

National Planning Policy Framework consultation

Strategic Planning Committee

12th January 2026

Context

Consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework, including national decision-making policies, was launched on 16th December 2025.

[Ministerial Statement](#) on 16th December 2025 from Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Housing and Planning - sets the context for the proposals as being the housing crisis and target for 1.5 million new homes, essential infrastructure and unlocking sustained economic growth.

[Letter to Leaders](#) on 16th December 2025 from Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Followed announcements in late November and earlier changes put in place by the Government.

The draft NPPF and a consultation document can be viewed at [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#).

Other national updates alongside the NPPF

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 – received Royal Assent on 18th December 2025. Introduces legislation which includes - planning committee reforms; delegation of the setting of planning fees; the new strategic planning system and Spatial Development Strategies; reforms to the Compulsory Purchase process; and the introduction of Environmental Delivery Plans.

Plan-making guidance – On 27th November guidance related to preparing a Local Plan under the new system was published, mainly related to the early stages. This is on the [Create or update a local plan using the new system - GOV.UK](#) webpage. Legislation anticipated early this year.

Consultation on reforms to the statutory consultee system – ran from 18th November until 13th January.

Overview

The new draft NPPF is described as the most significant re-write since it was introduced in 2012.

There have been a series of revisions since 2012, the most recent in December 2024.

Objectives:

- Ensure national planning policy is accessible and understandable
- Establish a comprehensive suite of national policies on general planning matters which will apply across the country
- Make the policy which it contains more 'rules-based' and certain

The draft NPPF is accompanied by a consultation document which contains 225 questions

The consultation closes on 10th March 2026.

Planning authorities preparing plans under the new system should have regard to the draft new NPPF.

Final version expected to be in place in the Summer.

New Structure

Strategic elements in the Introduction

Plan-making procedural policies

Decision-making procedural policies

Topic chapters, distinguish between plan-making and decision-making policies:

- Sustainable Development;
- Delivering homes and supporting growth;
- Creating high quality, sustainable places;
- Conserving and enhancing the environment;

Presented as policies throughout – e.g. town centre policies are prefixed ‘TC’

Additional information brought into Annexes in the NPPF including housing need calculation formula (previously in PPG) and Information Requirements for planning applications.

MHCLG summary of significant changes

MHCLG have summarised the 12 ‘most significant’ changes as:

1. A permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development – development of suitable land in urban areas will be acceptable by default and there will be a presumption in favour of suitably located development.
2. Building homes around stations – Described as a ‘default yes’ for proposals that develop land around rail stations in existing settlements or well-connected rail stations elsewhere. Minimum densities are proposed around rail stations.
3. Driving urban and suburban densification - Supporting higher density development in sustainable locations, for example redevelopment of low density plots, upwards extensions and infill. Minimum densities should be set in well-connected locations.

MHCLG summary of significant changes

4. Securing a diverse mix of homes – Including stronger support for rural social and affordable housing and expectations for accessible housing.
5. Supporting small and medium sites – Policies to make it easier to bring forward small sites and the introduction of a category of ‘medium’ development to provide a more proportionate approach.
6. Streamlining local standards – Limiting quantitative standards in development plans to only specified issues and limiting duplication of matters covered by Building Regulations other than where there are ‘optional technical standards’ (water efficiency and accessible dwellings).

MHCLG summary of significant changes

7. Boosting local and regional economies – Substantial weight to be given to the benefits of supporting business growth and to particular sectors such as those included in the Industrial Strategy, AI growth zones, logistics, town centres and agricultural and rural development. Also considering the removal of the town centre sequential test, which currently directs town centre uses to town centres first.
8. Supporting critical and growth minerals – Ensuring adequate provision for their extraction.
9. Embedding a vision led approach to transport – Moving away from a ‘predict and provide’ approach.

MHCLG summary of significant changes

10. Better addressing climate change – Aims to set out how decisions can take a proactive approach to mitigation and adaptation.
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – Proposals include reflecting Local Nature Recovery Strategies, incorporation of swift bricks and providing guidance on sites of local importance for nature.
12. Taking a more positive approach to the use of heritage assets – Aims for a clearer and more positive approach to better support heritage-related development.

The following slides identify some of the further proposals. Not all of the detailed proposals are covered in this presentation, but they are described in the [consultation document](#).

National Decision-Making Policies

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act contains provisions for National Development Management Policies, however the Government has decided not to proceed with these at this stage.

Instead, the NPPF contains ‘national decision-making policies’ – to be applied as a material consideration.

National decision-making policies should not be duplicated, substantively restated or modified in Local Plans.

These will have immediate effect when the final NPPF is published and inconsistent local policies are to be given very limited weight.

Ch2 Plan making policies

Plan making policies relate to the role, content, preparation and examination of plans.

Policies are set out in relation to Local Plans, Spatial Development Strategies, Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Plans.

All plan-makers should:

- Only address matters necessary and relevant to the plan being prepared;
- Only include policies beyond site / location specific policies where necessary and justified
- Not duplicate, substantively restate or modify the content of national decision-making policies
- Engage positively with communities and other key stakeholders – relevant issues to be identified and addressed as early as possible
- Use environmental assessment to inform plans
- Publish plans in a searchable digital format

Quantitative standards should be limited to infrastructure provision, affordable housing, parking and design and place-making. Should not cover matters addressed in Building Regulations other than accessibility standards and water efficiency.

Ch2 Plan making policies

Local Plans

Sets the policy for the 30 month plan preparation timescale (from Gateway 1).

Local Plans should plan ahead 15 years from adoption (as per existing NPPF).

Local Plans to set out a vision, spatial strategy, identify contributions expected from development, and other policies to support the delivery of allocated sites.

Proportionate evidence, drawing on existing sources where possible.

Examinations – changes to the ‘tests of soundness’ a) positive; b) appropriate; c) realistic; d) consistent (with national policy; e) conformity (with adopted Spatial Development Strategy).

Maintain co-operation and ensure plans align as fully as possible with those of other bodies.

Ch3 Decision-making policies

Policy on early engagement focuses on major development.

Information requirements specified – identifies the information required to support national decision-making policies, with a new Annex.

Determining development proposals – policy includes work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner, take a proportionate approach to consideration of planning matters, consult statutory or internal consultees only where necessary.

Other policies cover viability; use of conditions and obligations; relationship with other regulatory regimes; unauthorised development and enforcement; use of development orders; and Article 4 Directions.

Sustainable development

Ch4 Achieving Sustainable Development

Plans to include a spatial strategy.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development – relates to policies on the principle of development within or outside settlements.

Within settlements development would be supported in principle and outside settlements the types of development / circumstances that would be acceptable are listed.

Neighbourhood Plans – to qualify for ‘exemption’ from the presumption Neighbourhood Plans must contain allocations to meet their housing requirement.

Ch5 Climate change

Plan-making policies:

Plans can make use of baseline carbon emissions assessments to test alternatives.

Water efficiency standards can be set (but no provisions for energy efficiency standards).

National decision-making policies:

On mitigation and adaptation, considering future impacts over the lifetime of the development.

Delivering homes and supporting growth

Ch6 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Plan-making policies:

No further change to the standard method for calculating housing need.

Incorporates policy on Traveller Sites.

Spatial Development Strategies to establish needs for local authorities in their area.

Plans should identify locations for large scale development, and in Local Plans at least 10% of the housing requirement to be on sites of 1-2.5ha alongside at least 10% on sites of 1ha or less.

Expanding the definition of 'Designated Rural Area' to support affordable housing contributions to be sought on minor developments.

Requiring plans to set out policies on accessible homes – at least 40% of homes should be M4(2) or M4(3) standards.

Identifying sites for specific types of housing e.g. custom and self build.

Broader mix of tenures on larger sites over 150 homes.

Delivering homes and supporting growth

Ch6 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

National decision-making policies:

Substantial weight to be given to the benefits of accommodation that will contribute to meeting evidenced needs.

Seeking views on whether medium sites could have the option of a financial contribution to affordable housing rather than provision on site.

Policy on different types of specialist accommodation e.g. housing for older people.

Strengthened support for rural exception sites.

Policy on Traveller Sites.

Policy to support build out of major sites e.g. flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

Delivering homes and supporting growth

Ch7 Building a strong, effective economy

Plan-making policies:

Take account of local business needs and wider opportunities in key sectors set out in the Industrial Strategy and AI Growth Zones.

Not be overly prescriptive about types of uses on specific sites.

National decision-making policies:

Substantial weight to be given to the benefits of proposals for commercial development.

Policies also on freight and logistics and rural business development.

Delivering homes and supporting growth

Ch8 Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Plan-making policies:

Policies to be informed by a strategy for town centres, including broadening the mix of uses.

National decision-making policies:

Substantial weight to be given to the overall vitality and viability of a centre.

Seeking views on the retention of the sequential test.

Impact assessment to be weighed in the planning balance rather than resulting in refusal.

Ch9 Supporting high quality communications

No plan-making policies proposed

National decision-making policies: consolidates existing parts of the NPPF.

Delivering homes and supporting growth

Ch10 Securing clean energy and water

Plan-making policies:

Plans to reflect capacity and requirements for energy and water infrastructure.

Addition of reference to electricity network infrastructure alongside renewable and low carbon energy.

Plans to identify areas suitable for renewable and low carbon energy where this would help secure their development.

National decision-making policies:

Substantial weight to be given to the benefits of energy security, economic development and net zero, and additional benefits from re-powering and small scale and community led developments.

Substantial weight to proposals that increase capacity in water infrastructure to support planned development and improve water quality.

Ch11 Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

Policies largely relevant to SCC as minerals and waste planning authority.

Requirement for prior extraction of minerals on sites allocated for other uses, where feasible.

Recognition of critical and growth minerals.

Creating high quality, sustainable places

Ch12 Making effective use of land

Plan-making policies:

Places greater emphasis on allocating land to optimise land use.

National decision-making policies:

Highlights specific opportunities which should be given substantial weight.

Residential and mixed use should contribute to an increase in density.

Minimum density of 40dph for development in walking distance of a train station, and 50dph around well-connected train stations.

Ch13 Protecting Green Belt land

Not relevant in East Suffolk, as there is no Green Belt in or close to the district.

Creating high quality, sustainable places

Ch14 Achieving well-designed places

Plan-making policies:

Requires plans to identify where design guides, design codes and masterplans are necessary.

National decision-making policies:

Additional references to climate change and green infrastructure.

Greater emphasis on design considerations through the process.

Ch15 Promoting sustainable transport

Plan-making policies:

Vision led approach.

National decision-making policies:

Introduces reference to wheeling.

Clearer guidance on roadside facilities.

Consideration of impacts on transport network, rather than highways impacts.

Creating high quality, sustainable places

Ch16 Promoting healthy communities

Plan-making policies:

Plans should set standards for different forms of outdoor recreation land provision.

National decision-making policies:

Substantial weight to proposals for new or improved community facilities and public service infrastructure.

Policy on retention of community facilities and public service infrastructure would apply where these are the last of their type in the area.

Ch17 Pollution, Public Protection and Security

Plan-making policies:

New policy on allocating land which may be needed for public safety and security.

National decision-making policies:

Increased reference to matters to be considered in relation to the impact of development on existing activities.

New provisions on safeguarding areas.

Conserving and enhancing the environment

Ch18 Managing flood risk and coastal change

Plan-making policies:

New requirements in relation to taking account of the Shoreline Management Plan and National Coastal Erosion Risk Map, Coastal Change Management Areas to also include estuaries and tidal rivers, and to consider risk over a 100 year time frame.

National decision-making policies:

Clarification over circumstances when the sequential test is not required.

New policy to avoid the enclosure of watercourses.

Stronger policy on permanent new residential development not being appropriate in the Coastal Change Management Area.

Conserving and enhancing the environment

Ch19 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Plan-making policies:

New requirements to set clear standards for green infrastructure.

Biodiversity Net Gain standards which exceed statutory standards to be limited to specific sites.

Decision-making policies:

New development should incorporate swift bricks.

Emphasis on mitigation of major development in protected landscapes, reflecting new duty to ‘seek to further’ the purposes of these areas.

Ch20 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Plan-making policies:

Links between conservation area objectives and design guides, design codes and masterplans emphasised.

Decision-making policies:

Includes reference to supporting proposals that deliver positive impacts and bringing underused buildings back into use or improving energy efficiency.

Next steps

- Officers fully reviewing the proposals and drafting a response
- Proposals will be considered by Local Plan Working Group in February
- Response to be submitted by 10th March
- Final version of new NPPF anticipated in the summer