

What is the National Planning Policy Framework?

Introduction

The [Framework](#) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and came into effect in March 2012. It replaces over a thousand pages of planning policy statements and planning policy guidance previously issued by the Government with a document of around fifty pages.

It provides the basis for local planning authorities to prepare their Local Plans and for communities producing Neighbourhood Plans.

Achieving sustainable development

The Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

The Framework also introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It adds that this should be the 'golden thread' that runs throughout plan making and decision-taking on planning applications.

What is meant by sustainable development?

The Framework contains sections which, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice for the planning system. These are:

1. Building a strong, competitive economy
2. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy
4. Promoting sustainable transport
5. Supporting high quality communications infrastructure
6. Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
7. Requiring good design
8. Promoting healthy communities
9. Protecting Green Belt land
10. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
13. Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

Local Plans

Local Plans must be consistent with the principles and policies set out in the Framework, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

They should seek opportunities to achieve each of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and net gains across all three.

The Framework says that Local Plans should set out the strategic policies for the area and positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area. They should be based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Framework states that Neighbourhood Plans should support the strategic development needs of the wider area set out in the Local Plan. They should not promote less development or undermine its strategic policies.

It adds that Neighbourhood Plans should plan positively to shape and direct development that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 require a Town or Parish Council, or Neighbourhood Forum, to submit a statement to the local planning authority along with their draft plan. This should outline how the proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan meet certain basic conditions. This includes having regard to national policy and guidance.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with the Framework.

Decision-taking

The Framework is also a material consideration when taking decisions on planning applications, especially where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date.

