

PLANNING REFORM AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS

The Government is reforming the planning process to speed up the development process and to make it easier to build and deliver housing and major infrastructure. Three areas of change will impact local councils:

❖ PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Decisions on planning applications must follow national policy. National policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and related guidance.

The Government is consulting about a major overhaul of the NPPF. The new Framework will, for the first time, include policies for determining planning applications. Up until now it has been for local planning councils to set out these policies.

In addition, the Government in the future will restrict what can be considered by committee and instead more planning applications will be decided by officers in accordance with the NPPF and local plans.

❖ LOCAL PLANS

Later this year new regulations will require local plans to be prepared more quickly. Currently the process is slow, typically taking seven years and Government has set a target of 30 months for plan preparation. This will be achieved by reducing the content of the plans (as planning application policies will be in the new NPPF) and cutting down on supporting evidence each Council must prepare.

In addition, there will be a requirement for a new level of plan known as a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The Strategy will be prepared at regional, or county level and will set out broad locations for growth.

❖ National Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) (e.g. reservoirs, solar farms and energy pylons)

The changes include removing or reducing the amount of consultation, especially before a planning application is prepared. National guidance will also be reviewed and updated every 5 years and the opportunity for legal challenge will be limited.

❖ SUPPORT

All Parish and Town Councils will be affected by these changes. SALC aims to arrange online briefings with expert planners so that all our members are equipped to engage effectively.

Please look out for the invitations to attend the briefings and consider any questions you may have.