

Consultation on Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) & related planning documents

1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), issued in March 2012, as part of the planning reform package set out in the February 2017 Housing White Paper, the September 2017 'Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places' consultation and further announcements in last November's Autumn Budget.
2. The proposals were launched on Monday (5th March) and subject to consultation until 10th May and include the following interrelated documents:
 - National Planning Policy Framework consultation proposals
 - National Planning Policy Framework – Draft Text for Consultation
 - Draft Planning Practice Guidance for Viability
 - Housing Delivery Test – Draft Measurement Rule Book
 - Supporting Housing Delivery through developer contributions (Reforming developer contributions to affordable housing & infrastructure).
3. The consultation takes the form of a series of specific questions regarding the details of the changes.
4. Further releases are also anticipated (this week), which set out the methodology for the calculation of housing requirements. There is no indication that the Government's approach has shifted from that in the previous consultation and it is expected that, as before, each local authority will be have a baseline number set by Government.
5. Officers are working through the details of these proposals, with a view to preparing an initial response to the Development Plan Panel (DPP) on 17th April and will also make DPP aware of the nature and scope of these proposals at the meeting on 13th March. Other briefings can be provided as appropriate.
6. There is a considerable amount of detail to work through, in comparing the cross cutting changes with the current NPPF and in reviewing the other technical documents. From an initial analysis the following headlines can be flagged:
 - Changes to the structure & presentation of the NPPF, for example the 'Core Planning Principles' section has been removed, with the principles incorporated into each thematic section,
 - The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' would be triggered where a Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing supply "or where the housing delivery test indicates that delivery of housing has been substantially below the housing requirement over the previous three years,
 - Local plans will be considered sound if, as a minimum, they meet as much as possible of an area's objectively assessed needs, particularly for housing,
 - A standard methodology for assessing housing need will be implemented via the revised framework (previously set out in the September 2017 consultation document),

- A housing delivery test will impose sanctions on Councils failing to meet housebuilding targets in their local plans,
- Planning authorities must fully examine "all other reasonable options" for meeting their identified development needs before releasing Green Belt.
- The government expects minimum density standards to be used in town and city centres and around transport hubs in areas where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified development needs,
- Where policy requirements have been tested for viability at the plan-making stage, such issues should not usually need to be visited again at the planning application stage,
- Greater emphasis upon 'strategic plans' & the role of combined authorities with planning powers, with stronger references to meeting unmet needs from neighbouring areas where necessary/agreed,
- Changes to the wording of the soundness tests for plan –preparation (plans need to be justified on the basis of '*an appropriate strategy*' not '*most appropriate strategy*' as currently worded).

Supporting Housing delivery through developer contributions

- Alongside its review of the NPPF, the also published consultation proposals for changes to developer contributions. These changes were first announced in last year's Budget following recommendations made by the government's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) review panel, which was tasked with reviewing the workings of the levy.
- The Budget said that the government would consult to ensure that where an authority has adopted CIL, section 106 pooling restrictions could be removed "in certain circumstances such as where the authority is in a low viability area or where significant development is planned on several large strategic sites". It also proposed to allow authorities to "set rates which better reflect the uplift in land values between a proposed and existing use". Other measures to be consulted on would include "speeding up the process of setting and revising CIL to make it easier to respond to changes in the market".

Implications for Leeds

7. The Leeds Site Allocations Plan (SAP) is at an advanced stage, with the Core Strategy Selective Review (CSSR) progressing to timetable. Because of these respective timetables, due to transitional arrangements, they will not be 'caught' by these new proposals. The SAP remains at examination and following the close of consultation on resubmission proposals (26th February) is due to reconvene with stage 2 Hearings (Housing) in July 2018. The CSSR is at Publication draft consultation stage, with consultation due to close on 23rd March, with submission to the Secretary of State planned for September 2018.
8. In launching the consultation proposals, the MHCLG have confirmed that local planning authorities will have six months from publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (anticipated in the summer) to submit local plans for examination under the old framework. Transitional arrangements are proposed which will apply the current framework to the examining of plans which are submitted on or before the date which is six months after the date of the publication of the new framework.

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