

LOUGHBOROUGH SOUTH WEST ACTION GROUP (SWAG)

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Background Information

The presumption in favour of **sustainable development** is at the heart of the NPPF and is one of the **core principles** against which many of the policies are read.

As the NPPF puts it para. 14 it

“should be seen as the golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.”

The principle of sustainable development should not be taken to promote development at all costs - at the very heart of it is the idea of sustainability.

The NPPF takes the meaning of sustainable development adopted by the Report of the Brundtland Commission ‘Our Common Future’ in 1987 - **development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and the section of the NPPF on ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’ explains that for the planning system that means:**

- (1) Planning for prosperity (an economic role)
- (2) Planning for people (a social role)
- (3) Planning for places (an environmental role).

A central, distinguishing feature of sustainable development as a policy paradigm is that it shifts the terms of debate from traditional environmentalism, with its primary focus on environmental protection, to the notion of sustainability, which requires a much more complex process of trading off social, economic and environmental priorities

The section of the NPPF on ‘planning for places’ takes the transition to a low carbon economy as one of its key objectives and states that local planning authorities should adopt **proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change**. Further, and particularly in relation to the concerns expressed by the National Trust, the NPPF notes that to achieve the objective of delivering a healthy natural environment, the planning system should **aim** to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment by (i) protective **valued** landscapes; (ii) minimising impacts on biodiversity and; (iii) preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at **unacceptable** risk from land, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.

The NPPF goes on to state that “in preparing plans to meet development requirements, the aim should be to minimise adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans

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should allocate land with **the least** environmental or amenity value **where practical**, having regard to other policies in the Framework including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.”

The NPPF clearly aims to strike a balance between two core aims (1) promoting economic growth and meeting the country’s desperate need for housing and (2) protecting our natural environment from the increasing pressures of development.

The term **sustainable development** has been questioned by many commentators because it is vague and therefore open to many different interpretations.

“ It could be argued that without a clear meaning almost anything could be said to be sustainable, leaving it as little more than an empty political slogan. A universally acceptable definition is needed, with a list of measurable criteria against which it would be possible to judge progress towards sustainability. This is perhaps the basis for our concerns.”

How the final document strikes the balance is yet to be seen, but we have an opportunity to influence the outcome by making our views known to our local MP.

Highlighted sections indicate areas of concern.

Patrick Keogh (Secretary)