



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

PLANNING NEWSLETTER

By Email Only

Message from the Chief Planner

13 December 2024

On 12 December the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) update was published, alongside the Government's response to the consultation which launched in July 2024. The new NPPF is effective immediately.

Minister Pennycook announced the update in an oral statement to the House and further details can be found in the [Written Ministerial Statement](#). We encourage you to read this in full and make yourself familiar with the changes.

This Newsletter highlights the key announcements made, including the revised NPPF, revised PPG, funding to support local authorities with local plans at Reg 19 and for undertaking Green Belt Reviews and the results of the 2023 Housing Delivery Test. We also provide details of the [working paper](#) published this week relating to Planning Committees.

While this is a significant moment of change to national policy, there will be more to do in the coming months as we continue to modernise the planning system. These include introducing agile, shorter, and faster local plans and improving engagement; updating viability guidance; designing a new strategic planning system; refreshing the National Model Design Code; rolling out increased planning fees; and other aspects of policy that we will bring forward in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. These are exciting times to be involved as a planner or built environment expert in designing and delivering the places so vital to our collective future.

All previous Chief Planner Letters and Newsletters are available on GOV.UK [here](#).

With kind regards and best wishes for the Festive Season,

Joanna Averley
Chief Planner



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National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Update

MHCLG published an updated [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) on 12 December 2024. This follows the consultation in July 2024 to which Government has now published its [response](#). The update is **effective immediately**. A high-level description of the key changes is provided below. These were set out by the Housing Minister in his oral statement and accompanying [Written Ministerial Statement](#), but for the full detail and understanding of the policy please refer to the text of the NPPF itself.

In headline terms, the new NPPF:

- Makes **housing targets mandatory** and reverses other changes made under the previous Government regarding housing supply;
- Implements a **new standard method formula** to ensure local plans are in line with the Government's manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament;
- Confirms **transitional arrangements for local plans** in the existing system;
- **Defines grey belt land** within the Green Belt, to be brought forward for homes and other important development through both plan and decision-making;
- Defines new '**golden rules**' for land released in the Green Belt to ensure release delivers in the public interest, as well as the policy considerations of affordable housing, design quality, and sustainable locations that are part of the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- Makes wider changes to ensure that local planning authorities are able to prioritise the types of affordable homes their communities need, and that the planning system supports **a more diverse housebuilding sector**;
- Supports **economic growth in key sectors**, including laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital economies, and freight and logistics – given their importance to our economic future;
- **Delivers community needs** to support society and the creation of healthy places and adopting a 'vision led' approach to transport planning; and



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- **Supports clean energy and the environment**, including through support for onshore wind and renewables.

Alongside this package of policy changes, we are announcing:

- Over **£14.8m in new funding to support Local Planning Authorities** to bring plans into line with the new NPPF;
- A commitment to **closing the gap between the planning fees** and the cost to authorities of processing applications by boosting Local Planning Authority resourcing so that they can deliver a more efficient service with regulations in Spring 2025;
- The results of the **2023 Housing Delivery Test**;
- Updates to the threshold for bringing infrastructure projects into the **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project** regime to reflect advances in technology;
- Launch of the **clearing services** being provided by Homes England to match developers with housing associations **where S106 affordable housing needs to be delivered**;
- A revised **Planning Policy for Traveller Sites**;
- Updates to the following **Planning Practice Guidance** to support the NPPF announcement:
 - Housing and economic needs assessment
 - Housing supply and delivery
 - Viability



Updated Timetables for Local Plan Preparation

In light of the changes to the NPPF, the Deputy Prime Minister has asked that **all local planning authorities produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF**, i.e. by no later than 6 March 2025. The updated LDS should include clear, realistic, and specific dates for consultation and submission of the local plan. We ask that once updated, the LDS is made publicly available, and a copy is sent to the Ministry using the following email address: LocalPlans@communities.gov.uk **AND** the key information is recorded by filling out the following [form](#).

The Deputy Prime Minister made clear the intention to make rapid progress towards universal local plan coverage both through support and using Government's powers of intervention when needed. To support this, following consultation, updated local plan intervention policy criteria have now been published as part of the [plan making planning practice guidance](#). The revised criteria will help ensure that future local plan intervention action is targeted, swift, and proportionate. Planning authorities will be invited to put forward any exceptional circumstances that they think the Secretary of State should consider in relation to any plan-making intervention action.

Funding for Local Authorities to support Local Plan Transition and Green Belt Reviews

The Government remains committed to enhancing the capacity and capability of local planning authorities and has set aside **£14.8m to provide grant funding support** to enable local authorities to implement the policy changes announced today. This funding will be provided to local authorities that are at an advanced stage of **the local plan making process (Regulation 19 stage)**, and that will need to revise their draft plans to accommodate the increase in their local housing need figures as a result of revisions to the NPPF. The funding will also provide additional support to local authorities that intend **to undertake a Green Belt review**.

Local planning authorities will be invited to request a share of these funds via an expression of interest, details of which will be provided early next week.



This support should be viewed alongside the wider initiatives that are already having an impact in the sector. This includes the ongoing Pathways to Planning programme run by the Local Government Association, which continues to see new graduates placed into local planning authorities, as well as the funding provided to grow the work of Public Practice in placing senior built environment professionals into the public sector. The implementation of further reforms will be supported by the £51m of funding commitment to support capacity and capability in local planning authorities in 2025/26.

Planning Committees Discussion Paper

Government published a working paper on modernising planning committees earlier this week. The paper forms part of a series of working papers on different aspects of planning reform, designed to inform further policy development in collaboration with the wider sector.

The paper invites views on three measures that seek to encourage better quality development that is aligned with local development plans, facilitates the speedy delivery of the quality homes and places that our communities need, and reassures applicants that in more instances their application will be determined in a timely manner. Some of the ideas under consideration for which views are welcomed include:

- Whether to introduce a **national scheme of delegation** that could bring clarity and consistency about which applications get decided by officers and which by committees;
- Having dedicated **committees for strategic development** to allow a dedicated and small group of councillors to focus on the most significant projects; and
- Requiring that **councillors undertake appropriate training** before they can form part of a planning committee.

Local authorities and other stakeholders are invited to engage with this policy paper online, noting that a formal consultation will follow in due course. The working paper can be found here: [Planning Reform Working Paper: Planning Committees](#).



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The Planning Advisory Service has also launched a project to gather information about how planning committees are currently operating and help inform thinking about what a modern effective planning committee looks like. To kick off the project they have launched a survey. This can be found online here: [complete the survey](#).