

## Reforms to national planning policy

### Briefing Note No. 23-08

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1. On 22 December 2022, Government published its consultation '[Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy](#)'. It sought views:
  - On [changes](#) to the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to be in place spring 2023, subject to the outcome of the consultation;
  - To inform future changes to the NPPF, subject to the implementation of proposals on wider changes to the planning system, including the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
2. The council has now responded, and the full response can be found at the end of this note. It has been produced following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning. A few areas are highlighted below, which may be of interest. Further information on the five-year housing land supply and housing delivery test can be found in [Briefing Note No. 22-09](#)<sup>1</sup>.
3. In response to the questions about the five-year housing land supply, the council agrees with the removal of the need to continually demonstrate a five-year housing land supply for up-to-date plans. It has also made the point that it does not agree to having to demonstrate a deliverable five-year housing land supply as a point of principle in decision making, but would welcome a reduced four-year housing land supply applying to Wiltshire.
4. The council also welcomes the proposed changes for Neighbourhood Plans to give them protection for five years rather than two years when applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This will help to incentivise communities to plan for their area, enabling them to monitor and review their plans in an effective and timely way.
5. The council has also shared concerns about the Government's standard method for calculating local housing need, but welcomes the proposal to elevate from guidance to policy the principle that the standard method is a starting point for plan making.
6. Another area is the proposed changes covering renewable energy, including wind and solar. These are not substantial changes and include repowering (i.e. the renewal of

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 16 to 21

existing facilities when they are life expired), which is supported in principle, subject to impacts being properly considered. In addition, the policy for onshore wind does not represent significant change, but provides clarification about the need to address community support for proposals and impacts that are identified by the local community.

8. The full response is provided below, and also includes the council's responses to proposed changes to the Housing Delivery Test, more homes for social rent, older people's housing, sites for small builders, and community-led developments; plus transitional arrangements for the new planning system.

RESPONSE TO LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL: REFORMS TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION

Chapter 3 - Providing certainty through local and neighbourhood plans		
Reforming the 5 year housing land supply (5YHLS)		
Q1	Do you agree that local planning authorities should not have to continually demonstrate a deliverable five- year housing land supply (5YHLS) as long as the housing requirement set out in its strategic policies is less than five years old?	Yes, the removal of the need to continually demonstrate 5YHLS for up-to-date plans incentivises local authorities to keep their plans up to date and address any shortfalls that could arise through the plan led system. However, Wiltshire Council does not agree to having to demonstrate a deliverable 5YHLS as a point of principle in decision making. See response to Q16.
Q2	Do you agree that buffers should not be required as part of 5YHLS calculations (this includes the 20% buffer as applied by the Housing Delivery Test)?	Yes, this artificially inflates the requirement. The removal of the need to continually demonstrate 5YHLS for up-to-date plans incentivises local authorities to keep their plans up to date and address any shortfalls that could arise through the plan led system.
Q3	Should an oversupply of homes early in a plan period be taken into consideration when calculating a 5YHLS later on or is there an alternative approach that is preferable?	<p>Yes. The planning practice guidance provides significant detail on shortfalls in housing completions (undersupply) when calculating a 5YHLS but little, if any, guidance is provided on consideration of over-supply of housing completions, which needs to be addressed.</p> <p>However, the emphasis needs to be more on whether the local planning authority is making good progress towards meeting its overall housing requirements rather than being measured against a five-year housing land supply. Even though there is a significant pool of committed sites (allocations and planning permissions) and local plans have made provision for new homes, market conditions and commercial decisions can determine how quickly sites are brought forward or built out, which in turn affects a local planning authority's ability to demonstrate 'deliverable' supply.</p>

		See response to Q4.
Q4	What should any planning guidance dealing with oversupply and undersupply say?	<p>See response Q3.</p> <p>There needs to be a method that considers the inconsistencies in housing delivery year on year. The emphasis needs to be more on whether the local planning authority is making good progress towards meeting its overall housing requirements.</p> <p>In the past there has been what were known as both the 'Liverpool' and 'Sedgefield' approach that could be applied when considering housing land supply. The former enabled authorities to smooth out any under/over delivery (undersupply/oversupply of housing completions) across the remaining plan period thereby acknowledging the housing delivery may not be consistent but result in peaks and troughs across it. Current reliance on the 'Sedgefield' approach in planning guidance expects any shortfall in delivery to be met within the next five-years thereby increasing the five-year land supply target. This does not recognise the fluctuations in delivery that can take place, often due to commercial decisions which are outside local planning authorities' control, and in front loading undersupply makes the five-year target harder to meet resulting in more speculative proposals rather than plan-led development.</p>
<b>Boosting the status of Neighbourhood Plans</b>		
Q5	Do you have any views about the potential changes to paragraph 14 of the existing Framework and increasing the protection given to neighbourhood plans?	<p>This is a welcome change and will help incentivise communities to plan for their area, enabling them to monitor and review their plans in an effective and timely way.</p> <p>Neighbourhood plans are a considerable investment by local communities and the perverse consequence of the two-year protection has meant that they feel they must review and update their plans every two years. This is not an effective way to plan and places the emphasis on protection rather than positive planning by communities.</p> <p>The five-year period also aligns with much needed Government funding for local authorities supporting neighbourhood plans - currently no funding can be claimed if a plan is reviewed and updated within the first five years after it is made.</p>
<b>Chapter 4 - Planning for housing</b>		

Q6	Do you agree that the opening chapters of the Framework should be revised to be clearer about the importance of planning for the homes and other development our communities need?	The change helps to recognise the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, and importance of planning for the growing needs of communities.
<b>Local housing need and the standard method</b>		
Q7	What are your views on the implications these changes may have on plan-making and housing supply?	<p>The standard method is considered by many local communities to be unfair; they do not understand why there is the need to plan significantly above the household projections for an area through the application of an affordability factor, which can result in a significant increase. Notwithstanding this, elevating from guidance to policy the principle that the standard method is a starting point for plan making is welcomed.</p> <p>However, while it is recognised that the method is not going to be reviewed in the short term it is considered that there does need to be a change to the current planning practice guidance (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 2a-008-20190220) to 'fix' the standard method outcome earlier in the plan making process so not to disrupt plans going through the transitional arrangements. Changes to the affordability factor through the publication of the median work-place affordability ratio can have a significant effect on the level of need to be planned for. For example, the March 2022 change resulted in around 1,000 additional homes in Wiltshire's plan area to be planned for.</p> <p>While the proposed changes to varying degrees (see response to other questions about planning for housing) may help support plan making and in turn the delivery of housing supply, expectation has been raised within local communities that local planning authorities can easily reduce the number of homes to be planned for (from the standard method as a starting point) in setting a housing requirement, which will not be the case for many areas.</p>
<b>Introducing new flexibilities to meeting housing needs</b>		
Q8	Do you agree that policy and guidance should be clearer on what may constitute an	As circumstances are exceptional, it is understood that most authorities will be expected to still use the standard method. The commitment to review the standard method in due course is

	<p>exceptional circumstance for the use of an alternative approach for assessing local housing needs? Are there other issues we should consider alongside those set out above?</p>	<p>therefore welcomed but it needs to move away from seeking to achieve an aspirational national figure that is unrealistic.</p> <p>In addition, it should not be subject to change once plan development has commenced, which can happen due to the annual publication of the median work-place affordability ratio - this will be particularly important with the new planning system and 30-month plan preparation period.</p> <p>In the interim, prior to the review of the standard method, the bigger issue is perhaps more about the circumstances when it will be acceptable to set a housing requirement that doesn't meet need because of constraints to development in an area. See response to Q9.</p>
Q9	<p>Do you agree that national policy should make clear that Green Belt does not need to be reviewed or altered when making plans, that building at densities significantly out of character with an existing area may be considered in assessing whether housing need can be met, and that past over-supply may be taken into account?</p>	<p>The continuation of policy to allow local planning authorities to review and alter Green Belt boundaries in exceptional circumstances would be welcomed. However, there is concern that the introduction of the new wording would lead to neighbouring authorities on the outer edge of Green Belts being put under more pressure to accommodate need from elsewhere, which in turn could disrupt the progression of their plans given the ongoing requirement for plans to provide for "<i>any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas</i>" (paragraph 66, NPPF). This is exacerbated further where the urban uplift comes into consideration. For this reason, the change is objected to.</p> <p>While the recognition that densities significantly out of character with an existing area may be a valid reason for not meeting need, there are other equally genuine constraints not explicitly mentioned that apply also and should be referred to. Such constraints include timing of essential infrastructure needed (such as water and energy capacity) and bringing forward mitigation measures that are necessary to meet Habitat Regulations (such as preventing pollution of water courses).</p> <p>The indicative changes to the NPPF at paragraph 11(b)(iii) refer to "past over-delivery" in terms of the number of homes permitted compared to the housing requirement - this is confusing, and it is not clear what is intended here, as delivery tends to relate to homes completed whereas supply relates to future completions and permissions.</p>
Q10	<p>Do you have views on what evidence local planning authorities should be expected to</p>	<p>No. This is likely to be an issue for urban authorities, their views will be particularly important as to what would be reasonable and proportionate evidence.</p>

	provide when making the case that need could only be met by building at densities significantly out of character with the existing area?	
Q11	Do you agree with removing the explicit requirement for plans to be 'justified', on the basis of delivering a more proportionate approach to examination?	Yes, the changes to the test of soundness so that plans are only subject to proportionate assessment and in particular the requirement for them to meet needs " <i>so far as possible, taking into account the policies in this Framework</i> " (paragraph 36) is welcomed. It is recognised (as emphasised in the prospectus) that this does not take away the need for plans to be appropriately evidenced, effective and deliverable. The reality will be, given the purpose of the examination process and the role of Inspectors to scrutinise plans, that plans still need to be properly justified in the light of the other tests.
Q12	Do you agree with our proposal to not apply revised tests of soundness to plans at more advanced stages of preparation? If no, which if any, plans should the revised tests apply to?	No. It would be preferable for as many plans as possible to benefit from the new tests provided it can be done in a legally robust way to incentivise plans to continue and not be delayed.
Q13	Do you agree that we should make a change to the Framework on the application of the urban uplift?	Clarification on the application of the urban uplift is needed so that it does not complicate plan making in other areas. See response to Q15.
Q14	What, if any, additional policy or guidance could the department provide which could help support authorities plan for more homes in urban areas where the uplift applies?	The issue is perhaps less about urban areas needing better guidance or policies but more that urban areas are, in many respects, unable to meet their housing targets because they are constrained, and the delivery of urban regeneration and brownfield sites can be more complex than greenfield.
Q15	How, if at all, should neighbouring authorities consider the urban	The uplift could have the unintended consequence of cascading development from urban centres to rural areas contrary to the objectives of the approach. To help prevent this national

	<p>uplift applying, where part of those neighbouring authorities also functions as part of the wider economic, transport or housing market for the core town/city?</p>	<p>policy should clearly state that any urban uplift should not be met on the outer edge of a designated Green Belt.</p>
<p><b>Enabling communities with plans already in the system to benefit from changes</b></p>		
<p>Q16</p>	<p>Do you agree with the proposed four-year rolling land supply requirement for emerging plans, where work is needed to revise the plan to take account of revised national policy on addressing constraints and reflecting any past over-supply? If no, what approach should be taken, if any?</p>	<p>Wiltshire Council does not agree with having to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply as a point of principle. This is because delivering the supply is largely out of the hands of local planning authorities and puts too much power in the hands of housebuilders (for instance holding back developing where they have other land holding interests).</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, introducing a shorter housing land supply requirement will ease the burden on local planning authorities. On the basis that supply tests are being retained, the benefit of the time-limited four-year rolling housing land supply requirement should apply to <u>all</u> local authority areas that are exposed to speculative development because of out-of-date plans provided they are actively moving forward with plans to meet housing needs and allocate land for housing under the current system. This will incentivise local planning authorities to get their plans in place as soon as possible and would also prevent planning applications prejudicing the content of the plan and diverting resources away from plan making.</p> <p>Paragraph 226 of Annex 1 (as proposed to be changed) needs amending to reflect the scope and flexibility of Regulation 18. Regulation 18 does not prescribe the publication of a revised policies map. The wording should therefore more appropriately say:</p> <p>“...consultation which included preferred sites towards meeting housing need”.</p> <p>This would provide appropriate safeguards for local planning authorities like Wiltshire who are actively progressing their local plans with full public engagement to benefit from the changes.</p>
<p>Q17</p>	<p>Do you consider that the additional guidance on constraints should apply to plans continuing to be prepared under the transitional arrangements set out</p>	<p>This is not applicable to Wiltshire but appears to refer to plans submitted prior to 24 January 2019.</p>



	in the existing Framework paragraph 220?	
<b>Taking account of permissions granted in the Housing Delivery Test (HDT)</b>		
Q18	Do you support adding an additional permissions-based test that will 'switch off' the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development where an authority can demonstrate sufficient permissions to meet its housing requirement?	Yes, with the retention of the housing delivery test this is a reasonable approach to take, although it is unlikely to apply to Wiltshire given its performance against the test. It has the potential to help in situations where the lack of delivery is due to housebuilder inactivity rather than any shortage of land released.
Q19	Do you consider that the 115% 'switch-off' figure (required to turn off the presumption in favour of sustainable development Housing Delivery Test consequence) is appropriate?	It is not clear on what evidential basis the 115% has been selected.  There is the added complication that housing delivery is largely out of the hands of local planning authorities so they should not be penalised when housebuilders chose not to develop for commercial reasons and delay delivery.
Q20	Do you have views on a robust method for counting deliverable homes permissioned for these purposes?	The housing delivery test (like the five-year housing land supply) is perceived to form part of a system that benefits the development industry whilst penalising local planning authorities for housebuilders delivering slowly, which is counter productive.  As the emphasis is still on 'deliverable' permissions this is likely to play in the hands of developers further because of the definition in Annex 2 on what a deliverable site is and result in lengthy assessment and challenge as to what is included. It is noted that the wording in new footnote 49 does not refer to the term 'deliverable' in the application of the test, which should be used.
Q21	What are your views on the right approach to applying Housing Delivery Test consequences pending the 2022 results?	No comment.

## Chapter 5 - A planning system for communities

### More homes for social rent

Q22	Do you agree that the government should revise national planning policy to attach more weight to Social Rent in planning policies and decisions? If yes, do you have any specific suggestions on the best mechanisms for doing this?	<p>Greater emphasis should be given to Social Rent to reflect changing needs of communities, but this should not undermine the right balance of tenures being sought in line with local needs, which may differ between local authority areas. It is however recognised that the existing planning system already supports delivery of this tenure as well as Affordable Rent.</p> <p>Evidence is suggesting that many households in need of affordable rented accommodation in Wiltshire would now benefit from Social Rent, as they are not able to afford an Affordable Rent. However, local needs should determine the appropriate balance between Social and Affordable Rents to ensure that overall affordable housing delivery is maximised, and local needs are met. This is because cost implications associated with each tenure can have a different bearing on viability and thus the overall number of affordable homes that can be delivered.</p> <p>There should be no expectation to deliver Affordable Rent and Social Rent on the same site (unless evidence suggests this is needed) as this could lead to perceived unfairness and potential challenge from residents who are occupying an identical property to their neighbours and paying a higher rent.</p>
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### More older people's housing

Q23	Do you agree that we should amend existing paragraph 62 of the Framework to support the supply of specialist older people's housing?	<p>The existing Framework does not discourage the supply of specialist older people's homes so the changes will not make a significant difference.</p> <p>The amendment to refer to "retirement housing, housing with social care and care homes" as examples of older peoples housing though does provide further clarification. However, there also needs to be emphasis on the adaptability of new homes in general to allow older people (and others) to live independently for longer alongside specialist provision.</p> <p>Linked to this is the need to amend M4(2) Building Regulation standards to include those elements, previously in Lifetime Homes standards, which would assist older people (and others) to live in their own homes longer, so avoiding the need for specialist housing. For example, the</p>
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		potential for an entrance level bedspace, and provision of entrance level WC and shower drainage.
<b>More small sites for small builders</b>		
Q24	Do you have views on the effectiveness of the existing small sites policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (set out in paragraph 69 of the existing Framework)?	<p>This would benefit from review, as it can be difficult to identify small sites to the extent required in national planning policy within strategic local plans. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments are often dominated by sites much larger than one hectare and the ability of local plans to bring forward small and medium sized sites is therefore limited. Small sites tend to be delivered as windfall sites and to a degree through neighbourhood plans where communities often prefer to see smaller sites come forward. Similarly, Brownfield Land Registers are not identifying few sites due to the fact many come forward as windfalls at the planning application stage.</p> <p>While there is an expectation for local planning authorities to work with developers to encourage division of large sites to help speed up delivery, without any requirement beyond ‘encourage’ this remains difficult to achieve.</p>
Q25	How, if at all, do you think the policy could be strengthened to encourage greater use of small sites, especially those that will deliver high levels of affordable housing?	Greater recognition could be given to the complementary role neighbourhood plans can take in providing smaller sites to complement the strategic allocations in local plans.
<b>More community-led developments</b>		
Q26	Should the definition of “affordable housing for rent” in the Framework glossary be amended to make it easier for organisations that are not Registered Providers – in particular, community-led developers and almshouses – to develop new affordable homes?	<p>No, there needs to be the accountability and scrutiny that registration affords. Community-led housing groups currently successfully work alongside Registered Providers that specialise in rural delivery.</p> <p>If groups, other than Registered Providers, are allowed to deliver affordable rented housing, there would need to be some type of registration and on-going checks to ensure that adequate procedures and practices are in place to protect the tenant. It would be preferable for this to be</p>

		<p>in a less onerous way so that it doesn't discourage community-led groups / almshouses to register with the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure scrutiny.</p> <p>Any addition to the groups that can deliver affordable rented housing would have to be clearly defined and should be required to comply with the Council's adopted Allocations Policy (unless otherwise agreed with the Council) to ensure that developers / landowners are not able to 'select' tenants in a way which is contrary to adopted policies and procedures.</p>
Q27	Are there any changes that could be made to exception site policy that would make it easier for community groups to bring forward affordable housing?	It would be preferable to have separate Rural Exception Site and Community-Led Exception Site policies. Rural Exception Site policy is not always suitable for community-led developments. Community-led groups may want to deliver tenures other than Affordable Housing in perpetuity in order to meet identified needs in their community e.g. market bungalows to facilitate downsizing or self-build plots. It would therefore be preferable to introduce a Community Led Development Exception policy, which would allow provision of some market homes and non-residential uses e.g., village halls. See response to Q28 also.
Q28	Is there anything else that you think would help community groups in delivering affordable housing on exception sites?	The main issue about delivery of exception sites is the willingness of landowners to make their land available. The ability to use some market housing to help incentivise landowners could be considered but care needs to be taken to ensure that this does not generate 'hope value' on land and in turn effect the viability of the scheme. Skills and resources within local communities is also a barrier.
Q29	Is there anything else national planning policy could do to support community-led developments?	See response to Q28.
Q30	Do you agree in principle that an applicant's past behaviour should be taken into account into decision making?	<p>Past behaviour in relation to planning enforcement issues is subjective and complex, and this change would be easy to interpret in the wrong way.</p> <p>The commitment in the prospectus to undertake further engagement with local planning authorities on this is supported.</p>

Q31	Of the two options above, what would be the most effective mechanism? Are there any alternative mechanisms?	<p>If one of the options is to be brought in, Option 2 that enable local authorities to decline to determine planning applications submitted by applicants who have a demonstrated a track record of past irresponsible behaviour would be preferable to Option 1 that requires it to be done at the decision-making stage.</p> <p>However, the ability to apply either option would be highly subjective and thus challenging for local planning authorities to administer.</p>
<b>More build out</b>		
Q32	Do you agree that the three build out policy measures that we propose to introduce through policy will help incentivise developers to build out more quickly? Do you have any comments on the design of these policy measures?	<p>In principle more needs to be done to ensure that developers build out the homes that have either been committed on sites through the development plan process (allocations), as well as planning permissions. The principle of incentivising delivery is welcomed but the changes may only have minimal effect and financial measures may also be needed to incentivise build out.</p> <p>With respect to measure (b) and requiring developers to explain how they propose to increase the diversity of tenures to maximise the rate at which homes are sold or occupied, this needs to be expanded to include the unit size, housing type and distribution of each tenure / unit size / housing type - as these also impact on the absorption rate.</p> <p>More evidence to demonstrate commitment to delivery for major planning applications is required at the planning application stage to allow for greater transparency about how and when the site will be brought forward for development following the initial grant of planning permission. This will allow any delays following initial grant of planning permission due to land negotiations etc. to be understood, as well as provide information on housing trajectories and timings to achieve full consents to enable development to start and complete.</p> <p>It may be helpful if developers were incentivised to develop, for instance through positive taxation policies or financial penalties for unbuilt properties.</p> <p>Taxation policies could be used to support development of major sites such as sustainable urban extensions ahead of smaller sites that tend to be easier to develop.</p> <p>The use of taxation policies to incentivise the early development of allocated sites and thus support the plan-led system would be the most effective mechanism. For instance, a landowner</p>

		could be taxed if they chose to not bring forward a site, contrary to assertions they have made when promoting a site through the local plan. Alternatively, they could receive favourable taxation incentives if they do bring forward allocated sites more promptly than what was set out in the housing trajectory at local plan stage.
<b>Chapter 6 - Asking for beauty</b>		
<b>Ask for beauty</b>		
Q33	Do you agree with making changes to emphasise the role of beauty and placemaking in strategic policies and to further encourage well-designed and beautiful development?	<p>The continued emphasis on well-designed development and place-making alongside 'beauty' is welcomed. The concept of beauty, however, is subjective meaning different things to different people and could be used by communities as a tool to oppose development.</p> <p>Policies are already in place to deliver high quality urban design and architecture. The problem is that planning teams are over-worked, under-resourced and lack the skills and conviction to resist poor quality development. The presumption in favour concept favours average quality design because local planning authorities are under pressure to approve development rather than fight for 'beautiful' places.</p>
Q34	Do you agree to the proposed changes to the title of Chapter 12, existing paragraphs 84a and 124c to include the word 'beautiful' when referring to 'well-designed places', to further encourage well-designed and beautiful development?	<p>See response to Q33.</p> <p>High quality urban design and place-making can be delivered using existing tools, policy and guidance. What is lacking is the resources for local planning authorities to appoint experienced planners and professional teams of urban designers who can spend the time negotiating high quality schemes.</p> <p>Local planning authorities should be empowered to resist poor or average quality development without fear of decisions being overturned at appeal. Local planning authorities barely have the resources to deal with normal caseloads without the pressure of time-consuming appeals relating to planning applications refused on urban design grounds which can be subjective.</p> <p>Government should empower local planning authorities to negotiate high quality design improvements and limit appeal options where developers resist changes. This is the key to 'beautiful' place making.</p>

<b>Refuse ugliness</b>		
Q35	Do you agree greater visual clarity on design requirements set out in planning conditions should be encouraged to support effective enforcement action?	<p>Yes. Changes to paragraph 35 (new paragraph 137) are generally supported but “approved use of materials” should be changed to “approved materials and landscaping”.</p> <p>Greater clarity is needed on design expectations particularly at outline and through pre-application advice as this can help establish whether scale of development is achievable as part of a well-designed scheme. Design quality intentions at outline schemes can become diluted when full details are progressed.</p>
<b>Embracing gentle density</b>		
Q36	Do you agree that a specific reference to mansard roofs in relation to upward extensions in Chapter 11, paragraph 122e of the existing framework is helpful in encouraging LPAs to consider these as a means of increasing densification/creation of new homes? If no, how else might we achieve this objective?	<p>It is not clear what urban design problem this change is seeking to address. It introduces a disproportionate level of detail for national planning policy.</p> <p>Local planning authorities already can support this type of development where this does not harm the landscape, heritage, or distinctiveness of an area. This change to national policy would provide further opportunity for inappropriate development, contrary to the ‘building beautiful’ concept.</p>
<b>Chapter 7 - Protecting the environment and tackling climate change</b>		
<b>Delivering biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery</b>		
Q37	How do you think national policy on small scale nature interventions could be strengthened? For example, in relation to the use of artificial grass by developers in new development?	<p>National policy could do more to support interventions that can be applied to fit local circumstances. Some examples of small scale nature interventions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Introducing measures to prevent developers clearing sites ahead of planning assessments.</li> <li>(ii) Preventing (incremental) loss of hedgerows and local trees by ensuring they are retained within communally managed areas and subject to management plans.</li> </ul>

		(iii) Taking advantage of co-benefits by requiring tree planting for wildlife that also reduces summer overheating/ adds 'beautification' / aids sustainable drainage.
<b>Recognising the food production value of farmland</b>		
Q38	Do you agree that this is the right approach making sure that the food production value of high value farm land is adequately weighted in the planning process, in addition to current references in the Framework on best most versatile agricultural land?	<p>The existing Framework already includes appropriate consideration of agricultural land in plan-making. The indicative change to footnote 67 proposes that the availability of agricultural land for food production should be considered alongside other policies in the Framework when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development.</p> <p>There also remains the existing problem of distinguishing between grades 3a and 3b – which is critical to determining whether land is best and most versatile, or not. Better data to distinguish Grade 3 land needs to be provided across England.</p>
<b>Climate change mitigation: exploring a form of carbon assessment</b>		
Q39	What method or measure could provide a proportionate and effective means of undertaking a carbon impact assessment that would incorporate all measurable carbon demand created from plan-making and planning decisions?	This is a huge question and one that is likely to be best resolved through working with private sustainability consultants or academics working in the fields of sustainability to come up with a meaningful standardised approach that can be easily understood and replicated. Consideration will need to be given to the different forms and scale of development to ensure a proportionate approach when considering individual developments.
<b>Climate adaptation and flood-risk management</b>		
Q40	Do you have any views on how planning policy could support climate change adaptation further, specifically through the use of nature-based solutions that provide multi-functional benefits?	Nature based solutions are to be supported and encouraged due to the well-known co-benefits. Further emphasis could be given to natural flood management catchment solutions in development proposals, alongside those necessary for the development itself. Opportunities are often missed to 'slow the flow' of water into catchments through improving the diversity of habitats as part of developments and in turn contributing to biodiversity net gain. Developers need to be encouraged to do proper green infrastructure assessments of potential to identify the multi-functional benefits sites can bring.



		Further emphasis could also be placed on the role that mineral site restoration can play in supporting climate change adaptation such as through flood alleviation and/or enhancing green and blue infrastructure networks.
<b>Chapter 8 - Onshore wind and energy efficiency</b>		
<b>Enabling the repowering of existing onshore wind turbines</b>		
Q41	Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 155 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?	<p>The proposed changes to paragraph 155 of the NPPF (renumbered paragraph 157) relates to all forms of “renewable and low carbon energy and heat” and not just onshore wind turbines. In introducing the change, the prospectus refers to the commitment in the British Energy Security Strategy to support the ‘repowering’ of existing onshore wind sites when they require updating or replacement to ensure existing sites continue to provide for energy generation.</p> <p>The change is limited in that it introduces the requirement for plans in providing a positive strategy for renewable and low carbon energy that “their future re-powering and maintenance” is also included. A plan-led approach to ‘repowering’ is welcomed as it will enable consideration of local circumstances including: the nature of the developments in an area and whether there are any restrictions on planning permissions that would need to be reconsidered, or significant changes that have occurred locally that may mean that a different approach is required. Such considerations and potential conflicts can be looked at in the context of the wider strategy for renewable energy generation in plans thus ensuring that authorities play their part in providing energy security and moving towards net zero.</p>
Q42	Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 158 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?	See response to Q41. The changes to paragraph 158 (renumbered paragraph 160) in effect creates a presumption in favour of repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites “where its impacts are or can be made acceptable”. A proper assessment of impacts is critically important.
<b>Introducing more flexibility to plan for new onshore wind deployment</b>		
Q43	Do you agree with the changes proposed to footnote 54 of the existing National Planning Policy	Changes proposed to existing footnote 54 (renumbered as footnote 63) do not radically change the current policy that restricts delivery of onshore wind energy but provide improved wording in requiring impacts identified by the local community to be satisfactorily addressed and for

	<p>Framework? Do you have any views on specific wording for new footnote 62?</p>	<p>community support to be demonstrated through consultation. The steps being taken to update guidance on what constitutes good practice for community engagement by developers is welcomed. This should be expanded to all forms of renewable energy including solar farms and not just wind.</p> <p>The reference to supplementary planning documents identifying an area for wind energy development (where the development plan includes policy on supporting energy) requires review. Such documents cannot propose land uses, which is a matter for the development plan.</p> <p>New footnote 62 is welcomed in principle as it helps clarify the vehicles other than planning applications that can deliver wind energy.</p>
<p><b>Barriers to energy efficiency</b></p>		
<p>Q44</p>	<p>Do you agree with our proposed Paragraph 161 in the National Planning Policy Framework to give significant weight to proposals which allow the adaptation of existing buildings to improve their energy performance?</p>	<p>Yes, this is a positive change in principle. Greater emphasis on the importance of adaptation while respecting the historic environment (conservation areas and listed buildings) is welcomed. In practice though this may not lead to significant change, as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Generally, energy efficiency measures are beyond the control of planning; and</li> <li>ii) Conservation areas and listed buildings have statutory protections (which will outweigh 'significant weight').</li> </ul> <p>The adaptation of existing homes to ensure they remain consistent with the objective of mitigating climate change impacts, rather than demolishing and replacing with new, is consistent with circular economy principles.</p> <p>Guidance to showcase how historic buildings and buildings of non-standard construction can be sensitively and viably adapted may be helpful to ensure there are no unintended consequences.</p> <p>Non-standard (e.g. traditional) construction which can be considered 'hard to treat' needs to be managed with great care to avoid inadvertently harmful impacts to the historic fabric (e.g. from lack of ventilation and breathability) from retrofitting measures. There is a risk that this policy change may inadvertently lead to harm to historic fabric and need for greater works, with greater carbon impacts. Local planning authorities will need to have the skills and resources to be able to consider applications.</p>

		Also, care needs to be had to ensure that this does not encourage proposals to replace traditional glazing with uPVC double glazing. There are clear embodied carbon issues (not to be mention heritage implications) which should be fully considered. Operational carbon savings could be similarly achieved through proper maintenance and secondary glazing. This causes less embodied carbon and can be more readily recycled at the end of its useful life.
<b>Chapter 9 - Preparing for the new system of plan-making</b>		
<b>Giving time to finalise and adopt plans already in development before the reformed plan-making system is introduced</b>		
Q45	Do you agree with the proposed timeline for finalising local plans, minerals and waste plans and spatial development strategies being prepared under the current system? If no, what alternative timeline would you propose?	Yes, submission of plans by 30 June 2025 and adoption by 31 December 2026 provides sufficient time for plans to be taken forward under the current system.
<b>Setting out the timeline for preparing local plans, spatial development strategies, minerals and waste plans and supplementary plans under the reformed system</b>		
Q46	Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements for plans under the future system? If no, what alternative arrangements would you propose?	<p>Yes. The timeline for authorities completing local plans under the current system to start work on new plans by at the latest five years after adoption is reasonable, as it respects the fact that plans will remain up to date for five years post adoption. Although, there is a lack of clarity about what is meant by the term 'start work'.</p> <p>The expectation for work to commence on plans more than five years old when the new system goes live (expected late 2024) that are not being updated through the current system is also reasonable. This means the first new style local plans could be adopted as early as April 2027 with examinations commencing in October 2026.</p> <p>However, we still have concerns about the ability to achieve adoption of the first round of new style plans within 30 months, particularly as not all local planning authorities are the same in terms of their size or complexity. This is considered arbitrary and unrealistic, particularly given the challenges for local planning authorities in recruitment and retention of skilled staff.</p>

Q47	Do you agree with the proposed timeline for preparing neighbourhood plans under the future system? If no, what alternative timeline would you propose?	Yes. It is noted that neighbourhood plans, like local plans, will need to be submitted for examination by 30 June 2025 to be progressed under the current system. This is a reasonable timeframe.
Q48	Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements for supplementary planning documents? If no, what alternative arrangements would you propose?	<p>It is agreed that there does need to be transitional arrangements for supplementary planning documents (SPDs) but the cut off as part of the adoption of new style plans would cause problems. In addition, the process for preparing new supplementary plans or how they are intended to link with the new style local plans is not clear.</p> <p>Additional time should be allowed for local authorities to plan for the expiry of SPDs and put alternatives in place where necessary to avoid a vacuum in decision making. The transition to the new system will take time to bed in and the focus initially should be on new style local plans.</p> <p>For authorities preparing local plans under the current system the expiry of SPDs on adoption of the new style plans is more reasonable. This will give time for SPDs to be reviewed and new supplementary plans to be prepared alongside new style local plans where necessary.</p>
<b>Chapter 10 - National Development Management Policies</b>		
Q49	Do you agree with the suggested scope and principles for guiding National Development Management Policies?	<p>In general, it is not clear what substantive benefits the introduction of National Development Management Policies will achieve in terms of speeding up plan making.</p> <p>On the basis National Development Management Policies are intended to generally have the same weight as local plans and neighbourhood plans in planning decisions these should be very limited in content to general policy principles only that are strategic, well established, and which are common to and can be applied (as appropriate) across England. They should not undermine the ability for locally distinctive policies to be prepared for different local authority areas. For example, well established general policies on Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, flood risk, conserving historic assets, mineral safeguarding etc.</p> <p>Policies should be capable of being added to, so should not be overly detailed, to reflect local distinctiveness and circumstances.</p>

Q50	What other principles, if any, do you believe should inform the scope of National Development Management Policies?	See response to Q49.
Q51	Do you agree that selective additions should be considered for proposals to complement existing national policies for guiding decisions?	See response to Q49.  It is essential that there should be the potential for local planning authorities to add locally distinctive policy requirements to complement and add to (but not repeat) national development management policies.
Q52	Are there other issues which apply across all or most of England that you think should be considered as possible options for National Development Management Policies?	Consideration should be given to national minerals safeguarding policy.
<b>Chapter 11 - Enabling Levelling Up</b>		
Q53	What, if any, planning policies do you think could be included in a new framework to help achieve the twelve levelling up missions in the Levelling Up White Paper?	No comment.
<b>Levelling up and boosting economic growth</b>		
Q54	How do you think that the framework could better support development that will drive economic growth and productivity in every part of the country, in support of the Levelling Up agenda?	No comment.

Q55	Do you think that the government could go further in national policy, to increase development on brownfield land within city and town centres, with a view to facilitating gentle densification of our urban cores?	The importance of increasing development on brownfield land is recognised but policy should not be so prescriptive to prevent local circumstances being considered. Improved delivery of national policy could be achieved with complementary funding measures by Government to help bring forward opportunities. To enable more areas to access funding and capitalise on brownfield land potential requires reasonable timeframes to bid and longer timeframes for developments to be completed in.
<b>Levelling up and boosting pride in place</b>		
Q56	Do you think that the government should bring forward proposals to update the framework as part of next year's wider review to place more emphasis on making sure that women, girls and other vulnerable groups in society feel safe in our public spaces, including for example policies on lighting/street lighting?	Positive urban design principles are already secured via national and local planning policies and by urban design tools. The safety of everyone in society is important. The framework should adequately consider the needs of all groups when considering what planning policy is required at national level.
<b>Chapter 13 - Practical changes and next steps</b>		
Q57	Are there any specific approaches or examples of best practice which you think we should consider to improve the way that national planning policy is presented and accessed?	<p>To make national planning policy more accessible, there should be a single national planning policy document.</p> <p>National Planning Policy for Waste should be amalgamated within the NPPF to provide greater emphasis on the importance of sustainable waste management in the context of climate change and economic growth, and proper consideration of sustainable waste management by all local planning authorities.</p> <p>Similarly, the opportunity should be taken to review and amalgamate Planning policy for traveller sites.</p>