions to the allocations policy with regard to social needs.	
6.2	The proposed additional wording to the medical assessment form would ensure that moving would aid and improve the medical needs of the applicant. Applicant declarations are being strengthened to ensure that the applicant's information can be shared as necessary and that fraud is minimised. It was proposed to alter the wording on page 7 of the medical assessment form to read <i>'Any person who knowingly withholds pertinent facts about their housing application or seeks to gain an award through giving untrue information may be suspended, for a specific period, from the Housing Register. Further legal action may be taken if appropriate.'</i>	
6.3	It is proposed to discontinue 'double banding' and by signing the form, an applicant states that they understand that cannot bid on an unsuitable property	
6.4	Currently about twelve cases are not being met through the standard housing allocations policy and it is proposed that they are dealt with individually. Recently in a few cases, private occupational therapy assessments have been commissioned to quickly ascertain if properties on new developments are suitable for adaptations to meet the needs of individual applicants. In the future the aim is to have more joint working between Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing teams with more of a case conference approach.	
6.5	Concerns were raised regarding the possible perception that applicants had bypassed the system should they be dealt with outside the housing allocations policy. It was agreed that the section in the policy which enabled the council to withhold properties from the Choice Based Lettings Scheme should be strengthened to ensure transparency.	Housing Strategy Team
6.6	There was discussion, given the limitations of the DFG budget around whether applicants should move or remain in	

	<p>a property where the required works were possible and whether adaptations for an older person should be undertaken in family housing if they would later need to be removed.</p> <p>It was agreed that the balance between quality of life and the cost of moving versus the cost of adapting a property should be taken into consideration. Decisions should be made on a case by case basis, taking the needs of the applicant as well as the practicality and financial impact into account.</p>	
6.7	<p>JW suggested linking the DFG policy into the Housing Allocations Policy. Consider if the DFG is necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable. If not, then there is potential for an element of DFG funding to be used to facilitate a move into an appropriate property.</p>	
6.8	<p>LB suggested some additions to the policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Providers of bungalows to allow people on high rate PIP to move into the property that would usually only be for an older person. • Priority cards (medical) should be time limited and reviewed to check if the banding should continue. Band 1 – reviewed at 9 months Band 2 – reviewed at 12 months <p>Members agreed that priority can be extended if there were no properties available that met the needs of the applicant</p>	
	<p>Cllr North and Beverley Tebbutt left the meeting at 3.30pm</p>	
7.	Potential for a Local Housing Company	
7.1	<p>KP explained that there are two properties in Duck Street, Rushden that Riverside Housing Association are seeking to dispose of. They were originally sold to Riverside by the council. If Riverside sells them before January 2019 they must offer them back to the council for the value of the debt on them. Riverside Housing is waiting to hear if ENC wish to purchase the properties back. They are also exploring other options such as leasing the properties to another housing association until they could sell them on the open market.</p>	
7.2	<p>The properties have been recently tenanted, so it is hoped that they will be in satisfactory condition but the exact level of works is not yet known. The properties could either be sold on or let out, potentially as shared supported housing.</p>	
7.3	<p>Working Party members were supportive in principle of the purchase of the properties but more information was needed and it was agreed that a report should be taken to the 25th April meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration. KP asked that Members provide feedback on the draft report. If P&R wished to proceed with the purchase, a final decision could be made</p>	<p>KP/CC Working Party</p>

	by Council in July.	
8.	Any Other Business	
8.1	It was agreed that Members will receive reports for meetings electronically and should contact CC should they require a hard copy.	
8.2	Due to a recent internal audit on working parties, risks now need to be added to the agenda for each meeting. CC to set up a discussion of the risk register and agenda with Sharn before the next meeting	CC
9.	Next Meeting	
	<p>The next meeting will be held on Weds 20th April 2pm in the Kasen Room.</p> <p>The Castle Court opening will take place before the meeting on 20th April at 12 noon, at Chancery Lane, Thrapston.</p> <p>The allocations training will take place on Monday, 18th April at 1.30 pm in the Members Room.</p> <p>Further working party meeting dates were confirmed: Weds 18th May at 1.30 pm Weds 15th June at 2 pm Weds 13th July at 2 pm</p>	
	The meeting concluded at 4pm	

Planning Policy Committee – 22 February 2016

National Planning Policy Framework- Consultation on Proposed Amendments

Purpose of report

The report recommends a response to the current Government consultation concerning proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.0	Background
1.1	The Government has launched a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The consultation covers a wide remit of planning issues. The NPPF sets out the Government's national approach to planning policy and how policy should be applied in relation to plan making and determining planning applications in helping to achieve sustainable development.
1.2	An initial report was considered by the Housing Policy Working Party at its meeting on 20 th January, which focused on that part of the consultation impacting specifically in respect of affordable housing provision and starter homes. That report provided for an earlier opportunity for Member comments to be fed into this report to the Planning Policy Committee. It also assisted the officer response, which will need to be forwarded to the Government in advance of the Planning Policy Committee meeting, as the consultation period closes on 22 nd February
1.3	The consultation covers a number of separate areas of policy in respect of proposed changes to national planning policy, those relevant to East Northamptonshire are set out as follows; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadening the definition of affordable housing • Supporting the delivery of starter homes • Increasing the density of development around commuter hubs, to increase the efficient use of land • Supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites, and addressing the delivery of housing agreed in local plans • Transitional arrangements are also proposed for the changes set out in the consultation document
1.4	The Housing Policy Working Party report focussed on responses in respect of the first two bullet points listed above, this report will provide a more comprehensive response to the impact on planning policy, taking into account those responses arising through the Working Party
1.5	The Government's consultation proposes a series of questions which are shaped to direct responses to the consultation; the proposed responses therefore reflect the relevant questions posed, which are set out in this report.
2.0	The NPPF consultation on Proposed Changes

	Broadening the definition of affordable housing to include starter homes
	<i>1) Do you have any comments or suggestions about the proposal to amend the definition of affordable housing in national planning policy to include a wider range of low cost homes?</i>
	<i>2) Do you have any views on the implications of the proposed change to the definition of affordable housing on people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010? What evidence do you have on this matter?</i>
2.1	Local Planning Authorities are required to plan proactively to meet all housing needs arising within their area; this includes both market and affordable housing
2.2	As well as social and affordable rented housing the current definition of affordable housing provision includes low cost home ownership models, such as shared ownership (provided through Housing Associations where the buyer purchases a share of the homes and rents the remainder) and shared equity (which provides a loan acting as part of the deposit, with the buyer taking out a mortgage for the remainder).
2.3	The Government indicates that the current definition limits the availability of home ownership options for households whose needs are not met by the market, and proposes to amend the definition to include a wider range of products. This could include “discount market sales” (starter homes) and new models of rent to buy housing. These changes would allow local councils to secure starter homes as part of their negotiations on affordable housing schemes.
2.4	In addition to the above the Government, through the draft Housing and Planning Bill, is introducing a statutory duty on local councils to promote the delivery of starter homes, with a requirement that a percentage of starter homes be delivered on all suitable reasonably sized housing developments. Starter homes are intended to be provided for low cost home ownership for first time buyers under the age of 40 only and to be sold at a minimum of 20% discount of the open market price, and with the price, after the discount, being no more than £250,000 (outside London). After 5 years ownership there are no restrictions proposed on the resale of the property purchased
2.5	This Council welcomes the Government’s aim to increase home ownership at a time when the ability of first time buyers to get on the housing ladder has been curtailed by rising house prices. The Council appreciates that there is limited funding available for affordable housing and that it therefore makes economic as well as social sense to assist those whose income is sufficient to sustain a mortgage to do so. Not only will this help those who aspire to home ownership, and can afford to buy a property, it will also free up social housing currently occupied by this group. It will also reduce the pressures on the council housing needs register, by meeting the needs of those who are able to purchase a home with some assistance, and thereby assisting those who cannot afford to buy, by reducing demand for affordable and privately rented homes. The principle of achieving home ownership through introducing a wider range of market product to suit individual circumstances is also to be welcomed
2.6	However, there are concerns that amending the definition of affordable homes to include starter homes and products such as rent to buy will have an adverse effect on the delivery of other affordable tenures such as affordable rent and shared ownership. This is particularly likely as part of S106 agreements where starter homes will form part of the total affordable housing negotiated with the developer. Such agreements are subject to viability issues and traditional forms of affordable housing may be

	'squeezed out', especially if proportions for starter homes are set by the Government and not negotiated on a site by site basis.
2.7	Both affordable rent and shared ownership tenures enable those who cannot afford to buy to access decent, secure accommodation and as such prevent homelessness and reduce the financial burden on councils to provide expensive temporary accommodation for homeless families and to pay high rates of housing benefit on privately rented properties.
2.8	Affordable rented homes are the entry point to the housing market for many households. Some, particularly the more vulnerable members of society, such as older people and the disabled, will remain in these homes. Younger working people may move on to purchase, or may exercise the Right to Buy their existing home – which will be facilitated by the new RTB regulations.
2.9	Shared ownership is also perceived as a valuable resource, particularly in areas where local property prices are high. It enables those on relatively low incomes to gain a stake in their property, which they can increase over time using the stair casing provisions. Receipts from the RTB and the purchase of shares are recycled into further affordable housing, thereby ensuring the subsidy to provide the homes is either retained within the home or used to provide additional homes.
2.10	<p>Currently, affordable housing is provided in “perpetuity” this allows for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative housing provision. The consultation however, proposes that starter homes would have no such ‘perpetuity’ or ‘recycling’ arrangements except in exceptional circumstances. This means that only the first purchaser of the property would benefit from any subsidy provided, thereby reducing the numbers of properties which could be delivered over time. It is recommended that further consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how this subsidy could be recycled to assist in further local provision, as is the case with the current Help to Buy arrangements • how affordable rented and shared ownership can continue to be delivered for the more vulnerable and less financially stable.
2.11	Consideration should be given to placing greater emphasis on the delivery of starter homes; however, any future approach should avoid reducing the existing supply of affordable housing provision. Starter home provision could therefore focus on bringing land into the planning system to complement the Government’s proposals rather than being introduced at the expense of rented tenures that can provide for those occupants that are unable to access home ownership, unless property values are significantly reduced. The risk that affordable rent and shared ownership provision would no longer provide an option if (replaced entirely by starter homes) would exclude sectors of the community from the housing market, without any guarantee of increasing overall housing supply. It would also reduce the ability of plan making to create locally sustainable and balanced communities, particularly, as stated above, in areas where local house prices are high.
2.12	Councils are also required to provide evidence to ensure that local plans meet the full, objectively assessed housing needs for market and affordable housing. This includes different groups within the community. It is not clear how the proposal to redefine the approach to affordable housing, through starter homes, would assist in meeting the needs of that sector of the community, unable to access the housing market, even

	through a proposed discount.
	Equality Implications
2.13	The current proposal restricts the starter home initiative to people under 40. The Government's Equalities Statement justifies this in that younger people have been unable to access home ownership in more recent years due to increasing house prices.
2.14	In specifying an age limit to purchase a starter home this discriminates against those over 40 with a genuine housing need. Potential purchasers over 40 may only recently be earning sufficient income to access home ownership. It is therefore considered that there should be no age limit and that the starter homes initiative should be available to all first time buyers. Even so, the issue of those wishing to downsize or purchase a property due to changing family circumstances is not clearly addressed through the revised definition.
2.15	The equalities statement, published by Central Government (as an attachment to the consultation) recognises that some groups will not benefit from the proposals, but justifies the proposals on the basis that the homes would not have been delivered otherwise. Whilst the Government's position on this is understandable and accepted for starter homes delivered on sites which would not otherwise have been granted planning permission, it is likely to have an impact on particular groups for sites where starter homes are part of a S106 agreement and replace other affordable tenures. The needs of women, single parents and disabled persons, (where particularly associated with lower incomes), will still to be met through other forms of affordable housing.
3.0	Increasing residential density around commuter hubs
	<p>3) Do you agree with the Government's definition of commuter hub? If not what changes do you consider are required?</p> <p>4) Do you agree that the Government should not introduce a minimum level of residential densities in national policy for areas around commuter hubs?</p>
3.1	<p>The Government wishes to encourage development around new and existing commuter hubs, which it defines as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rail, tube or tram public transport interchanges where people can board or alight to continue their journey by other public transport (including buses) walking or cycling; and • a place that has, or could have in the future, a frequent (every 15 minute) service
3.2	Transport hubs can provide suitable locations for higher density development and it appears sensible to encourage development to such areas, particularly if they are more sustainable in terms of providing different transport modes of choice. This approach clearly won't apply to all areas. Within East Northants, the mix of urban and rural areas appears to provide limited opportunity to meet the requirements laid out in the proposals in terms of what constitutes a transport hub.
3.3	Setting a minimum density is considered to be overly prescriptive and would not

	necessarily take into account local character. However, the proposal is generally supported.
4.0	New Settlements
	<i>6) Do you consider that national planning policy should provide greater policy support for new settlements in meeting development needs?</i>
4.1	The proposed changes to the NPPF provide for a more supportive approach to new settlements, within local plans. In principal the provision of a more supportive approach to new settlement provision is welcomed. This Council have been working in partnership with adjoining Councils through the Joint Core Strategy to seek the inclusion of a new settlement on land at Deenethorpe. This type of proposals can provide an option for sustainable development.
4.2	Whilst it is important that, where appropriate, new settlements are considered as an option to meet the development needs of an area, it would however be inappropriate if national planning policy indicated that they were preferred to other means of meeting development needs, such as urban extensions to existing towns. This is a matter that should be considered through the local planning process, taking heed of the current thrust of the NPPF objectives, and the local sustainability issues. it is important to ensure that local housing need can be delivered through a portfolio of sites which can best meet local requirements.
5.0	Supporting Housing Development on brownfield sites and small sites
	<i>7) Do you consider that it would be beneficial to strengthen policy on development of brownfield land for housing? If not, why not and are there any unintended impacts that we should take into account?</i>
	<i>8) Do you consider that it would be beneficial to strengthen policy on development of small sites for housing? If not, why not? How could the change impact on the calculation of the local planning authorities' five-year land supply?</i>
	<i>9) Do you agree with the Government proposal to define a small site as a site of less than 10 units? If not, what other definition do you consider is appropriate, and why?</i>
	<i>10) Do you consider that national planning policy should set out that local planning authorities should put in place a specific positive local policy for assessing applications for development on small sites not allocated in the Local Plan?</i>
5.1	The Government wishes to give more support to housing development on brownfield land and on small sites, to assist the role of brownfield land in providing for future development needs the consultation indicates that proposals on brownfield sites are to benefit from a presumption in favour of housing development, subject to certain caveats, for example high environmental implications. The Housing and Planning Bill complements this through setting out an intention for councils to publish and maintain registers of brownfield sites suitable for housing.
5.2	Sites of less than 10 units are seen as playing an important role in helping to meet

	local housing demand, much of which, nationally, is sited on brownfield land. Land providing sites of this nature can deliver a range of economic and social benefits, sustaining local growth and making more effective use of land
5.3	There is support in principle on the priority to develop brownfield land. As indicated above, this Council has provided support for the policy of developing a settlement at Deenethorpe on brownfield land through the Joint Core Strategy.
5.4	Generally, whilst the re-use of brownfield land within cities, towns and larger villages for housing is likely to deliver sustainable development, this may not be the case in rural areas, particularly in smaller villages and the countryside, where such dwellings may be isolated and remote from facilities. Any strengthening of national policy needs to include a caveat to avoid new, isolated homes being created on brownfield land in more remote rural locations without the necessary infrastructure in place.
5.5	This Council already has local plans that include positive policies to promote the development of non-allocated sites within settlement boundaries for housing, employment and other development to meet the needs for the local area. Any strengthening of national policy to support the development of small sites within settlement boundaries should allow local planning authorities some discretion in how to reflect this aspiration of Government in local policy.
5.6	Proposed changes to national policy should recognise that policies promoting the development of all non-allocated sites within settlement boundaries would also support housing development on small sites. National planning policy should not be amended to support proposals for the development of small sites for housing immediately adjacent to (but outside) settlement boundaries, except where they are exception sites.
5.7	Many local plans also envisage neighbourhood plans having a key role in delivering growth in villages. This approach would be undermined by this proposed change to national planning policy.
5.8	In respect of rural exception sites it is not considered appropriate to allow the release of such sites to meet general housing needs, especially where it can be demonstrated that this need can be met by other policies in the local plan, or through other approaches, such as neighbourhood planning.
5.9	Defining a small site as a site of fewer than 10 units would be consistent with the statutory definition of 'major development'.
5.10	In response to Q10 it is not considered necessary to put in place a specific policy as other material considerations as well as local plan policy would be used to assess the merits of a windfall application.
6.0	Ensuring Housing Delivery on allocated sites
	<p><i>11) We would welcome your views on how best to implement the housing delivery test, and in particular:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you consider should be the baseline against which to monitor delivery of new housing?</i> • <i>What should constitute significant under-delivery, and over what time period?</i> • <i>What steps do you think should be taken in response to significant under-delivery?</i> • <i>How do you see this approach working when the housing policies in the Local Plan are not up-to-date?</i>

6.1	The NPPF (para 49) already requires that a local planning authority's policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites cannot be demonstrated. In such circumstances the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' in national planning policy (para 14) applies in decision-taking. Where councils are 'persistent under-deliverers' of housing supply there is the potential to increase the 'buffer' from 5% to 20% in the five-year supply calculation.
6.2	Whilst this Council can demonstrate a 5 year housing supply through a proactive approach to housing development it is recognised that there are a number of different reasons that can contribute to under delivery on a national basis. It is considered that councils should be able to respond to address housing shortfalls as suggested in the consultation, however, instead of addressing current difficulties in bringing forward the right sites for development, the proposals could contribute to releasing additional land for development, which may not be appropriate in sustainability terms
7.0	Supporting the delivery of starter homes on unviable and underused commercial and employment land
	<p><i>13) What evidence would you suggest could be used to justify retention of land for commercial or similar use? Should there be a fixed time limit on land retention for commercial use?</i></p> <p><i>14). Do you consider that the starter homes exception site policy should be extended to unviable or underused retail, leisure and non-residential institutional brownfield land?</i></p> <p><i>15). Do you support the proposal to strengthen the starter homes exception site policy?</i></p> <p><i>16). Should starter homes form a significant element of any housing component within mixed use developments and converted unlet commercial units?</i></p>
7.1	The consultation is proposing to amend the NPPF (para 22) to make clear that unviable or underused employment land should be released unless there is significant and compelling evidence to justify why such land should be retained for employment use. The Government is therefore interested as to the level and type of evidence which would justify retention of employment and commercial land.
7.2	In addition the Government is considering the merits of requiring local planning authorities to adopt a policy with a clear limit on the length of time that commercial or employment land should be protected if unused and no clear evidence of it coming forward.
7.3	The Government also proposes to widen the scope of the current exception site policy for starter homes to incorporate other forms of unviable or underused brownfield land, such as land which was previously in use for retail, leisure and non-residential institutional uses. This would require greater clarity about the scope of the exception site policy for planning applicants and local planning authorities, and is considered by Government to have the potential to release more land for starter homes.

7.4	It is considered essential that any test to justify the retention of employment land needs to have regard to longer term commercial and employment needs to ensure that there is no unnecessary loss of employment that would not be easily replaced. Further, in providing for future sustainability, employment and similar uses should be seen as complementary to housing provision, not instead of.
7.5	It would not be appropriate for national planning policy to require starter homes to form a significant element of any housing component of a mixed use scheme. Costs of remediation vary and may limit the amount of affordable housing that can be provided, often it is required to negotiate a reduced level of provision in order to make a scheme viable. Any change to national planning policy, needs to be sufficiently flexible to ensure that a requirement to deliver starter homes within a mixed use development would not make the scheme unviable.
8.0	Encouraging starter homes in rural areas
	<i>17) Should rural exception sites be used to deliver starter homes in rural areas? If so, should local planning authorities have the flexibility to require local connection tests?</i>
8.1	The current definition of rural exception sites indicates that they are 'small sites' used for affordable housing in perpetuity, where 'small numbers' of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion. To be consistent with this approach it is considered that 'small numbers' of starter homes should only be allowed on rural exception sites where they enable the delivery of other affordable homes. Two such schemes currently being delivered locally are providing both affordable and starter homes for local people.
8.2	If greater numbers of starter homes are allowed on exception sites, the mechanism for delivering rented and shared ownership homes will be lost. Parish councils will be unlikely to support the schemes and landowners may be unwilling to sell their land below market value, particularly if the homes can be sold on the open market after 5 years.
8.3	It is disappointing that a requirement for the perpetuity of new starter homes is excluded within rural areas, particularly where there are issues with affordability and a lack of available land for development. Consideration should be given to limiting the value of re-sales to a percentage of market value.
8.4	In order to gain the support of the local community and the parish council for development on exception sites, it is essential that local connection criteria can be imposed, both on initial sales and any re-sales.
8.5	The consultation also proposes that starter homes on rural exception sites should be subject to the same minimum time limits on resale (5 years) as other starter homes to ensure local people are able to maximise the value of the home and establish themselves in the housing market. It is considered that local planning authorities should be able require the ability to apply criteria, such as a local connection to an area.

9.0	Transitional Arrangements
9.1	The Government has considered the need for transitional arrangements to introduce the changes proposed. The definition of affordable housing provision will require councils to consider the impact it has on adopted local plan policies in the context of relevant evidence. The Planning Inspectorate has introduced fast track partial reviews of local plans with this in mind to help local planning authorities in making amendments to policies. A transitional arrangement of up to a year is envisaged; however the consultation is asking whether this is an appropriate timescale.
9.2	The proposed change to the definition of affordable housing if implemented will require councils to review their local plan policies; therefore the transitional arrangements would be welcomed. This would provide the opportunity to understand and reflect the proposed changes, particularly as this has the impact of reflecting changes at a number of plan levels (ie Joint Core Strategy, Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans).
10.0	Equality and Diversity
10.1	An equalities statement has been published by the Government to accompany the consultation proposals.
11.0	Legal Implications
11.1	This report relates to Government consultation on proposed changes to the NPPF. Any implications arising will depend on the final amendments to the NPPF.
12.0	Risk Management
12.1	There are no significant risks arising at this stage of the consultation process. Final outcomes from the consultation will need further assessment when announced.
13.0	Financial Implications
13.1	There are no financial implications arising from the report.
14.0	Corporate Outcomes
14.1	It is considered that the proposals will help deliver the following corporate outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Quality of Life – Sustainable – High quality built environment • Effective Management
15.0	Recommendation
15.1	The Committee is recommended to: <p>(1) Approve the officer response to the public consultation on the proposed changes to national planning policy.</p> <p>(Reason - To provide a response to national consultation which impacts on implementation of planning policy objectives).</p>

Legal	Power: National Planning Policy Framework
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Other considerations:					
Background Papers:					
Person Originating Report: Richard Palmer – rpalmer@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk – 01832 742142					
Date: 09-Feb-2016					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)

Briefing Note

Introduction of Local Allowance caps in the Social Rented Sector.

It was announced in the Autumn Statement and Spending Review 2015 that there will be a cap on the amount of rent that Housing Benefit will cover in the social rented sector to the relevant Local Housing Allowance for new tenancies signed on or after 1 April 2016 (for supported housing this will be 1 April 2017) with Housing Benefit entitlement changing from **1 April 2018** onwards. This includes the shared accommodation rate for single people aged under 35 years.

There is currently a review underway regarding supported accommodation hence the reason the policy for this cohort has been deferred for 12 months.

The Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy (aka bedroom tax) will continue to apply for working age tenants but only the highest deduction from either the relevant Local Housing Allowance cap or the RSRS will apply. In addition, the exemptions similar to those that currently apply to the Shared Accommodation Rate in the private rented sector will be replicated for those in the social rented sector e.g. in receipt of the severe disability premium or a care leaver.

The changes mean that from 1 April 2016 (for supported housing 1 April 2017) social landlords have a duty to inform all tenants who sign a new tenancy agreement from this date of the above change. This includes those tenants who renew their tenancies from this date, as well as those who move home or who are new tenants. These tenants may not be receiving Housing Benefit, or the housing element of Universal Credit at this time, but they need to be aware that on signing the new tenancy agreement it may mean their Housing Benefit of the housing element of Universal Credit may be capped from 1 April 2018.

A 'model' letter has been created by the DWP and sent to social landlords for them to use when notifying tenants of the changes (attached).

The Reduction of Spare Room Subsidy does not apply to pensioners however the changes detailed above **will** apply to **both** those of working and pensionable age.

Local Allowance rates from 1 April 2016

Localities	Peterborough	Northants Central
Shared	£57.15	£52.24
1 Bedroom	£92.05	£82.40
2 Bedroom	£115.07	£105.94
3 Bedroom	£132.32	£123.58

4 Bedroom	£168.41	£164.79
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(Annex A to letter)

MODEL LETTER FOR LANDLORDS TO SEND

The Housing Benefit [or housing element of Universal Credit] that you receive in the future is changing

I am writing to you because from 1 April 2018, the way Housing Benefit [or the housing element of Universal Credit] is calculated will be changing.

What does it mean for me?

If you have signed a new or renewed tenancy from **1 April 2016 [1 April 2017 for supported accommodation tenancies]** onwards, the amount of Housing Benefit [or the Housing element of Universal Credit] that you may receive from 1 April 2018 could be restricted.

This is because if you rent from a local authority, a registered housing association or other registered social landlord the amount of Housing Benefit [or the housing element of Universal Credit] you will receive will be capped to the relevant Local Housing Allowance rate for your household size that currently applies to private sector tenants. The Local Housing Allowance rates for your area can be found at <http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/Search.aspx>

If you are under 35 years old and do not have any dependent children living with you, your eligible rent will be capped to a shared accommodation rate even if you do not share your home with anyone else. The rate for your area can be found at <http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/Search.aspx>

Will I also have to pay for any spare rooms?

If you are of working age and have one or more extra bedrooms, your rent and any service charges used in the assessment of your Housing Benefit [or the housing element of Universal Credit] is already capped.

If the difference between your rent and the relevant Local Housing Allowance rate for your household is higher than the reduction for under-occupied bedrooms, only the cap will apply. Similarly, if the reduction for under-occupied bedrooms is higher than the relevant Local Housing Allowance rate for your household, only the reduction for under-occupied bedrooms will apply.

If you are of pension age, you will not receive a reduction in the rent used to assess your Housing Benefit for any under-occupied bedrooms but your

rent will be capped to the relevant Local Housing Allowance rate for your household.

Please note – in all cases, you will only receive one reduction.

What do I need to do now?

If you sign a new tenancy or renew a tenancy after 1 April 2016 [1 April 2017 for supported accommodation] you will need to think about whether the rent you pay in the social sector is higher than that allowed for private rented sector tenants.

In particular, if you are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit on or after 1 April 2018, you will need to consider how you will afford any shortfall in your rent. The website links above will help you to determine whether your rent is above the Local Housing Allowance rates for your area.

If you are unsure if this applies to you, please contact us or your local authority.