

# Briefing Note

## Draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework

### Responding to demand for more homes

Today the Government published its draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for consultation, one year on from the publication of the Housing White Paper (HWP). This announcement is the biggest shake-up of planning policy since the introduction of the NPPF in 2012. Both the Prime Minister and Secretary of State spoke at the launch, highlighting the current political importance of housing and planning.

In the table below, we look at the extent to which key policy proposals from the HWP (see [Policy Response: Housing White Paper](#)) have made it into today's revisions to the NPPF. It illustrates a real consistency of approach from Government. The main addition to the HWP proposals is the announcement on viability, with a Draft Planning Practice Guidance for Viability also published.

More detail and clarification will come in the revisions to the Planning Practice Guidance to be published later in the week, including how the standard approach to housing need will work. It's only when we see these details that we can assess the potential impact of the changes on the delivery of new homes and how far they are likely to take us towards solving the housing crisis. The consultation runs until 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Housing White Paper policy proposal	In the NPPF revisions?	
<b>ADOPTING</b> a standardised approach to assessing housing requirements	✓	A standard approach will determine the minimum number of homes needed, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Details on how the method actually works will be in the new Guidance, promised later this week. (Paragraph 61)
<b>EXPECTING</b> local planning authorities to ensure housing targets are met	✓	Housing Delivery Test is defined in a separate document. If delivery is less than 95% of the housing requirement, then an action plan will be needed. The presumption in favour of sustainable development applies if delivery falls below 75%. (Paragraph 75-77)
<b>REQUIRING</b> local authorities to prepare Statements of Common Ground on working together to address housing requirements	✓	There is a clear aim to encourage collaboration and agreement between plan makers at local authorities, county councils, mayoral offices and combined authorities (paragraph 36). This theme of cooperation runs through chapter 3.
<b>ALLOWING</b> Spatial Development Strategies to allocate strategic sites for housing	✓	Where the power to make allocations has been conferred, spatial development strategies will be expected to make site allocations. (Paragraph 24)
<b>ALLOWING</b> the Secretary of State to direct a group of authorities to produce a joint plan	✓/X	The new ' <i>plan-making framework</i> ' does not require every local planning authority to have its own plan, but to ensure that there is a plan ' <i>which addresses the strategic priorities for their area</i> '. (Paragraphs 17-19)
<b>AMENDING</b> the test for a 'sound plan' to one of producing 'an' appropriate strategy rather than 'the most' appropriate strategy	✓	This has been implemented. It is unclear how a local authority should choose between appropriate strategies or how this should be assessed at a local plan examination. (Paragraph 36)
<b>REQUIRING</b> local authorities to address the housing requirements of groups with particular needs such as the elderly	✓	This covers ' <i>those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.</i> ' (Paragraph 62)
<b>ATTACHING</b> great weight to the re-use of suitable brownfield sites for housing	✓	Substantial weight is to be given to the use of brownfield land within settlements, and there is a clear aim to encourage effective use of land through increasing density, allowing appropriate conversion and reallocation of sites. (Paragraphs 118-120)
<b>EXPECTING</b> local and neighbourhood plans to define design expectations for new homes	✓	There is a comprehensive re-write of the design oriented paragraphs, including an expectation to provide ' <i>maximum clarity</i> ' on design. (Chapter 12)
<b>CONFIRMING</b> the potential to build higher-density housing around train stations and other public transport nodes	✓	Plans will be expected to include minimum density standards for locations well served by public transport. This applies where there is a shortage of land for meeting housing need. (Paragraph 123)
<b>REQUIRING</b> at least 10% of housing sites to be half a hectare or less	✓✓	At least 20% of housing sites are to be of half a hectare or less. (Paragraph 69)



<b>GIVING</b> much stronger support for 'rural exception' sites	✓	Local authorities should support opportunities to bring forward these sites to meet identified local housing need. Affordable housing does not have to be provided on rural exception sites. A new concept of Entry Level Exception Sites is introduced for the provision of homes for first time buyers. (Paragraphs 79, 65 and 72)
<b>GIVING</b> local authorities the opportunity to agree housing land supply on an annual basis	✓	This comes with a requirement for a 10% buffer (rather than the standard 5%) on the supply of specific deliverable sites. (Paragraph 74)
<b>ENCOURAGING</b> local authorities to consider a developer's track record when deciding whether to grant planning permission	✓/X	There is a requirement for planning authorities to consider why any earlier application for similar development on a major housing site has not started. (Paragraph 78) The Letwin Review, expected next week, will also be relevant.
<b>ENCOURAGING</b> local authorities to shorten the timescales for implementing planning permission	✓	A planning condition should be considered to require development to begin within a shorter timescale than the relevant default period, usually three years. (Paragraph 78)
<b>REQUIRING</b> local authorities to plan for rented property where there is need	✓	People who rent their homes are one of the specific groups to be planned for. Affordable housing on Build to Rent schemes is expected to be the 'normal form of affordable housing', but need not be owned by a registered provider and will be called Affordable Private Rent. (Annex 2)
<b>DEFINING</b> when it is appropriate for local authorities to amend Green Belt boundaries	✓	When releasing land priority should be given to land which has been previously developed or is well served by public transport. Removing Green Belt land can be offset by improving environmental quality and accessibility. (Paragraphs 137-138)
<b>ENCOURAGING</b> a more proactive approach to bringing forward new settlements in their plans	✓	Strategic plan-making authorities should seek to identify opportunities for new settlements or significant extensions to existing towns and villages where this can meet identified need in a sustainable way. This should include considering the opportunities presented by existing or planned investment in infrastructure. (Paragraph 73)
<b>AMENDING</b> the definition of affordable housing, including provision for Starter Homes, and ensuring that a minimum of 10% of all homes on a site are affordable	✓	Starter Homes are within the definition of affordable housing. At least 10% of major development sites should be for affordable home ownership, unless this exceeds the local affordable housing requirements or prejudices the ability to meet identified affordable housing needs. Build to rent; elderly and student housing; self-build and 100% affordable housing sites are excluded. (Annex 2; Paragraph 65)
<b>CLARIFYING</b> the status of endorsed recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission	✓	These will be material considerations when preparing plans or deciding applications. (Paragraph 6)

**Further reading**

**Policy Response: Housing White Paper**

Our review of the potential impact of the Housing White Paper.

**Planning to Solve the Housing Crisis**

Assessment of the degree to which planning responds to market signals and analysis of the potential impact of the Housing Delivery Test.

**Planning Policy Update**

How many local planning authorities have a plan and a five year land supply?

**Policy Response: Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places**

Analysis of the likely effectiveness of the proposed standard approach to calculating housing need.



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