

Planning Update

March 2018

Prime Minister Announces Draft Revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework



The Prime Minister, Theresa May, and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, have announced details of the revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Speaking at the 'Future of Planning Policy' event held at the Institute of Engineering and Technology, London, the Prime Minister set out details of the consultation which she stated would set out a "new planning rule book" to deliver a "fairer planning system". The consultation will run until the 10th May.

A New Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The consultation proposes amendments to the presumption in favour of sustainable development including a replacement footnote defining specific environmental policy designations restricting development. Irreplaceable habitats including Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees are now included in this list.

A New Framework for Plan Making with Defined Strategies

Changes to plan making included in the housing white paper are reflected in the consultation document. Authorities will be required to ensure that their plan addresses the strategic priorities of their area providing overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development. Local plan policies will be required to be reviewed every five years, and local plan examinations will allow for a more proportionate approach to evidence base.

Test for Soundness for Local Plan

Changes to the test for soundness are proposed including that a plan is required to be 'an' appropriate strategy rather than one that is 'most appropriate'.

New Standard Methodology for Calculating Housing Need

Paragraph 61 of the revised framework proposes the introduction of a new standard method for calculating local housing need. Details are included within a revised version of the National Planning Guidance published alongside the Framework. This will likely have significant implications for authorities who are yet to submit a plan to the SoS.

Fixing the 5 Year Land Supply Position

It is proposed that authorities will be able to fix their five year housing land supply position for a one year period through recently adopted Local Plans or through subsequent annual position statements. A minimum 10% buffer will be required to take advantage of this policy.

Delivering Homes

Paragraph 65 of the draft framework proposes that all major new build housing sites will be required to provide at least 10% affordable homes.

The consultation also provides further encouragement for smaller sites and developers. Paragraph 68 states that LPAs should ensure that at least 20% of the sites identified in the local plan should be made up of sites that are half a hectare or less. Theresa May confirmed that the Government would be making £1.5 billion in funds available to small house builders to help ensure a more diverse housing market.

The new Housing Delivery Test will also be taken forward, it proposes the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply where delivery is below 75% of the authority's housing requirement to take effect from 2020.

More Effective Use of Land

Changes to the framework also aim to ensure the most effective use of land. Greater support is to be provided for development of land that is considered under-utilised, particularly in locations that are highly accessible. This also includes supporting opportunities for development where space exists above existing residential and commercial premises to provide new homes. The consultation also places the expectation on town and city centres to apply minimum density standards.

“As widely expected, the consultation seeks to introduce a new standard method for calculating local housing need... This will likely have significant implications”



Green Belt

Changes to Green Belt policy are proposed setting out that where Green Belt is released, first consideration should be given to land which has been previously developed or which is well served by public transport, Paragraph 144 proposes allowing brownfield land to be built on to provide for affordable housing.

Support for Local Businesses and Community Needs

Both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have placed importance on supporting local businesses and communities. Paragraph 85 has been revised to better accommodate sites for local businesses and community needs. The policy recognises that development for these purposes, especially in rural areas, may have to be found outside existing settlements and in locations that aren't necessarily well served by public transport.

Changes to Policy for Town Centres

Local authorities should look to allocate sites to meet the needs for town centres over a 10 year period. Town centre settlement boundaries should also be regularly reviewed to accommodate change.

Clarifying Design Requirements

Where design accords with clear expectations of local policy, design should not be used as a reason for a decision-maker to object to a development.

Environmental Plan

Changes have been made to the chapter on 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' as to align with the 25 Year Environmental Plan. The revised Framework strengthens protection for ancient woodlands and other irreplaceable habitats and clarifies policy linked to natural and historical environments.

Viability

The consultation seeks to take forward measures aimed at making the planning process more transparent. Viability assessments to be made available to the public is one of the mechanisms proposed.

Other Announcements

The government has additionally published a number of other relevant documents, including further details on Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy in England; the Housing Delivery Test (Draft measurement rule book); and a document setting out proposed Draft Guidance for Viability.

NATIONAL PLANNING ENQUIRIES

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