

Summary of the new NPPF, why it matters, and whether to respond

What is the new NPPF?

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a major proposed overhaul of national planning policy in England. It is intended to **speed up and simplify planning**, provide greater certainty for decision-making, and support the delivery of housing and infrastructure through a stronger **plan-led system**.

Key features include:

- A **restructured and re-numbered framework**, organised by policy themes rather than the current paragraph-based format.
- A stronger, more **directive and rule-based approach** to planning decisions.
- A **permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development**, particularly for suitably located land outside the Green Belt.
- Increased emphasis on **higher-density development**, intensification within settlements, and development near public transport, especially railway stations.
- A new **national decision-making policy (Policy S6)** that gives **greater weight to neighbourhood plans**, explicitly stating that development should normally be refused where it conflicts with a made neighbourhood plan.
- Greater flexibility for neighbourhood plans, including the ability to propose **detailed amendments to Green Belt boundaries**.
- New requirements for neighbourhood plans to be published in a **searchable digital format**.
- Continued protection of key environmental and heritage assets (footnote 7 assets), despite changes to the definition of Green Belt.

The consultation runs until **10 March 2026**, with the revised NPPF expected to take effect shortly afterwards.

Why does it matter?

The proposed changes represent a **“reset” of national planning policy** and will directly affect:

- How local planning authorities determine planning applications.
- How neighbourhood plans influence decisions.
- Where development is considered acceptable, including near transport hubs and, in some cases, within the Green Belt.
- The balance between housing delivery and local control.

While the NPPF retains much of the existing wording, subtle changes could have significant practical effects, particularly when tested through appeals and decision-making.

Should we respond to the consultation?

Yes - it is **strongly advisable** for councils to respond.

Reasons to respond include:

- The changes will directly affect local decision-making and community influence.

- The enhanced role of neighbourhood plans makes it important to ensure they are properly protected and clearly defined.
- Proposals affecting Green Belt land, settlement boundaries, and development near transport hubs may have local impacts.
- Early engagement allows councils to shape national policy rather than simply react once it is adopted.

Responding helps ensure local concerns, priorities, and experiences are reflected before the framework is finalised.

Draft press release for after the Planning Committee
Local Council encourages residents to engage with new National Planning Policy consultation

A major public consultation has been launched on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and guides how planning decisions are made.

The revised NPPF represents a significant update, aiming to speed up the planning system, increase housing delivery, and provide clearer and more consistent planning rules. Key proposals include a stronger emphasis on development near transport links, higher-density development within settlements, and a permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Importantly, the draft framework also proposes to give greater weight to neighbourhood plans, strengthening their role in planning decisions and confirming that development which conflicts with a made neighbourhood plan should normally be refused.

The consultation also includes proposals affecting Green Belt policy, digital requirements for neighbourhood plans, and the types of development considered acceptable both within and outside settlements.

[Council name] is reviewing the proposals and encourages residents, community groups, and local organisations to take an interest, as the changes could influence future development in the area.

The public consultation is open until **10 March 2026**, after which the Government is expected to finalise and adopt the new framework.

Further information on how to respond to the consultation can be found on the Government's website.