

Press release
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Government should protect Winchester's landscape, says City Trust

Winchester's beautiful and unique landscape setting could be threatened if the government fails to recognise the need to protect it, says the City of Winchester Trust.

In its response to the Department of Communities and Local Government's [National Planning Policy Framework consultation](#), which closes on October 17, the Trust also says the document gives too much weight to economic growth at the expense of social, environment and cultural factors, and fails to give priority to development on brownfield sites.

The Trust's full response has been submitted to the DCLG and it is hoped that these concerns will be noted and acted upon in the next draft, both to protect Winchester and as a national principle.

City of Winchester Trust council member **Michael Carden**, says:

"Besides important heritage assets, Winchester also has a rural landscape setting of international importance, although only a small proportion has any national protection except where part of the national park.

"The NPPF gives too little protection to the undesignated countryside and in defining 'valued landscapes' too narrowly would not give adequate protection to locally designated landscapes. This would put at risk Winchester's landscape setting. We urge that greater recognition be accorded to both the countryside generally, important landscape settings of towns and locally designated/valued landscapes."

The Trust is also concerned about the proposed removal of protected status for land that could be used for business purposes within urban environments. **Michael Carden** says:

"With the anticipated reduction in public sector employment in Winchester, the Trust will be supporting the local authority in encouraging the private sector to take up employment sites in the town. We are therefore concerned about the NPPF's proposed removal of protection for viable employment land so that alternative uses such as housing should be allowed having regard to market signals.

"This could well damage the economy of the town and lead to an unbalanced, unsustainable mix of uses and reduce the vitality of the town centre. The local authority, in consultation with local people including the business community, should decide which land is allocated for employment and which is released for other uses such as housing. This would be in line with the government's professed Localism agenda."

Ends

More information Contact Sharon Watson 0775 362 8831 sharonwatson@btinternet.com

Notes to Editors

The Trust was founded in 1957 and has 800 members; the main aim of the Trust is to preserve the distinctive and evolving character of the city, by seeking to influence the decisions of both city and county Councils and the proposals of developers.

The Trust's full response to the consultation is attached. The following is a short summary of points:

- Due to extreme brevity the NPPF lacks clarity, risking different interpretations, disputes, lengthening the planning process and increased expense. (1, 2)
- References to previous guidance would greatly assist understanding and conflict resolution. (3, 4)
- Over emphasis on economic growth creates lack of balance with equally important social, environmental cultural and local factors. (5, 6)
- The requirement for sustainability of development and communities, etc., needs clear definition for each context. (7, 8)
- The essential sustainability of giving priority to development on brownfield land has been overlooked. (9)
- The distinctiveness of local communities requires protection of heritage and other locally valued assets. (10, 11)
- In spite of the 'Localism Agenda', the NPPF too often gives insufficient discretion to local communities to adopt policies appropriate to their areas. (6, 11, 12)
- There is no recognition of problems that will be created by population increase and inward migration, or of undue influence on planning from minority interests. (13)