

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system#decision-making-policies>

The Government is consulting on reforms to National Planning Policy Framework to speed up the planning and development process to make it easier to build and deliver housing and major infrastructure. The key driver is housing growth. The consultation is complicated and difficult to navigate but there a number of key changes that will impact parish councils.

MANDATORY HOUSING TARGETS

Mandatory housing targets for principal authorities to drive housebuilding, with increased targets in areas facing the highest levels of unaffordability.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The new NPPF will, for the first time, include policies for determining planning applications. Up until now it has been for local planning authorities to set out these policies.

In addition, the Government will restrict what can be considered by committee and instead more planning applications will be decided by officers in accordance with the NPPF and local plans. There will be mandatory training for planning committee members. The new proposals will effectively set up a triage system to help planning authorities decide which applications can be referred to the Development Control Committee.

LOCAL PLANS

New regulations will require local plans to be prepared more quickly. Currently the process is slow, typically taking seven years and Government has set a target of 30 months for plan preparation. This will be achieved by reducing the content of the plans (as planning application policies will be in the new NPPF) and cutting down on the supporting evidence each Council must prepare.

Measures will also be included to ensure that principal authorities develop or update local plans that cater to the needs of their communities.

In addition, there will be a requirement for a new level of plan known as a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The Strategy will be prepared at regional, or county level and will set out broad locations for growth and coordinate development at a regional level, ensuring that infrastructure (like schools, transport, and hospitals) is delivered alongside new homes.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (e.g. reservoirs, solar farms and energy pylons)

The changes include removing or reducing the amount of consultation, especially before a planning application is prepared. National guidance will also be reviewed and updated every 5 years and the opportunity for legal challenge will be limited.

REQUIREMENT FOR DEVELOPERS TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

New Golden Rules for greenbelt development require developers to provide essential infrastructure for local communities, such as nurseries, GP surgeries, transportation, and a higher proportion of affordable housing.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Most affordable housing is not genuinely affordable, particularly in rural areas. There will be an increased emphasis on providing a mix of tenures particularly social housing for rent.

BUILDING STANDARDS

There will be a Future Home Standard.

CHANGES TO GREEN BELT LAND

Principal authorities must identify and prioritise lower-quality grey belt land to meet housing targets. These are parts of the green belt that they consider lower quality and easier to develop, for example land that has been previously developed.