

Twenty-six things clerks need to know about the government's consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework

The government has published its long anticipated and delayed prospectus 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy' setting out its proposed revisions the National Planning Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF covers all planning issues and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

The key proposals or areas of interest to clerks are outlined below:

1. **It is big.** It is over 50 pages, spans most of the planning system and poses 58 questions.
2. **A key theme is determining how to assess how many new homes need to be built and this should be distributed.** The government remains committed to its manifesto commitment of building of 300,000 new homes a year. It is not proposing any major changes to the existing national formula used to distribute this housing target across local authorities but will enable them plan for fewer homes in special circumstances "taking into account what should be protected in each area - be that our precious Green Belt or national parks, the character or an area, or heritage assets". Local authorities will also be able to bring forward their own method for assessing housing needs if they have exceptional circumstances, such as unusual demographic and geographic factors.
3. **Local planning authorities (LPAs) will be not required to alter Green Belt boundaries** if this would be the only way of meeting their housing need.
4. **Nor will they be required to build at high densities** (which would be significantly out-of-character with the existing area) if this would be the only way of meeting their housing need.
5. **The requirement for LPAs with an up-to-date local plan to continually demonstrate a five-year housing land supply will be removed.**
6. **They will also not be required to have a buffer of 5%, 10% or 20% on top of their 5-year housing land supply.**
7. **The uplift of 35 per cent to the assessed housing need for the 20 largest towns and cities in England will be retained.**
8. **Additional protections for neighbourhood plans** where a LPA's policies for the area covered by the neighbourhood plan are out-of-date.
9. **The process to prepare Local Plan** will be simplified such as relaxing the 'soundness' text through which they are examined.
10. **The provision of Social Rent homes to be enhanced.**

11. **More to be done to support the supply of specialist older people's housing.**
12. **Measures to encourage more community led housing developments especially affordable housing.**
13. **Past "irresponsible planning behaviour" by developers could in future be taken into account when applications are being determined.**
14. **Government data will be published on developers of sites over a certain size who fail to build out according to their commitments.** Such developers also may be subject to financial penalties.
15. **References to "Well-designed" to be changed to "Well designed and beautiful".**
16. **To consult on whether permitted development rights can be moderated by Design Codes.**
17. **Mansard roofs to be encouraged.**
18. **Seeking views on how planning policy can be strengthened to promote small-scale changes that can enhance biodiversity and support wildlife recovery including restricting the use of artificial grass by developers.**
19. **Food production value of land to be a consideration in the determination of planning decisions.**
20. **More measures aimed at supporting energy efficiency especially onshore wind development.**
21. **Reformed plan-making system to be introduced in late 2024.** LPAs will be required to start work on new plans by, at the latest, five years after adoption of their previous plan, and to adopt that new plan within 30 months.
22. **Plan-makers will have until 30 June 2025 to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, etc.** for independent examination under the existing legal framework.
23. **Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) will be replaced by Supplementary Plans, which will be afforded the same weight as a local plan.**
24. **The new National Development Management Policies (NDPMs) to be published as a separate document and have statutory weight.** The concept is that such 'general' development control policies will be set by the government through the NDMP rather than LPAs.
25. In addition, to the reforms contained in the prospectus the government has also stated that it proposes to consult on measures to **give places greater local control over tourism accommodation** including a tourist accommodation registration scheme and reviewing the Use Classes Order.

26. The deadline for comments is 11.45pm on 2 March 2023.

Further information including a copy of the consultation document and how to consult can be found at [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy)