



Compton Parish Council

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Response to the Consultation by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system

The Parish Council submitted responses only to the individual consultation questions reproduced below. No comments were made on sections of the consultation outside these questions.

Question 56: Do you agree our proposed changes to the definition of designated rural areas will better support rural social and affordable housing?

Response: Strongly agree.

Compton Parish Council strongly agrees with the proposed changes. As a rural community within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, we rely on a supply of genuinely affordable rented and affordable-to-buy homes to support local people and maintain a balanced community.

Much of the development that comes forward in rural areas is small-scale, often through infill or windfall sites of fewer than 10 dwellings. These sites currently fall outside affordable housing requirements in many rural parishes because the definition of “designated rural areas” is too narrow. CPRE’s *State of Rural Affordable Housing* report (2023) shows that only about half of rural England currently benefits from these protections, despite widespread need.

Widening the definition would ensure that small rural developments also contribute to affordable housing, which is vital for sustaining rural communities like ours.

Our 2025 Housing Needs Survey provides clear evidence of this need:

- 22% of respondents reported that they or someone in their household will need a new home in Compton within the next 5 years.
- At least 8 households already appear eligible for affordable rented housing, with more likely once full data is analysed.
- 44 individuals have left Compton in the last 5 years due to affordability, and 29 would return or might return if suitable homes were available.
- 74% of residents support affordable homes for people with a local connection.

- 54% support a small development of 4-10 affordable homes for local people.

These findings confirm that Compton is a village where generations traditionally stay, but where younger people and older people needing to downsize are now being forced out due to a lack of suitable and affordable homes.

At the same time, we are increasingly seeing older affordable rented homes - particularly bungalows - being sold by providers and not replaced. This reduces the availability of affordable rental homes for long-standing residents, including older people who wish to downsize and remain in the village. With no replacement stock coming forward, we are now reliant on new development, including small rural sites, to provide both affordable rented homes and genuinely affordable routes into home ownership.

Strengthening the definition of designated rural areas will help ensure that rural communities like Compton can continue to meet local housing needs and remain socially resilient.

Question 60: Do you agree with our proposals to ask authorities to set out requirements for a broader mix of tenures to be provided on sites of 150 homes or more?

Response: Partly agree.

Compton Parish Council strongly supports the principle of requiring a broader mix of housing tenures - particularly social rent, affordable rent, and genuinely affordable routes into home ownership - on larger development sites. CPRE's research shows that only 14% of new rural housing is social housing, despite lower rural incomes and high affordability pressures. This is reflected locally in Compton.

Our 2025 Housing Needs Survey shows that:

- 8 households already appear eligible for affordable rented housing.
- 13 households are on the West Berkshire Homechoice register.
- 44 individuals have left Compton in the last 5 years due to affordability, with 29 saying they would return or might return if suitable homes were available
- There is strong community support for affordable homes for people with a local connection (74%).

The proposed 160-home development on the former Institute site demonstrates the issue clearly. Although it includes 50 affordable units, none of the bungalows are affordable, despite the fact that older residents in Compton rely on single-storey homes to downsize and remain in the village. At the same time, our existing affordable bungalows are being sold by providers and not replaced. This leaves older residents with no realistic options to stay in the community.

Younger generations are also unable to afford to buy locally, despite Compton being a village where families have traditionally remained for generations. The Housing Needs Survey confirms this: 11% of respondents reported family members leaving the parish due to a lack of suitable or affordable homes.

Given these pressures, we are now reliant on new development to provide both affordable rented homes and genuinely affordable homes to buy. However, the current policy framework does not guarantee that large rural developments will deliver the right mix of homes.

We therefore support CPRE's recommendation that the NPPF should set national minimum expectations, including:

- at least 10% social rent on all major developments of 100+ homes, until local plans are updated
- a lower threshold than 150 homes - we suggest 50 homes - so that medium-sized rural developments also contribute meaningfully to affordable rented and affordable-to-buy provision

This would help ensure that rural communities like Compton receive the homes they genuinely need, rather than developments dominated by larger market homes that do not reflect local incomes or demographics.

Question 62: Are any changes to policy HO7 needed in order to ensure that substantial weight is given to meeting relevant needs?

Response: Yes.

Policy HO7 should be strengthened to ensure that substantial weight is given to delivering social rent, affordable rent, and genuinely affordable homes to buy, particularly in rural areas where need is acute and where the supply of existing affordable housing is diminishing.

Compton's 2025 Housing Needs Survey provides clear evidence of this need:

- 8 households already appear eligible for affordable rented housing
- 13 households are on the Homechoice register
- 44 individuals have left the parish in the last 5 years due to affordability
- 74% of residents support affordable homes for people with a local connection
- 54% support a small development of 4-10 affordable homes
- Existing affordable homes - especially bungalows - are being sold and not replaced

This demonstrates that Compton is a community where generations traditionally stay, but where younger people and older people needing to downsize are now being forced out due to a lack of suitable and affordable homes.

We therefore support CPRE's recommendation that the NPPF should set minimum national expectations, including:

- at least 10% social rent on all major developments of 100+ homes, until local plans are updated
- a lower threshold of 50 homes in rural areas, where developments are often smaller but the need for affordable rented and affordable-to-buy housing is high

Given the ongoing loss of older affordable stock and the limited number of new sites that come forward in rural areas, it is essential that national policy ensures every suitable development contributes meaningfully to meeting local housing needs.

Question 181: Do you agree policy N2 sets sufficiently clear expectations for how development proposals should consider and enhance the existing natural characteristics of sites?

Response: Neither agree or disagree.

Compton Parish Council partly agrees with the aims of policy N2 but believes it does not yet provide sufficiently clear or robust protection for valued rural landscapes, high-quality agricultural land, and established hedgerow networks. As a parish located entirely within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, our setting is central to our identity, biodiversity, and sense of place. Policy N2 needs to be strengthened to reflect the importance of these landscapes and the pressures they face.

1. Landscape character and value must be explicitly recognised

Policy N2(1)(a) should explicitly refer to landscape character and landscape value, not just “natural characteristics”. The current NPPF (2024) provides stronger wording on protecting valued landscapes, and this should be retained. CPRE’s response highlights that everyday countryside - not only designated areas - requires clear protection. This is particularly important for Compton, where the landscape forms part of the wider chalk downland character of the North Wessex Downs.

2. Stronger protection is needed for high-quality farmland

CPRE’s research shows that 14,000 hectares of prime agricultural land have been lost in 12 years, equivalent to 250,000 tonnes of vegetables annually. Policy N2(1)(b) should include a presumption against development on Grades 1-3 agricultural land, unless there is an overriding justification. Compton’s surrounding farmland is productive, contributes to local food security, and forms part of the parish’s rural character.

3. Hedgerow and tree protections must be strengthened

We welcome the intention of N2(1)(d), but the phrase “wherever possible” weakens the policy and risks avoidable loss. Hedgerows in Compton are ecologically significant, supporting wildlife corridors, carbon storage, and the historic field pattern of the parish. Our community places high value on these features, and their protection should be unambiguous.

4. Development pressures risk incremental landscape harm

Compton is experiencing significant development pressure, including a major 160-home scheme on the former Institute site. While housing need is clearly evidenced in our 2025 Housing Needs Survey, which shows that 22% of respondents expect to need a new home in the next five years, this need must be met in a way that respects and enhances the landscape. Without stronger national policy, incremental erosion of rural character is likely.

5. Policy N2 should better reflect the purpose of National Landscapes

As a parish within a National Landscape, we expect policy wording that clearly reflects the statutory purpose of these areas: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The current draft does not fully reflect this duty. Stronger alignment with existing protections would help ensure that development proposals in and around National Landscapes are landscape-led and sensitive to local character.