



The Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham,
Suffolk, IP17 1BW, Tel: 01728 604595,
Email: townclerk@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
55 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HP

4th October 2024

Dear Mr Milliband

Severely Impacted Zones – A Proposal from Saxmundham Town Council

We enclose a press release regarding Saxmundham Town Council's response to the government's recent consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF').

We support the general direction of the changes; however, the main purpose of our response was to draw attention to the extreme stresses that our town and community faces arising from a combination of simultaneous, extremely large-scale developments:

- 1) Massive strategic undertaking of the construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station.
- 2) Mainstream planning proposals for 800 homes and commercial development (covered by the NPPF).
- 3) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects ('NSIP') from National Grid companies in the form of multiple Converter Stations for a variety of grid improvement projects (covered by the Planning Act 2008 and relevant national policy statements).

We took the opportunity in our response to call attention to a glaring hole in planning policy where the two types of major development (NPPF and NSIP) intersect and interact in a single area, with potentially severe economic, social and environmental impacts on a specific locality and its population. This is compounded by the fact that each project is looked at separately, so the cumulative impacts are never properly considered nor quantified.

We contend that there is currently a major problem in the interface between ordinary planning policy and the NSIP regime. The consequence of this lack of joined-up policymaking means that the small number of localities like ours, which currently face a multiplicity of potential major developments covering both housing and energy infrastructure, receive no special consideration, coordination, protection or compensation under the present policy and proposals.

We are therefore calling for recognition of these localities as a Severely Impacted Zone; a special status which will require national infrastructure and housing projects to be coordinated to ensure that communities are compensated for the impact of national targets for housing and energy infrastructure.

We also propose that where a specific locality is, or is likely to be, subject to two or more large-scale proposed developments, including NSIPs projects, whose impacts on the locality and community are likely to be extremely substantial, there be:

- a) a requirement on the developers to coordinate their proposals with a view to reducing negative impacts in the construction phase, and to increase efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out the works, and
- b) a requirement to draw up (with appropriate consultation) proposals for community benefits, mitigation, and compensation for consideration as a package to be presented to the local community and local authorities (including relevant town/parish councils) and then to government for decision.

We have noted, from other recent consultations, the ideas for 'Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure' but consider that an enhanced regime, with stronger government involvement and contribution, is needed for those like Saxmundham that are Severely Impacted Zones, taking into account the totality of development projects and their impacts within that area.

Your considered support with this proposal would be appreciated. A copy of this letter has been sent to Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Smith
Clerk to Saxmundham Town Council

