

# **RESPONSE to the 2025 REFORM of the NPPF**

## **by the**

### **NATIONAL ORGANISATION of RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS**

The National Organisation of Residents Associations was established in 2003, and through its membership represents an estimated 2,500,000 residents in various communities throughout England.

There is no evidence to support the belief that making it easier for developers to obtain planning consent will increase the rate of house building. Since the last election the rate of house building has fallen from an annual 200,000 new builds to 160,000 in spite of the promises of changing the planning regime. Since the reason for the Reform proposals is to expedite house building surely they are unjustified and unnecessary and should be reviewed and even abandoned.

#### **FORLORN HOPE**

It is a forlorn hope to expect this proposed up-dating of the NPPF will speed up the building of new dwellings in order to meet the government's target of 1.5 million dwellings. A study of the history of UK house building since 1949 (ONS Archive) reveals that the ups and downs of annual new builds relate to booms and busts in the UK economy, and there is no evidence that changing the planning regime has ever had any effect on the rate of completion of annual new builds.

Since 1949 annual new builds for sale by the private sector have rarely exceeded 200,000, while the total annual completions of 300,000 and more new builds have only occurred when public sector new builds for rent comprised 50% of the total, a figure last achieved in 1977. Without doubt 1.5 million new dwellings are needed, but it is abundantly clear that to build them during this parliament is an impossibility - the arithmetic is simple - and this makes the proposed reform irrelevant and unnecessary.

Furthermore the stifling of the UK housing market is not due to the planning regime but is a consequence of the destruction of public sector housing, house-price inflation and high taxation. Planners do not build dwellings; their role is to ensure the right buildings are built in the right place for the benefit of communities and the economy. They have no power to oblige developers to implement their planning consents.

In our view the proposed reform spells disaster for the democratic involvement of the community in deciding new developments. To lay greater weight on development when there is conflict with the environment, the amenity of existing residents or our heritage combined with enabling central government to over-ride local refusals are tantamount to producing an authoritarian control of development.

#### **NEW ANALYSIS**

The proposed new classification of the planning regime comprises 133 subjects in 19 chapters covering plan-making to great details on a host of subjects. The original

NPPF of 75 pages was a handy manual, but this new proposal of 125 pages is more akin to a bible and would present a considerable burden on planning officers and developers. Some of the proposals do add clarity but some are likely to present new problems (new builds at train stations without consideration for commuter parking).

For lay members of the public to try to unravel the 225 questions in the accompanying guidance would be an unreasonable, onerous and pointless exercise.

For these several reasons NORA members consider the proposed reform of the NPPF will not achieve its aim, and the perceived underlying damage to the existing planning regime is unacceptable and unnecessary. The sincere hope is that the exercise will be reviewed.