



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Planning and Development	Central Lancashire Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Committee	Wednesday, 7 February 2024

National Planning Policy Framework Update

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the changes related to Local Plans in the revised National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendations

2. To note the contents of the report

Reasons for recommendations

3. Not applicable

Other options considered and rejected

4. Not applicable

Corporate priorities

5. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Healthy and happy communities
Opportunities for everyone	Green and clean neighbourhood

Revised National Planning Policy Framework

6. In December 2023 the government published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), following consultation which ran during early 2023. The NPPF

sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Reforms to Housing Delivery

7. The biggest change is that the revised NPPF introduces various reforms to housing delivery by giving local planning authorities a strong incentive to update their Local Plans.

Changes to the Five-Year Land Supply and Delivery Requirements

8. Under the previous version of the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) were required to continually demonstrate a deliverable five-year housing land supply. The updated NPPF however states that LPAs will not need to meet this requirement provided their adopted plan is less than five years old, and that it identified "at least a five-year supply of specific, deliverable sites at the time its examination concluded" (para 76b).
9. There is also a reduced requirement for LPAs with a Local Plan underway (paras 76 + 226) – i.e. where a Local Plan has been consulted on, either under Regulation 18 (Preferred Options), Regulation 19 (Publication), or submitted for examination. If the draft Local Plan includes a policies map and proposed housing allocations, those LPAs will only have to demonstrate a four-year housing land supply. This change only applies for two years from the publication date of the revised NPPF – i.e. 19th December 2025.
10. As a result, it is estimated that 40% of local planning authorities will no longer be required to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. This is important, as if an LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, then in the process of deciding planning applications, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies.
11. That presumption (also known as the 'Tilted Balance') means that permission should be granted for sustainable development (unless the application of NPPF policies to protect assets or areas of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusal, or the adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits). The Tilted Balance results in an increased possibility of planning permission being granted, particularly by appeal. The change means that local authorities who are no longer required demonstrate a five-year housing land supply will be better protected against unplanned or speculative development, as the Tilted Balance will not apply. The changes provide an incentive to local planning authorities to keep their local plans up to date, so there is no need to continually demonstrate a five-year supply of land for housing.

Changes to the Assessment of Housing Supply

12. Under the previous version of the NPPF, all LPAs were required to include a buffer of 5% (by default), 10% (or 20% (if there has been significant under delivery of new homes in the preceding three years) into their calculations on five-year housing land supply. In the updated NPPF, the 5% and 10% buffers have been removed but the 20% buffer has been retained, where delivery falls below 85% of the requirement over the three previous years.
13. In addition, historic over supply can be accounted for in the five-year housing land supply calculation, and further guidance on this will follow.

Greater Flexibility for Local Authorities in Assessing Local Housing Need

14. New text has been added to the NPPF at paragraph 60, clarifying that the overall aim for LPAs, in the context of delivering homes, should be to “meet as much of an area’s identified housing need as possible”.
15. At paragraph 61, the revised NPPF also now clarifies that the standard method for calculating need, to establish the number of homes required, is now considered as an “advisory starting point”.
16. As a result of these changes, LPAs now have slightly more flexibility when defining the quantum of housing it intends to plan for.

Housing Need

17. There have been some changes introduced in the revised NPPF relating to specific categories of housing need.
 - Retirement housing – new paragraph has been added to para 63, requiring planning authorities to assess local need for retirement and care housing provision, and then reflect this need in their policies.
 - Support for small sites – new paragraph 70, requires local authorities to support small sites for community-led and self/custom build housing.
 - Support for community led development – NPPF para 73 requires that local authorities should support exception sites for “community-led development” (defined within Annex 2) on sites that would not otherwise be suitable as rural exception sites (i.e. 100% affordable housing).

Alteration of Greenbelt Boundaries

18. To justify changing boundaries of Greenbelt, Local Planning Authorities have always needed to justify there are exceptional circumstances for this. The tests include being able to show that it has:
 - Made as much use of possible suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
 - Optimised the density of development in accordance with Chapter 11 of the NPPF; and
 - Discussed with neighbouring planning authorities whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development.
19. New paragraph 145 of the revised NPPF however states that there is now no requirement to alter Greenbelt boundaries during plan-making. The significance of this change is that local plans which are challenged on the basis that they have not proposed greenbelt alterations to meet its targets, are more likely to be found ‘sound’.

Allocation of Agricultural Land for Development

20. At paragraph 181, the revised NPPF now requires local authorities to consider the availability of agricultural land used for food production when allocating sites for development. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

Climate change and air quality

21. The work noted in this report has an overall neutral impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

22. There are no impacts at this stage and the Local Plan itself is subject to a comprehensive impact assessment and EIA which must be published alongside the draft plan when submitted to the Planning Inspectorate

Risk

23. There is a risk register in place for the preparation of the Local Plan, the main risks are associated with the programme and the absolute deadlines imposed by the Government of submission by 30th June 2025 and adoption by 31st December 2026.

Background documents

24. The National Planning Policy Framework December 2023.

Appendices

25. There are no appendices.

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