

# **The National Planning Policy Framework and how it affects planning in Welshampton and Lyneal Parish**

Most people may not have heard of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the document in which, in 2012, the Government set out its reform of the planning system. In a nutshell it reduced 1,500 pages of planning policy and guidance to just 50. The broad brush policies contained in the NPPF are generally pro sustainable development. However, the NPPF recognises that local communities should have a say in the development of their areas and stipulates that Planning Authorities (in our case, Shropshire Council) must produce a 'Local Plan' to outline the policies and levels of development for their area. The NPPF is pro-development and if adequate land for development is not available in a Planning Authority's area then the NPPF is the overriding consideration for approving planning applications and not the Local Plan.

Shropshire Council embraced the localism approach to produce a Local Plan and actively involved all town and parish councils to agree the level of development within each town and parish boundary. With 167 town and parish councils in the Local Plan area you will understand this has not been a quick process. Some crucial policies, including where development can or cannot take place, are still to be made legally binding. This is not a problem in its own right but late last year Shropshire Council reviewed the land available for development and found it was enough for a county average of 4.95 years — just short of the 5 year figure required by the Government. This means planning applications are now required to be determined by reference to the NPPF and not the local policies developed by Shropshire Council.

Over the last few months you may have read in the local papers about sites of up to 50 houses and more being agreed by Shropshire Council or by developers going to the Planning Inspectorate to appeal against decisions to refuse an application. It is because of the lack of a 5 year land supply and NPPF policies taking precedence that development is taking place against the wishes of local communities.

As part of the Local Plan consultation process Welshampton and Lyneal Parish Council opted for 'Cluster' status for Welshampton and Lyneal and 'Countryside' status for the remaining villages and hamlets. This means that an agreed level of development, and none at all for 'Countryside', will be stipulated in the Local Plan period up to 2026. Under the current situation this decision is at risk of not being adhered to by developers. Unless Shropshire Council, with the help of the Parish Council, can prove that a development is "not sustainable" there is the real likelihood that development will take place in the parish in areas where the community does not want it.

The Parish Council considers local communities in Shropshire are being unfairly penalised by the NPPF taking precedence and has written a letter to our MP, Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson asking him to address the situation with the Housing Minister. The Parish Council is also supporting Shropshire Council in its actions with Government to have the planning process return to respecting local communities' views and stop being taken advantage of by speculative developers.