

# NORTON ST PHILIP PARISH COUNCIL

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## MENDIP DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET

[www.nortonstphilipparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.nortonstphilipparishcouncil.co.uk)

Clerk Nicola Duke, 81 Studland Park, Westbury, Wiltshire, BA13 3HN,  
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Dear Resident

I am writing to update you on changes to national planning policy which will have an effect at a local level, including within our parish.

In August this year the government published an entirely new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Some of the major changes introduced are described below:

- 1) The introduction of a revised method of calculating the housing need for Somerset, based on "affordability" of the area. The new method requires Somerset to build 3,800 homes each year over the next 20 years; the previous requirement was for 2,600 per annum. Mendip is the least affordable district in Somerset.
- 2) Largely as a consequence of the new requirement, the former Mendip District cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing supply. It is currently approx. 3.2 years. This means that when determining a proposal for new housing, there is a strong presumption in favour of granting planning permission unless the harms "substantially outweigh" the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole. Because of the lack of a 5 year supply, this presumption applies to proposals both within and outside of the settlement boundary.

The PC has recently been made aware of two proposals for major development outside of but adjacent to the village settlement boundary. These are likely to be submitted to Somerset within the next few months. One is anticipated to be for approx. 50 houses off the Farleigh Road at Norton Farm and the other for approx. 60 houses between Tellisford Lane and Frome Road. These will be considered in the context of the new NPPF; policies in the current, adopted, Mendip Local Plan will carry limited weight. If there is conflict with the adopted local policies, the new national ones take precedence.

Another significant change made by the Government is the introduction on 31st October of a "National Scheme of Delegation". This will result in most planning applications (including proposals for up to 9 houses on sites of less than 0.5ha) being decided by the Council's Planning Officers. Schemes of 10 or more houses will only be referred to Planning Committee if the Planning Officer and Chair (or Vice Chair) of that Committee consider that there are issues of particular significance that need to be considered by the Committee. If they do not agree, the Planning Officer's view prevails. The previous ability for a PC or Ward Member to refer an application to Planning Committee has been removed.

The NPPF does introduce new criteria which new developments must satisfy. Those most relevant to NSP are that:

1. The scale must suit existing or proposed infrastructure capacity.
2. The site must be physically well connected to the settlement.
3. Design of new development should respond to its context so that it integrates with and enhances its surroundings.
4. There should not be severe cumulative highways impact or unsafe access.
5. "Substantial (previously "great") weight" should be given to heritage harm (listed buildings/conservation area).

An adopted Neighbourhood Plan would provide some protection but this will be limited if it does not allocate sites to meet the parish's housing requirement. This requirement is currently unknown as the Local Plan is still in the process of being drafted. The various strategies being considered by Somerset result in a

housing requirement ranging between zero and 204. Any permissions granted from 31st March 2025 will be set against the new requirement. Thus the Bell Hill Garage development of nine houses will count towards it.

Particularly in the absence of a suitable Neighbourhood Plan the PC, together with the community, will soon need to address speculative applications in the light of new national policy. The PC will keep residents informed of any detail of development proposals.

Yours faithfully,

A small rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be 'N. Duke'.

Nicola Duke B.A Hons (FSLCC)  
Parish Clerk  
For and on behalf of  
Norton St Philip Parish Council