

CIWEM's Contaminated Land Network has expressed relief that Greg Clark MP has confirmed that the Government will not do away with the current, forward thinking and sustainable policy of building on brownfield sites before open greenfield land.

In the draft National Planning Policy Framework, currently being consulted on, the intention is to remove detailed planning guidance and withdraw and replace PPS23 (and its Annex 2) on Planning and Pollution Control by a short and focussed note. This direction aroused suspicion that the NPPF is a sop to the development lobby who can profit more from greenfield sites and to lawyers who will pounce on the lack of clarity for more appeals, challenges and inquiries.

Brownfield-first policies are eminently sensible and far better than allowing a developer-led free for all on greenfield sites. We have a legacy of brownfield land in this country and we need to ensure that there is sufficient legislation and guidance in place to protect against a massive potential increase in inappropriate and unregulated redevelopments.

On Thursday, the planning minister Greg Clark conceded that the NPPF used a different phrase, "land of least environmental value" rather than brownfield. He added: "It was never my intention, and it certainly was not the Government's intention, to depart from the obviously desirable situation in which derelict land should be brought back into use". CIWEM welcomes this statement and urges the brownfield first policy to be carried into the final version.

Gary Winder, Chair of CIWEM's Contaminated Land Network, says:

"There is a current presumption to use brownfield sites first and this must be clearly spelled out in the final National Planning Policy Framework. Using previously developed sites has many significant recognised benefits - addressing neglected and disused land, recycling land back into sustainable use, improving the environment by addressing contamination issues and helping to enhance and regenerate local communities. It is essential that the opportunities and importance of regenerating brownfield land are recognised in the final policy document".