

Government's Reforms of the National Planning Policy Framework – What Local Councils Need to Know

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Context

- The Government has published the consultation ‘Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system’.
 - Proposed changes some of the most significant in recent years and form a key part of the promised ‘blitz’ of English planning rules, including reversing many introduced by the previous Government in 2023.
 - Aimed at supporting the Government’s wider objectives “to achieve sustainable growth in our planning system” and “to achieve economic growth and build 1.5 million new homes”.
 - Deadline 11.45 pm on 24 September 2024
 - Some of the key ones of interest to the sector are
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Housing

- Reinstatement of mandatory housing targets including at the local authority level.
 - Limits the ability of local authorities to use 'exceptional circumstances' to use alternative approaches to assess need.
 - Includes a [spreadsheet](#) outlining the result of the method for local authorities.
 - Removal of the wording, introduced in 2023, which meant previous over-supply in housing delivery could be set against upcoming supply.
 - A strong focus on provision of more affordable housing, in particular social rent; including an expectation that housing needs assessments consider the needs of those requiring social rent.
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Indicative results for Lincolnshire Local Authorities

Local Authority Name	Current Method	Proposed Method	Average Annual Net additions (2020/21-2022/23)
East Lindsey	436.57	1091.48	1158.67
Boston	249.68	378.80	324.00
Lincoln	See Joint Plan	458.95	167.00
South Holland	427.08	572.68	658.67
South Kesteven	686.77	911.98	550.67
West Lindsey	See Joint Plan	526.50	618.00
North Kesteven	See Joint Plan	690.04	581.33
Lincoln, North Kesteven, West Lindsey	1053.90	1675.50	1366.33
Lincolnshire Totals	2854.00	4630.44	4058.33

Green Belt

- Local authorities must undertake a green belt review where otherwise they are unable to meet housing, commercial or other needs.
 - Any development on land released from the green belt must bring significant benefits, including that 50% of housing should be affordable.
 - Introduces the concept of 'grey belt' land in the Green Belt.
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Design and Neighbourhood Plans

- Rather than district-wide design code, the focus should be on the preparation of localised design codes, masterplans and guides “for areas of most change and most potential”.
 - Changes made in 2023 that reference “beauty” and “beautiful” in relation to well-designed development also to be deleted.
 - Reinforces the expectation that development proposals for homes and other needs on suitable brownfield land should be viewed positively.
 - The enhanced protections in special circumstances offered by neighbourhood plans to speculative housing development introduced in 2023 to be retained.
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Strategic Planning and Cross-border Working

- New mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning, including short-term measures to strengthen cross-boundary cooperation ahead of introducing formal strategic planning mechanisms through new legislation.
 - Local planning authorities and county councils “continue to be” under a duty to cooperate with each other.
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Economic Growth & Green Energy

- Local authorities should identify appropriate sites for commercial development “which meet the needs of a modern economy”.
 - Planning policies and decisions should make provision for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the growth of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries.
 - Support for renewable and low carbon energy generation, including onshore wind, renewable and low carbon energy.
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Infrastructure

- “significant weight” should be placed on the importance of facilitating new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development.
 - Will not be implementing the Infrastructure Levy that would have replaced Section 106 Agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy.
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Intervention, Fees & Transitional Arrangements

- Increases in some planning fees.
 - Local authorities that fail to produce local plans quickly enough may face sanctions.
 - Sets out the transitional arrangements, that “are designed to maintain the progress of plans at more advanced stages of preparation”
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Further information and how to respond to the consultation

The Government's consultation document can be found at

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

Consultation ends at 11.45pm 24th September 2024

