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Joint Planning Policy Committee

Consultation on Draft National Planning Policy Framework

Friday 23rd January 2026




Open consultation

National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system

From: [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)

Published 16 December 2025

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Applies to England

Summary

We are seeking views on a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system.

This consultation closes at **11:45pm on 10 March 2026**

Context

- ▶ Forms part of the wider reforms of the planning system
- ▶ Published on 16 December 2025
- ▶ Provides a fundamentally revised draft of the NPPF
- ▶ Increases from 80 to 125 pages
- ▶ Biggest change in structure and content since introduced in 2012



Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system

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Closes 10 Mar 2026

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Respondent details

a What is your name?

Name (Required)

b What is your email address?

Email (Required)

Consultation

- ▶ Comprises of:
 - Draft NPPF
 - Wider Consultation Document
- ▶ Need to read both documents
- ▶ Closes 10 March 2026
- ▶ Sets out 225 questions!
- ▶ Seeks views on content of draft NPPF and range of wider proposals



Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system

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Purpose

Move to:

- ▶ Provide clearer, more accessible policy
- ▶ A more rules-based approach
- ▶ Stronger decision-making policies
- ▶ Reduce duplication in plans
- ▶ Afford explicit support for growth



Principles

- ▶ Restructured into plan-making and decision-making policies
- ▶ Compliments new plan-making system and expectations for local plans
- ▶ Reordered Themes
- ▶ Provides Annexes to bring guidance into policy
- ▶ A revised presumption in favour
- ▶ Introduced on non-statutory basis



New Presumption in Favour

- ▶ Permanent rather than conditional
- ▶ Removes ties to out-of-date policy or housing land supply
- ▶ Location-led - within or outside 'Settlement'
- ▶ Rules based
- ▶ Triggered by where development is located and not by plan status
- ▶ Intended to be clearer and simpler, leading to more consistency



Settlements

- ▶ New NPPF tied to the notion of a ‘Settlement’
- ▶ Different rules if inside or outside of Settlement
- ▶ Expectation of defining extents of a Settlement within a local plan with mapped boundaries
- ▶ Draft definition of a settlement:
 - includes cities, towns, villages and other *predominantly built-up areas*
 - excludes hamlets and scattered groups of houses



Within Settlements

- ▶ Presumption that development should be approved unless *benefits are substantially outweighed by the harms*
- ▶ Not at all costs
- ▶ Consider conflicts with allocations or safeguarded land, loss of protected open space, Local Green Space, unacceptable flood risk, poor design, habitats, substantial heritage harm, loss of cemetery or flood storage, key policies that require refusal.



Outside Settlements

- ▶ A closed list of acceptable development, supported in principle where it is:
 - Agriculture, forestry, minerals, infrastructure
 - Rural businesses & tourism (where location justified)
 - Re-use of existing buildings
 - Previously developed land
 - Limited infilling
 - Exception sites / neighbourhood orders
 - Traveller sites (where need unmet)
 - Around well-connected stations
 - To meet unmet housing or logistics needs
- ▶ If it is not on the list, only allowed in exceptional circumstances.
- ▶ Still clear that isolated homes should be refused (unless for particular specific purpose)



Implications of Housing Delivery (or Lack of)

- ▶ No longer triggers ‘tilted balance’
- ▶ Enables release of land for housing to meet an *evidenced unmet need* that would be:
 - ▶ well related to an existing ‘settlement’ - unless the nature of development would make this unacceptable
 - ▶ of a scale that can be accommodated taking into account the availability of infrastructure



Affordable Housing

- ▶ Clearer + stronger rules around viability
- ▶ Proposals for medium sized schemes (10-49 homes / up to 2.5ha) to only provide financial contribution
- ▶ Stronger emphasis on Social Rent
- ▶ Inclusion of Military Homes
- ▶ If meet affordable requirements, expectation of being liberal on wider housing mix



Local Plans

- ▶ Stronger focus on allocations
- ▶ Need for 10% on sites <1ha and 10% <2.5ha
- ▶ Allocating sufficient sites required deliver to meet development needs
- ▶ Setting out standards that development on allocations will be required to meet
- ▶ Protecting allocations for their intended use(s)
- ▶ Not duplicating or substantively changing national decision-taking policies
- ▶ Limitations on inclusion of wider policies



Some Potential Concerns...

- ▶ Is the focus on settlements + boundaries a concern? Limit flexibility?
- ▶ Are there concerns around location being the focus for defining sustainable development?
- ▶ What are thoughts on restricting affordable housing on medium sites? Not rural proof?
- ▶ Concern around scale of small site allocations required?
- ▶ Concern around the possible limitations of applying local approaches to local issues?





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**ANY THOUGHTS, CONCERNS
OR ISSUES?**



Recommendations

- (1) Note the content of the report, the proposed changes to national planning policy, and associated implications as set out in the Appendices to this report;
- (2) Provide a steer on any key aspects that should be taken forward in the Councils' formal consultation response; and
- (3) Delegate authority to Officers, in consultation with the chair and vice-chair of JPPC, to prepare and submit a formal response to the consultation on behalf of both Councils.

