

Revised National Planning Policy Framework

July 2018

This is a summary of the most notable features from each of the chapters contained within the new National Planning Policy Framework.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

- Clarification that **endorsed recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission may be material when preparing plans or determining applications.**
- It re-affirms that the NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- The core planning principles in the previous NPPF have been removed.

Chapter 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development

- **An expectation for local housing needs to be accommodated unless there are strong reasons not to, including unmet needs from neighbouring areas.**
- The presumption in favour of sustainable development incorporates some small but significant changes from the previous text. For example, the previous requirement for local plans to meet objectively-assessed needs for housing and other development has been replaced by a requirement for strategic policies to provide for such needs, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas. Footnote 5 states that they are “as established through statements of common ground”.
- Footnote 6 is important – It sets out the national constraints that would limit the application of the presumption. It adds “irreplaceable habitats” to the list of such constraints .

Chapter 3 - Plan-Making

- **A new Plan-making framework which defines strategic priorities and allows authorities to plan for these in the most appropriate way,** e.g. a strategic plan produced by local planning authorities working together, or independently, or by an elected Mayor or combined authority, where plan-making powers have been conferred.
- **Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities.**
- Strategic policies should not extend to detailed matters that are more appropriately dealt with through neighbourhood plans or other non-strategic policies.
- **Enabling spatial development strategies produced by elected Mayors or combined authorities to allocate sites where there is unanimous agreement.**
- **A requirement for authorities to review Plan policies at least once every 5 years** following the date of adoption, with updates, as necessary.
- Setting out that, to meet the test of soundness, authorities will need to **prepare and maintain a Statement of Common Ground**, as evidence of the Duty to Co-operate and effective joint working.
- A number of changes to the tests of ‘soundness’ – **including strengthening the ‘effective’ test to emphasise effective joint working, as evidenced by the Statement of Common Ground.** The ‘justified’ test is amended to refer to “**an appropriate strategy**” rather than “the most appropriate strategy”.
- **Tightening the evidence which is expected to support a ‘sound’ plan,** to allow for a more proportionate approach.
- **A new approach to viability,** through which Plans are expected to set out the developer contributions expected from development; ***“Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan”.***
- Further detail is provided in the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Chapter 4 - Decision-making

- Making clear that **where a viability assessment is needed and can be justified, this should reflect the recommended approach in national planning guidance**, including standardised inputs, and be made publicly available.
- **New paragraphs setting out the weight that may be given to policies in emerging Plans** (previously in the Annex). It confirms that **“Refusal of planning permission on grounds of prematurity will seldom be justified where a draft plan has yet to be submitted for examination”**.
- Additional references to highlight the role of non-statutory and statutory consultees at pre-application stage and encourage early discussions about infrastructure and affordable housing.

Chapter 5 - Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes

- **The requirement for strategic plans to be based upon the new standard method of calculation of a local housing need assessment (unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify an alternative approach).**
- **A requirement for Plan policies to address the housing requirements of groups with particular need** – students and people who rent their homes have been added, as well as travellers.
- **Local authorities should disaggregate housing need into particular types of housing** required for families with children; affordable housing; self-build and custom-build development; student accommodation; Travellers who have ceased to travel; private rented sector and build to rent; and, specifically the need for housing for older people based on the NPPF definition.
- Inclusion of content from Written Ministerial Statement (November 2014) to state that **provision of affordable housing should not be sought for developments that are not major developments (other than in designated rural areas where policy may set out a lower threshold of 5 units or fewer).**
- **10% of homes on major sites should be available for affordable home ownership.**
- **Strategic policies should set out a housing requirement figure for designated neighbourhood areas**
- Requirement to ensure that at least **10% of an Authority’s housing requirement is met on sites of 1 hectare or less.**
- **The Housing Delivery Test** is to be introduced from November 2018. This includes a requirement for a local planning authority to produce an action plan where delivery has fallen below 95% of its housing requirement over the previous three years. The action plan should assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.
- **From November 2018, Councils will need to provide a 20% buffer on top of its five year supply of deliverable sites, where delivery in previous three years was below 85% of the housing requirement**
- **From 2020, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply where delivery is below 75% of the authority’s housing requirement.**
- Whilst not stated in the revised NPPF (but contained in the PPG), the Housing Delivery Test also indicates that the **application of the presumption will also apply where delivery is less than 25% of the housing requirement in 2018 and 45% in 2019.**
- **Allowing development of exception sites for entry-level homes (suitable for first-time buyers or those looking to rent their first home) on sites outside existing settlements, on land not allocated for housing** – unless the need for such homes is already being met within the authority’s area.

Chapter 6 – Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

- Planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy to positively and proactively encourage sustainable economic growth, set criteria or identify strategic sites to meet anticipated needs, seek to address potential barriers to investment and be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan.

Chapter 7 - Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

- Clarification that **in allocating sites in town centres, policies should look at least ten years ahead, and town centre boundaries should be kept under review.**
- Strengthening of the sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses, to make clear that **out of centre sites should be considered only if suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are not available (or expected to become available).**

- Where retail and leisure developments are outside town centres, and not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment, where the development is over 2,500 sq. m. or over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold.

Chapter 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

- Clarifying that **planning policies and decisions should consider the social, economic and environmental benefits of estate regeneration.**
- Additional **recognition to the role that planning can play in promoting social interaction and healthy lifestyles.**
- New policy on the ways in which planning policies and decisions can help to **anticipate and address possible malicious threats and natural hazards, especially in crowded places, and take into account operational defence and security requirements.**

Chapter 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport

- **Clarification on the variety of ways in which transport should be considered as part of the planning process from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals.**
- New policy to recognise the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields.
- Policy on assessing the transport impact of proposals has been amended to refer to highway safety as well as capacity and congestion.
- In setting parking standards, **policies should take into account the need to ensure provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.**
- New policy that **maximum parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city, and town centres or other locations that are well served by public transport.**

Chapter 10 - Supporting High Quality Communications

- New paragraph indicating that **planning policies and decisions support the expansion of electronic communications network**, including mobile technology, and fibre broadband connections.

Chapter 11- Making Effective Use of Land

- Expecting **strategic policies to set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed land.**
- **Setting out how planning policies and decisions should make more intensive use of existing land and buildings**, especially where it would help to meet housing need.
- Promote and support development of under-utilised land and buildings, e.g. converting space above shops, building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure.
- Support opportunities for upward extensions above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes.
- Setting out that planning **policies and decisions should avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.**
- Take a flexible approach to applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight.
- Giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs.

Chapter 12 - Achieving Well-designed Places

- **Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable.**
- Additional emphasis given on the importance of pre-application discussions in securing good design.
- Setting out that design should not be used as a reason to object to development where a scheme complies with local plan policies.

- Great weight should be given to **“outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings”**.

Chapter 13 - Protecting Green Belt Land

- The continued commitment to protection of the Green Belt is maintained, with policies in Local Plans to establish any changes to boundaries. Authorities will be expected to demonstrate that they have considered directing development in urban areas, towns, and villages inset within the Green Belt or locations beyond the outer Green Belt Boundary. Where it is necessary to release Green Belt Land for development, consideration should be given to previously developed land and/or locations well served by public transport.
- Where it is necessary to change boundaries offsetting the loss could be considered through compensatory improvements to quality and accessibility of Green Belt land.
- Amendments to boundaries can now be made through **Neighbourhood Plans**.
- Allowing redevelopment of brownfield land in the Green Belt to be used for an identified local affordable housing need, where there is no substantial harm to openness.

Chapter 14 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

- Clarifying that **Plans should have regard to the cumulative impacts of flood risk**, rather than just to or from individual development sites.
- **Clarifies policy on the exception test that may need to be applied when considering development in locations at risk of flooding.**

Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- Clarifying that **the ‘agent of change’ (or applicant) should be responsible for mitigating the impact of their scheme of potential nuisance arising from existing development, such as businesses and community facilities.**
- Updates to align with the 25 Year Environment Plan including taking air quality into account in planning policies and decisions.

Chapter 16 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- Re-affirms that **“when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation, irrespective of the degree of potential harm to its significance”**.

Chapter 17 - Facilitating the Sustainable Use of Minerals

- Additional text on on-shore oil and gas development to provide clear policy on the issues to be taken into account in planning for and making decisions on this form of development.

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