

Environmental Audit Committee

7 Millbank London SW1P 3JA

Tel 020 7219 0715 Email eacom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/eacom

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

9 November 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

National Planning Policy Framework

Today, the Environmental Audit Committee agreed the results of its examination of the sustainable development aspects of the draft National Planning Policy Framework. These are annexed to a letter (copied) which we are sending to the Communities and Local Government Committee, for them to take on board in their own inquiry on the NPPF.

The Localism Bill, which completed its parliamentary stages earlier this week, does not include a definition of sustainable development that should be applied in the new planning regime. The NPPF itself, however, should now be revised to include a detailed definition, embedding the principles set out in the 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy (as well as the earlier Brundtland definition), and indeed going further by specifying a need for environmental *gain* (rather than simply *protection*).

You wrote to the National Trust explaining that the Government's proposals for the planning system were intended to achieve a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development. The NPPF as currently drafted does not bear out that balance, however, and the Committee considers that the final version will have to make it clearer that the drive for economic growth does not trump other sustainability requirements.

The current confusion about what the presumption in favour of sustainable development means in the NPPF places a premium on Local Plans being in place, to make it clear what sort of developments local authorities will approve. Proper transitional arrangements will need to be introduced alongside the finalised NPPF to allow local authorities to be ready to continue from day-one to be able to influence the sustainability of the development in their areas.

I hope you will continue to keep a close watching brief over the NPPF, to ensure that our Committee's concerns are fully addressed.

Yours,


Joan Walley MP
Chair