

The National Planning Policy Framework Consultation Proposals

Briefing Note

05/03/2018

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The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government has launched a 'package' of consultations for comment comprising of the: National Planning Policy Framework Revision (the Framework), Draft Planning Practice Guidance for Viability, Draft Housing Delivery Test Measurement Rule Book and Supporting Housing Delivery through Developer Contributions.

This suite of documents, carry forward many of the provisions that were previously consulted upon in the Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken Housing Market (February 2017) and supporting government consultations. This planning reform package also brings forward new draft proposals.

The Principle of Sustainable Development: There is an increase in emphasis for objectively assessed need to be met unless there are strong reasons otherwise within the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraphs 11 – 16. A new list has been introduced in a footnote 7 which, defines the specific reasons for restricting development including: sites protected under the: Birds and Habitats Directives and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Core Planning Principles: The core planning principles at Paragraph 17 have been deleted. A necessity has been added to define strategic policies in locals plans. The role and function of strategic policies and allocations is also prescribed in more detail.

Tests of Soundness: Amendments are proposed to the tests for a 'sound' plan. These now advise that a local plan should set out 'an' appropriate strategy rather than 'the most appropriate strategy'. Amendments are also proposed to the 'effective' and 'positively prepared' soundness tests to highlight the important role of joint working and meeting objectively assessed needs for housing.

Up to Date: Paragraph 157 currently states that local plans should be kept up to date. Changes have been made requiring local planning authorities to review their local plans every five years from adoption.

Duty to Cooperate: The Framework at paragraphs 178 – 181 address the duty to cooperate requirements. Changes to the Framework now place greater expectations on local planning authorities to prepare statements of common ground as part of their evidence to demonstrate that this duty has been achieved.

Ensuring Viability and Deliverability: Local plans and development proposals must show that they are viable under the framework paragraphs 173 – 177. A new approach to development viability is being put forward, through which plans are expected to be clear about the contributions expected in association with development.

Weight of Emerging Policies: The Framework at Annex 1 gives advice on implementing national guidance. New provisions have been set out which outline that weight may be given to policies in 'emerging' plans and puts into policy the approach to 'prematurity'.

Housing Need and Delivery: Paragraphs 47 – 55 of Framework set out the national approach towards delivering 'a wide choice of high quality homes'. A number of changes are advocated in this consultation with a key matter being a housing delivery test focused on driving up the numbers of homes actually delivered in an area, rather than merely numbers planned for.

To parallel this, a new standard method for the calculation of local housing need is proposed, the details for this being set out in draft guidance published alongside the Framework. There is also a greater focus on holding developers to account. Additions have been made to increase the emphasis on providing housing for groups with particular needs including students and travellers.

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It is set out that at least 10% of homes on major sites should be available for affordable home ownership. The revisions also encourage greater use of small sites.

The draft text proposes that local planning authorities should ensure that at least 20% of the sites allocated for housing in their plans are of half a hectare or less, with an accompanying emphasis on providing for a suitable mix of small and medium sized sites to be provided in local plans. It is also recommended that the development of exception sites, provide entry-level homes suitable for first-time buyers, and that these may be appropriate where a local need is identified

The Rural Economy: A new provision has been introduced to promote the rural economy currently addressed in the Framework at paragraph 28. This sets out sites for local business and community needs outside existing settlements may be acceptable in certain circumstances.

Efficient Use of Land: More freedom will be given to local authorities to increase the utilization of brownfield land to build homes at a density which makes the best use of the land. Paragraph 17 and 111 at present, strongly promote the efficient use of brownfield land. New provisions are set out to add emphasis on this, including avoiding building homes at low densities and expecting minimum density standards to be used in town and city centres.

Green Belt: Paragraphs 79 – 92 of the Framework currently set out the governments' policies on the protection and enhancement of Green Belt land. Significant changes have been proposed to these provisions. Neighbourhood plans may amend detailed Green Belt boundaries where the need for a Green Belt change can be demonstrated. Brownfield land in the Green Belt can be used for residential developments (not confined to Starter Homes) subject to Green Belt protections, allowing local planning authorities to more flexible in response to local circumstances. It is also proposed that certain material changes of use that preserve openness will not be deemed inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Facilities for burial grounds and allotments, and rural exception sites, are also not to be taken as inappropriate development.

The consultation runs until the 10th May 2018.

If you require any further advice regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact the office listed below.



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