

APPENDIX 6.2
NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK POLICIES

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in December 2023 and sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- The presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF. Sustainable development is defined in paragraph 8 of the NPPF, and includes three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: these being economic, social and environmental factors.
- Sustainable development aims to support a strong, responsive and competitive economy, whilst achieving vibrant and healthy communities whose present and future needs are met by providing sufficient housing with accessible local services, a high-quality built environment, making efficient use of land, protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment and adapting to climate change.
- In that vein, **Paragraph 11** highlights how to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development; for decision taking, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed;
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- **Paragraph 38** relates to decision making and states that LPAs should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- **Paragraph 48** states that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
 - a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
 - b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

- Chapter 6 concerns the government priority of building a strong competitive economy, **paragraph 85** starts by setting out that planning decisions should:

*...help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation⁴², and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential **Paragraph 83** adds that planning decision should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.*

- **Paragraph 88** adds that planning decision should

Recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

- Chapter 7 concerns ensuring the vitality of town centres, with **paragraph 90** setting out that Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.

- **Paragraph 92** adds that:

When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre.

- **Paragraph 94** states that:

When assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace). This should include assessment of:

a) the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and

b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).

- Chapter 8 concerns promoting healthy and safe communities with **paragraph 96** stating that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and beautiful buildings which:

a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;

b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of beautiful, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and

c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

- **Paragraph 102** adds that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.

- Chapter 9 concerns promoting sustainable transport, **paragraph 114** sets out that in assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;

b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;

c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and

d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

- **Paragraph 115** is clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

- Within this context, **paragraph 116** adds that applications for development should:

a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;

b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;

c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;

d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and

e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

- **Paragraph 117** states that all developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed.

- Chapter 12 concerns achieving well designed and beautiful places, with **paragraph 131** stating that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

- **Paragraph 135** adds that planning decisions should ensure that developments:
 - a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

- **Paragraph 137** sets out that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

- Chapter 13 concerns protecting Green Belt land, **paragraph 142** starts by stating that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

- **Paragraph 143** adds that Green Belt serves five purposes:
 - a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- **Paragraph 152** states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

- **Paragraph 153** adds that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- Chapter 14 concerns meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, **Paragraph 162** states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and

b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.

- **Paragraph 173** sets out that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment.

- **Paragraph 175** adds that major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. The systems used should:

a) take account of advice from the lead local flood authority;

b) have appropriate proposed minimum operational standards;

c) have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development; and d) where possible, provide multifunctional benefits.

- Chapter 15 concerns conserving and enhancing the natural environment, **paragraph 180** sets out that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

- Chapter 16 concerns conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in terms of determining applications, **paragraph 200** states that:

Local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.