

TITLE OF REPORT: Proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the Planning System

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Introduction

1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 30th July. They are designed to support the government's wider objectives including achieving sustained economic growth and building 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, to improve national prosperity and the living standards of working people. The Press Release [Housing targets increased to get Britain building again - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/press-releases/2024/07/30/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again) summarises the proposals and indicates the government's intentions and approach.
2. The draft revised NPPF and consultation paper sets out specific changes that the government proposes to make by the end of this year, following the close of the consultation on 24th September.
3. This report highlights the key proposed revisions of the NPPF, that if implemented would have to be included in Planning and Policy decisions in Gateshead.

Planning for Additional Homes

4. The government intends to restore the standard method as the required approach for assessing new housing targets and planning for homes, to ensure that local plans are ambitious enough to support the commitment to build 1.5 million new homes over the next five years. The new standard method would increase targets across all regions other than London.
5. The proposed new standard method moves away from the current method, which is predominately based on population projections, to an approach which requires an annual addition based on 0.8% of the current housing stock
6. Higher expectations are also proposed for the Mayoral Combined Authorities as a whole. The new standard method calculates a significant overall increase for The North East Combined Authority area.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

7. It is the government's intention that Local Plans will, in time, identify enough land to deliver the homes required. However, prior to these plans being in place they are proposing to strengthen the position on the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The presumption would encourage the granting of

planning permission where plan policies for the supply of land are not up-to-date, or where there is: an insufficient supply of land; or the Housing Delivery Test is failed. It brings additional land into the scope of potential development, including 'grey belt' sites in the Green Belt.

8. Planning Authorities would have to update their land supply position annually to identify specific deliverable sites to meet a minimum of five years' worth of housing.

Green Belt, 'grey belt' and brownfield (Previously-Developed) land

9. The government is clear that the principle of development should not be in question on brownfield land, and so are consulting on an amendment to reinforce the expectation that development proposals on previously developed land are viewed positively. This makes clear that the default answer to brownfield development should be "yes" in principle.
10. The commitment to building on brownfield land first is retained but it is recognised that brownfield land can only be part of the answer. The government proposes changes to the NPPF to make clear that, where a local planning authority is unable to meet housing, commercial or other needs after fully considering all opportunities to make effective and efficient use of brownfield and wider opportunities, it should undertake a Green Belt review.
11. This would identify where the removal of Land from the Green Belt could be appropriate, The proposed NPPF sets out a sequential test to give first consideration to **Previously Developed Land**, before moving on to other '**grey belt**' sites, and finally to **higher performing Green Belt** sites where these can be made sustainable. Development on such sites would be required to deliver 50% affordable homes, increase access to green spaces and put the necessary infrastructure in place, such as schools and GP surgeries.

Local Plans and Strategic Planning

12. The Government's aim is for all local authorities to have a local plan, adopted as quickly as possible. This will put authorities in the best possible position to steer growth in their area. Targeted support may be required for authorities to get plans adopted and support authorities' individual circumstances.
13. The Government was clear that housing need, strategic infrastructure, economic growth and climate resilience cannot be met without planning for growth on a larger than local scale. New legislation is expected to introduce mandatory strategic planning at a regional level, with elected Mayors overseeing the development and agreement of Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs). Partnership working will be promoted, supporting local leaders and the wider sector to consult on, develop and conclude on SDSs quickly.

Planning for Social Affordable Homes

14. The consultation proposes to remove the current prescriptive approach to delivering 10% of affordable homes as home ownership products, so that more social rent products are delivered through the planning system as quickly as possible.

15. The government proposes to press Homes England to maximise the number of social rent homes in allocating funding. Additionally, there will be future Government investment in social and affordable housing, so that social housing providers can help deliver a significant increase in affordable housebuilding.
16. For future Green Belt housing development there would be a target of at least 50% of the homes to be affordable, and a requirement that all developments are supported by the infrastructure needed including GP surgeries, schools and transport links as well as greater provision of accessible green space.

Climate Change and Growth Supporting Infrastructure

17. It is proposed that Local Planning Authorities should support planning applications for renewable and low carbon development giving significant weight to the contributions which proposals make to renewable energy generation and a net zero future. Ensuring the transition to clean power will help boost energy independence, reduce energy bills, support high-skilled jobs and tackle the climate crisis.
18. The government is proposing changes to make it easier to build growth-supporting infrastructure such as laboratories and gigafactories and the networks that support freight and logistics and is seeking views on whether to include some of these types of projects in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) regime.
19. In addition, recognising the role that planning plays in the broader needs of communities, the government proposes several changes to support new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure including taking a vision-led approach to transport planning and promoting healthy communities, in particular tackling childhood obesity.
20. Taking a vision-led approach to transport will mean working with residents, neighbouring authorities, and developers to set a vision for how we want places to be and designing the transport and behavioural interventions to help us achieve this vision.
21. The government wants to consider ways in which the planning system can do more to support the creation of healthy communities. This includes tackling obesity, encouraging active travel and supporting a healthy childhood, such as through more consistent approaches to controlling hot food takeaways near schools.

Capacity and Fees

22. Current planning fee levels do not generate enough income to cover the full cost of considering planning applications. The Government are consulting on whether to use the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to allow local authorities to set their own fees, better reflecting local costs and reducing financial pressures on local authority budgets. This includes potential charges for applications where there are currently no charges, and increasing planning fees for applications, that have been well below cost recovery.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill – National scheme for delegation

23. The Press Release indicates that the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill would introduce a national scheme of delegation that focuses planning committees on the applications “that really matter”.

Implications for Gateshead.

24. Consultation on the draft NPPF ends on 24th September. We will need to consider and prepare for the full impacts of the proposed changes for Gateshead Local Planning Authority.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee note this report for information.

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APPENDIX 1

1. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Unknown

2. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Nil

3. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Nil

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

Nil

6. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Nil

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

This applies to all wards.

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[Housing targets increased to get Britain building again - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again)

[Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system)