

national planning policy framework practitioners advisory group

# **National Planning Policy Framework**

**A proposed draft from the  
Practitioners Advisory Group**

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# Introduction

## Objectives for the planning system

Planning helps shape the places where people live and work and the country we live in. Planning can play a vital role in building our economy and supporting strong and vibrant communities.

The Government expects the planning system to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs, while protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment<sup>1</sup>. Planning has a key role in securing and delivering a sustainable future.

Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs<sup>2</sup>. It is central to the economic, environmental and social success of the country and is the core principle underpinning planning. Simply stated, the principle recognises the importance of ensuring that all people should be able to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, both now and in the future. For the planning system, in particular, sustainable development means:

- **planning for prosperity (an economic role)** - using the planning system to help build a strong, flexible and sustainable economy by providing infrastructure and development fit to meet the country's current and future needs in a world of challenging global competition;
- **planning for people (a social role)** - using the planning system to help promote strong, vibrant communities by providing an increased supply of housing to meet the needs of present and future generations; and creating a good quality built environment, with accessible local services, that delivers the diverse requirements of a community; and
- **planning for places (an environmental role)** - using the planning system to help tackle climate change and adapt to its effects; to protect and enhance our natural and built environment; and to use natural resources prudently.

These objectives should be pursued in an integrated way, looking for solutions which deliver multiple goals. In principle, there is no contradiction between facilitating increased levels of development and the environmental role of planning, as long as development is planned and undertaken responsibly. The planning system must play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions, mitigating significant impacts and promoting positive strategies for environmental enhancement.

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<sup>1</sup> All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora. Those elements of the historic environment that hold significance are called heritage assets.

<sup>2</sup> The report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, 1987.

To deliver these objectives the country needs a transparent, effective and efficient planning system that will ensure the public interest is protected. This is achieved through a system based on:

- national policies which set out the Government's economic, social and environmental priorities and how these are expected to be addressed;
- local and neighbourhood plans, which empower local people to shape their surroundings; and
- development management, which allows planning applications to be considered on their merits, within this national and local policy framework.

Those responsible for bringing forward development are expected to play their part by recognising and responding to the needs of communities. Development will be expected to be of good design and appropriately located. National financial incentives and local tariff policies will help to ensure that local communities benefit directly from the increase in development that the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to achieve. The revenue generated from development will help sustain local services, fund infrastructure and deliver environmental enhancement.

The notion that economic growth necessarily leads to environmental degradation must be firmly laid to rest by ensuring that development is undertaken responsibly and that it generates benefits which help secure local economic, social and environmental objectives.

Enabling the delivery of the homes, infrastructure and work places that the country needs in a sustainable way, is the principal function of the planning system. A positive planning system is essential because, without growth, a sustainable future cannot be achieved. This means that the Government expects the planning system to pro-actively encourage growth to meet the needs of business; to increase the supply of housing that the country needs; and to ensure the timely provision of necessary infrastructure. Planning must operate to encourage growth and not act as an impediment. This must start from a positive assumption about development, to create certainty and confidence for national and local investment.

Planning must be positive, proactive, simple, and free from bureaucratic barriers.

## **The role of the National Planning Policy Framework**

This National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social priorities for England and explains how planning can help ensure a pattern of development that matches these priorities, whilst meeting local aspirations.

These priorities are made clear in the Objectives for the planning system set out above and in the Core Planning Principles set out below - and they are elaborated in a short series of policies for each principal topic area, which follow.

This National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's priorities only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable local governments can produce their own distinctive Local and Neighbourhood Plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

The National Planning Policy Framework and the expectations it places on the planning system will play a key role in supporting sustainable development.

The National Planning Policy Framework will not apply, however, to the development of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, which are subject to specific policies set out in National Policy Statements.

# Delivering sustainable development

## **The presumption in favour of sustainable development**

At the heart of the planning system is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking. Through the presumption, Government is setting a clear expectation on planning authorities to plan positively to promote development.

Applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development in this context will mean:

- local plans should be prepared on the basis that objectively assessed development needs are met;
- development proposals that accord with these plans should be promptly approved; and
- where planning policies are out of date or a plan is silent or unclear on a particular development, approval should be granted.

This presumption should apply unless to do so would cause significant harm to the objectives, principles and policies set out in this National Planning Policy Framework.

## **Core planning principles**

A set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and development management and should be taken into account by all those engaged in the planning system. These principles are key to building a planning system that makes the best use of land to deliver sustainable development:

- planning should be genuinely plan-led, with succinct local plans setting out a positive long term vision for an area. These plans should be kept up to date and should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of certainty and efficiency;
- local planning authorities should be proactive in driving and supporting the development that this country needs. They should make every effort to identify and meet the housing, business, and other development needs of their areas, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth;
- the planning regime must take into account local circumstances and market signals. Local planning authorities should set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business community;

- in considering the future use of land, local planning authorities should take account of its environmental quality or potential quality regardless of its previous or existing use;
- planning strategies and decisions should seek to protect and enhance environmental and heritage assets<sup>3</sup> of real importance. Where practical and consistent with other objectives, allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value;
- to get the most out of their available land, local planning authorities should:
  - promote mixed use developments that create more vibrant places; and
  - encourage **multiple benefits** from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation<sup>4</sup>, carbon storage, or food production).
- local planning authorities should enable the reuse of existing resources, such as through the conversion of existing buildings, and encourage, rather than restrict, the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
- local planning authorities should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest use of public transport and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
- planning policies and decisions should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of land and buildings

## Local plans

Development plans must aim to achieve the objective of sustainable development. To this end, they must be consistent with the objectives, principles and policies set out in this National Planning Policy Framework.

Each local planning authority should produce one plan for its area – the Local Plan. Beyond this, additional development plan documents or supplementary planning documents should only be necessary exceptionally, for instance where their production can help to bring forward sustainable development at an accelerated rate. Supplementary planning documents must not be used to add to the financial burdens on development.

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<sup>3</sup> A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process (including local listing).

<sup>4</sup> Managing and reducing the risk of flooding to communities and business.

Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic. They should address the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change. Local Plans should set out the opportunities for development and clear guidance on what will or will not be permitted and where. Only policies that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal should be included in the plan.

The Local Plan must set out the **strategic priorities** for the local planning authority. This should include policies to deliver:

- housing and employment requirements;
- the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- the provision of infrastructure for transport, minerals, waste, energy, telecoms, water supply and water quality;
- the provision of health, security, community infrastructure and other local facilities; and
- climate change mitigation and adaptation<sup>5</sup>, landscape and biodiversity protection and enhancement, and, where relevant, coastal management.

Crucially, Local Plans should:

- plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in its area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of this National Planning Policy Framework;
- be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15-year time horizon;
- indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations on a proposals map, allocating sites considered central to the plan;
- identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the uses of buildings and support such restrictions with a clear explanation;
- identify land which it is genuinely important to protect from development, for instance because of its environmental or historic value; and
- contain a clear strategy for the environmental enhancement of its area.

Local Plans are the key to delivering development that reflects the vision and aspiration of local communities. To do this, early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is

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<sup>5</sup> Involves adjustments to natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the development of the area.

Up-to-date Local Plans, which are consistent with this National Planning Policy Framework, should be in place as soon as practical. In the absence of an up to date and consistent plan, planning applications will be determined in accord with this National Planning Policy Framework, including its presumption in favour of sustainable development.

It will be open to local authorities to seek a certificate of conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework or to prepare a new or revised plan.

### **Using a proportionate evidence base**

Each local planning authority should ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area. Local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals such as land prices.

### **HOUSING REQUIREMENTS**

Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing requirements in their area. They should:

- prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment<sup>6</sup> to assess their full housing requirements, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas<sup>7</sup> cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the population is likely to require over the plan period which:
  - meets household and population projections, taking account of migration;
  - addresses the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing<sup>8</sup>; and
  - caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.

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<sup>6</sup> Strategic Housing Market Assessments are a key part of the evidence base required to ensure the delivery of housing that meets the needs of communities now and in years to come.

<sup>7</sup> Geographical areas defined by household demand and preferences for housing. They reflect the key functional linkages between places where people live and work.

<sup>8</sup> Affordable housing includes affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should meet the needs of eligible households, including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

Provision should be made for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the initial capital subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

- prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>9</sup> to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified requirement for housing over the plan period.

### **BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS**

Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across their area. To achieve this, they should:

- work together with county and neighbouring authorities and with local enterprise partnerships to prepare and maintain a robust evidence base to understand both existing business needs and likely changes in the market; and
- work closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and address barriers to investment, including a lack of housing, infrastructure or of viability.

Local planning authorities should use this evidence-base to assess:

- the requirements for land or floorspace for economic development, including both the quantitative (how much) and qualitative (what type) requirements for all foreseeable types of economic activity over the plan period, including for retail and leisure development;
- the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified requirements. Reviews of land available for economic development should be undertaken at the same time as, or combined with, strategic housing land availability assessments and should include a reappraisal of the suitability of previously allocated land;
- the role and function of town centres<sup>10</sup> and the relationship between them, including any trends in the performance of centres;
- the capacity of existing centres to accommodate new town centre development; and
- locations of deprivation which may benefit from planned remedial action.

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<sup>9</sup> The primary role of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is to identify sites with potential for housing; assess their housing potential; and assess when they are likely to be developed.

<sup>10</sup> Defined area, including the primary shopping centre area and areas of predominantly leisure, business and other main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. The extent of the town centre should be defined on the proposals map.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS**

Local planning authorities should assess the quality and capacity of transport, water, energy, telecoms, utilities and flood defence infrastructure and its ability to meet forecast demands.

### **MINERALS REQUIREMENTS**

Local planning authorities should use published sources to develop and maintain an understanding of the extent and location of mineral reserves in their areas and assess the projected demand for their use.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural and local environment of the area. A Strategic Environmental Assessment<sup>11</sup> should be an integrated part of the plan preparation process. It must consider all the likely significant effects on the environment.

Local Plans may require a variety of other environmental assessments, including under the Habitats Regulations where there is a likely significant effect on a European wildlife site<sup>12</sup> (which may not necessarily be within the same local planning authority area) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Wherever possible, assessments should share the same evidence base and be conducted over similar timescales, but local authorities should take care to ensure that the purposes and statutory requirements of different assessment processes are respected.

Assessments must be proportionate to the plan. They should not repeat the assessment of higher level policy. Wherever possible the local planning authority should consider how the preparation of any assessment will contribute to the plan's evidence base. The process should be started early in the plan-making process and key stakeholders should be consulted in identifying the issues that the assessment must cover.

### **WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS**

Local planning authorities should work with neighbouring authorities to develop a clear understanding of the capacity of waste infrastructure in their areas and its ability to meet projected increases in waste.

### **HERITAGE**

Local planning authorities should have evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance<sup>13</sup> of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment. Local planning authorities should either maintain or have access to a historic environment record.

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<sup>11</sup> A Strategic Environmental Assessment identifies the significant environmental effects that are likely to result from the implementation of the plan or alternative approaches to the plan.

<sup>12</sup> For advice on statutory obligations affecting biodiversity and geological conservation, see ODPM Circular 06/2005.

<sup>13</sup> The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

## Ensuring viability and deliverability

To enable a plan to be deliverable<sup>14</sup>, the sites and the scale of development identified in the plan should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that their ability to be developed viably is threatened. To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, local standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and on site mitigation, provide acceptable returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable.

It is equally important to ensure that there is a reasonable prospect that planned infrastructure is deliverable in a timely fashion. To facilitate this, it is important that local planning authorities understand district wide development costs at the time Local Plans are drawn up. For this reason, infrastructure and development policies should be planned at the same time, in the Local Plan. The Community Infrastructure Levy should be assessed at the plan making stage, where possible, as well as any affordable housing or local standards requirements that may be applied to development. Such policies should be kept under review.

The Community Infrastructure Levy should be based on robustly assessed requirements for financial contributions to physical infrastructure and environmental strategies and should not endanger the viability of development.

## Planning strategically across local boundaries

Public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the **strategic priorities** identified above. The Government expects joint working around areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities. Local planning authorities should work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly planned and co-ordinated.

Local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of cooperation when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. This could be by way of plans or policies prepared as part of a joint committee, a memorandum of understanding or a jointly prepared strategy which is presented as evidence of an agreed position.

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<sup>14</sup> Deliverable: To be considered deliverable, sites should, at the point of adoption of the local plan:

- Be Available – the site is available now
- Be Suitable – the site offers a suitable location for development now and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities
- Be Achievable – there is a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable, ie that it would provide acceptable returns to a willing landowner and a willing developer based on current values and taking account of all likely infrastructure, tariff, affordable housing, housing standards and other costs

Joint working should enable local planning authorities to work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own areas – for instance, because of a lack of physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to the objectives, principles and policies of this National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Examining Local Plans**

The Local Plan will be examined by an independent inspector whose role is to assess the plan for soundness. A local planning authority should submit a plan for examination which it considers is ‘sound’ – namely that it is:

- **positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is practical to do so consistently with the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- **justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- **effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities; and
- **consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

Neighbourhood plans give communities direct power to plan the areas in which they live. Parishes and Neighbourhood Forums can use neighbourhood plans to:

- develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood;
- set planning policies for the development and use of land; and
- give planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders.

This provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. However, the ambition of the neighbourhood must be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood Plans, therefore, must be in conformity with the **strategic priorities** of the Local Plan. Outside these strategic elements, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct development in their area.

Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans should be complementary. Therefore, local planning authorities should avoid duplicating planning processes for non-strategic policies where a neighbourhood plan is in preparation.

## **Development management**

The primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent development.

To enable each local authority to proactively fulfil their planning role, and to actively promote sustainable development, local planning authorities need to:

- approach development management decisions positively where practical – looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications can be approved wherever it is practical to do so;
- attach significant weight to the benefits of economic and housing growth;
- influence development proposals to achieve quality outcomes; and
- enable the delivery of sustainable development proposals.

The relationship between development management and plan making should be seamless and both should recognise the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the positive approach to planning set out in this National Planning Policy Framework. The application of the presumption is expected to achieve the delivery of enhanced levels of development consistent with national, strategic and local requirements.

## **Pre-application engagement and front loading**

Early ‘front loading’ of the process has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system for all parties. Local planning authorities should strongly encourage pre-application engagement with interested parties, including the community and local businesses. Good quality pre-application discussions enable better coordination between public and private investment and improved outcomes for the community.

The right information is crucial to good decision-making, particularly where formal assessments are required (such as Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment). To avoid delay, developers should discuss what information is needed with the local planning authority and expert bodies as early as possible. The information required should be proportionate to the scale of the likely impact.

Developers and local planning authorities should consider the potential of entering into Planning Performance Agreements, where this might achieve a faster and more effective application process.

Statutory consultees will be expected to take the same, early and pro-active approach to development proposals.

## **Determining applications**

The planning system is plan-led. Therefore Local Plans, incorporating Neighbourhood Plans where relevant, are the starting point for the determination of any planning application.

In assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In addition:

- applications which propose development in conflict with an up to date Local Plan which is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework should be refused; but
- applications should never be refused simply because a plan is in preparation. In these instances, acceptable development should be approved.

In all cases, these expectations should apply, unless to do so would cause significant harm to the objectives, principles and policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **Planning conditions and obligations**

Local planning authorities should actively consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations.

Planning conditions and obligations should be:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to planning and the development proposed; and
- proportionate, fair and reasonable in relation to the scale and kind of development, and in all other respects.

In addition, planning conditions should also be precise and enforceable. Local planning authorities should always consider the viability of development proposals when applying conditions and obligations. The total burden of conditions or obligations, including local tariffs and other charges, should not be such as to put at risk the deliverability of otherwise acceptable development.

## **Enforcement**

For the planning system to be robust and to fully achieve its objectives, local planning authorities should take a proportionate approach to enforcement. Where developers or individuals have proceeded without due regard to the planning process, resulting in unacceptable impacts on the local community, local planning authorities should take appropriate action.

### **Calling-in cases for determination by the Secretary of State**

The Secretary of State will not use his powers of intervention apart from in exceptional circumstances where the granting of permission:

- may substantially conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework;
- may affect the interests of national security or of foreign Governments;
- may raise issues of substantial national importance; or
- may raise potential conflicts with international obligations.

*“Planning for prosperity - use the planning system to help build a strong, flexible and sustainable economy by providing infrastructure and development fit to meet the country’s current and future needs in a world of challenging global competition”*

# Business and economic development

## Objectives

The Government is committed to securing sustainable economic growth. In particular, there is an urgent need to restructure the economy, to build on the country's inherent strengths and to meet the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.

To help achieve sustainable economic growth, the Government's objectives are to:

- plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
- promote the vitality and viability of town centres, whilst meeting the needs of consumers for high quality and accessible retail services; and
- raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural economies.

## Support economic development

In preparing their Local Plans, local planning authorities should ensure that investment in business is not over burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations. Local Plans should also recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including poor environment or any lack of infrastructure, services or housing. In drawing up their Local Plans, local planning authorities should ensure that they:

- set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth;
- set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated requirements over the plan period;
- support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate requirements not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances;
- positively plan for the location, promotion and expansion of clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries;

- identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement; and
- facilitate new working practices such as live/work.

In considering applications for planning permission, local planning authorities should take a positive attitude to proposals for economic investment and seek to find solutions to overcome any substantial planning objections where practical and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Local planning authorities should avoid the long term protection of employment land or floorspace and treat applications for alternative uses of designated land or buildings on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses.

### **Promote the vitality and viability of town centres**

Local planning authorities should plan positively to promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. As part of their strategy local planning authorities should:

- recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support the viability and vitality of town centres;
- define a network (the pattern of provision of centres) and hierarchy (the role and relationship of centres in the network) of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;
- recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites;
- allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, commercial, community services and residential development required in town centres. This should include an assessment of the need to expand defined town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites. It is important that retail and leisure needs are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Local planning authorities, therefore, should undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites;
- allocate appropriate edge of centre<sup>15</sup> sites where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available, and if sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, set policies for meeting the identified requirements in other

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<sup>15</sup> For retail purposes, a location that is well connected to and within easy walking distance of, (i.e. up to 300 metres) the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, this is likely to be within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge-of-centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.

accessible locations;

- set policies for the consideration of retail and leisure proposals which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres; and
- define the extent of the town centre and the primary shopping area<sup>16</sup>, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages<sup>17</sup> in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations.

Local planning authorities should apply a sequential approach to planning applications for retail and leisure uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan.

Local planning authorities should prefer applications for retail and leisure uses to be located in town centres where practical, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre<sup>18</sup> sites be considered. In applying this sequential approach local authorities should ensure that potential sites are assessed for their availability, suitability and viability and for their ability to meet the full extent of assessed quantitative and qualitative needs.

When assessing applications for retail or leisure development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold.

In assessing the impact of retail and leisure proposals, authorities should consider:

- 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
- the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice.

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<sup>16</sup> Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).

<sup>17</sup> Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail users. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses.

<sup>18</sup> A location which is not in or on the edge of a centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area.

## **Support the rural economy**

Local planning authorities should support sustainable economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to new development. They should set policies to maintain a prosperous rural economy and to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

# Transport

## Objectives

Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability objectives. The Government recognises that different policies and measures will be required in different communities. There is a need to balance the transport system in favour of sustainable modes and give people a real choice about how they travel. However, where these modes are less practical it is recognised that the private car will continue to form an important mode in order to maintain those communities.

Where practical, encouragement should be given to solutions which minimise CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by reducing the number and length of journeys and to solutions which promote sustainable modes and sustainable technology.

Therefore, the objectives of transport policy are to:

- facilitate economic growth by taking a positive approach to planning for development; and
- minimise carbon emissions and promote accessibility through planning for the location and mix of development.

## Facilitate economic growth

Local planning authorities should work with neighbouring authorities to develop strategies for the provision of infrastructure necessary to support sustainable economic growth, including large scale facilities such as Strategic Rail Freight Terminals or transport investment necessary to support strategies for the growth of ports, airports or other major generators of travel demand in their areas.

Planning applications for all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment. In determining applications local authorities should consider whether:

- the opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up given the nature and location of the site;
- safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;
- improvements can be undertaken within the local highway network that limit the significant impacts of the development and, subject to those considerations, not refuse planning permission on transport grounds unless the residual impacts of development are so severe that planning permission should not be granted having regard to the need to encourage increased delivery of homes and sustainable economic development.

Local planning authorities should, when planning for ports, airports and airfields that are not subject to a separate National Planning Statement, ensure that the Local Plan considers:

- their growth and role in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs;
- the economic, environmental and social impacts on the local and wider economy; and
- policies set out elsewhere in this National Planning Policy Framework and as well as the principles set out in the relevant national planning statements.

### **Minimise carbon and promote accessibility**

Developments that generate significant movement should preferably be located where the need to travel will be minimised and use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However, this needs to take account of policies set out elsewhere in this National Planning Policy Framework, particularly in rural areas.

Developments should be located and designed to minimise the need to travel. For larger scale residential developments a mix of uses is preferable in order to provide opportunities to undertake day to day activities including work on site. Where practical and ideally within large scale developments, key facilities such as primary schools, local shops and healthcare should be within walking distance of most properties.

Local planning authorities should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.

Local Plan strategies should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable modes for the movement of freight or people.

Developments should be located and designed where practical to:

- give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements;
- have access to high quality public transport facilities;
- create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians;
- incorporate facilities for charging electric and other low emission vehicles; and
- consider the needs of disabled people by all modes of transport.

The location and design of developments should seek to minimise the number and length of car journeys and maximise use of sustainable modes. A key tool in achieving this will be a Travel Plan. All developments which generate significant amounts of movement should provide a Travel Plan.

Local planning authorities should ensure that parking standards, as part of a package of planning and transport measures, promote sustainable transport choices.

When setting standards for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account:

- the accessibility of the development;
- the type and mix of units;
- local car ownership; and
- an overall need to reduce the use of the car where practical.

# Communications infrastructure

## Objectives

Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also play a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services. The Government's objective for the planning system is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunication systems in order to ensure that people have a choice of providers and services, and equitable access to the latest technology.

### **Facilitate the growth of communications infrastructure**

In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications, high speed broadband and digital infrastructure. In doing this, planning authorities should aim to keep the numbers of radio and telecommunications' masts and the sites for such installations to a minimum, by using existing masts, buildings and other structures, unless there is a clear justification for allocating new sites. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged.

Local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new telecommunications' development in certain areas, impose blanket Article 4 directions over a wide area or wide range of telecommunications development or insist on minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development. They should ensure that communications infrastructure does not cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment and that construction of new buildings or other structures does not cause interference with broadcast and telecommunications services.

Applications for telecommunications development (including for prior approval under Part 24 of the General Permitted Development Order<sup>19</sup>) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development. This should include:

- the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college; and
- for an addition to an existing mast or base station, a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed

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<sup>19</sup> A number of forms of telecommunications development which are permitted under the General Permitted Development Order are subject to a 56 day prior approval procedure. For such types of development the developer must apply to the local planning authority for its determination as to whether prior approval will be required as to the siting and appearance of the proposed development.

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection guidelines;  
or

- for a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection guidelines will be met.

Local planning authorities should not question whether the service to be provided is needed nor seek to prevent competition between operators, but must determine applications on planning grounds.

# Minerals

## Objectives

Minerals are essential to support sustainable economic growth. It is therefore important that there is a sufficient supply of material to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. The Government's objective for the planning system is to:

- secure an adequate and steady supply of indigenous minerals needed to support sustainable growth; whilst encouraging the recycling of suitable materials to minimise the requirement for new primary extraction; and
- facilitate sustainable use of energy minerals.

## Secure an adequate supply of minerals

In preparing minerals plans local planning authorities should:

- liaise with neighbouring authorities to co-ordinate the planning of locally important minerals or with more distant authorities where those authorities also host minerals of greater than local importance;
- not identify sites or extensions to existing sites for peat extraction;
- plan for a steady and adequate supply of land-won aggregates by:
  - taking full account of the proposed apportionment of aggregates in the current National and Regional Guidelines, as agreed by Aggregate Working Parties<sup>20</sup>;
  - ensuring that planned quantitative allocations of minerals take account of the ability for requirements to be met from sustainable sources, including recycling; and
  - allocating sufficient land to maintain sufficient landbanks of permitted reserves and to use these to indicate when new permissions for extraction are likely to be needed;
- ensure security of supply of specific minerals to support their likely use in manufacturing processes and energy generation taking account of any national forecasts of requirements and the importance of avoiding local as well as wider scarcity of supply, specifically by:

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<sup>20</sup> The Aggregate Working Parties were established in the 1970's to identify and consider problems in the supply of aggregates. They provide technical advice in relation to the supply of, and demand for, aggregates (including for sand, gravel and crushed rock).

- close liaison with other planning authorities where the minerals exists to manage extraction rates and, where appropriate, to encourage safeguarding or stockpiling so that important minerals are not lost for use;
- allocating sufficient land to maintain landbanks of permitted reserves recognising that it is normally appropriate to ensure landbanks of seven years of sand and gravel and 10 years for crushed rock and scarcer minerals, although longer landbanks may be justified in specific circumstances, such as the need to ensure the viability of proposed new investment.

Local planning authorities should:

- ensure sufficient levels of permitted reserves are available from outside National Parks, the Broads, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and World Heritage sites;
- ensure that large landbanks bound up in very few sites do not stifle competition;
- define Minerals Safeguarding Areas in order that proven resources are not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development, whilst not creating a presumption that resources defined will be worked. In doing so extend any necessary safeguarding to include:
  - existing, planned and potential rail heads, rail links to quarries, wharfage and associated storage, handling and processing facilities for the bulk transport by rail, sea or inland waterways of minerals, including recycled, secondary and marine-dredged materials;
  - existing, planned and potential sites for concrete batching, the manufacture of coated materials, other concrete products and the handling, processing and distribution of substitute, recycled and secondary aggregate material; and
  - known locations of specific minerals of local and national importance. These include aggregates, brick clay (especially Etruria Marl and fireclay), silica sand (including high grade silica sands), salt, fluorspar, coal, kaolin, ball clay, potash and local minerals of importance to the built heritage;
- contain policies to encourage the prior extraction of minerals, where practicable, if it is necessary for non-mineral development to take place in Minerals Safeguarding Areas;
- set out environmental criteria, in line with the policies in this National Planning Policy Framework, against which planning applications will be assessed so as to ensure that permitted operations do not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment or human health, including from dust, tip and quarry-slope stability, differential settlement of quarry backfill and migration of contamination from the site;

- put in place policies to ensure worked land is reclaimed at the earliest opportunity and that high quality restoration and aftercare of mineral sites takes place, including for agriculture, biodiversity, native woodland and recreation.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should:

- give significant weight to the benefits of the mineral extraction, including to the economy;
- ensure in granting planning permission for mineral development that there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment, cultural heritage or human health, and bear in mind the cumulative effect of multiple impacts from individual sites and/or from a number of sites in a locality;
- not grant planning permission for peat extraction from new or extended sites;
- provide for restoration to be carried out to high environmental standards, through the application of appropriate conditions, where necessary;
- not normally permit other development proposals near safeguarded sites where they might constrain future use for these purposes; and
- consider allowing small-scale extraction of building stone at, or close to relic quarries, some of which have been designated, where it would contribute to the repair of historic buildings without compromising the requirement to protect designated sites.

### **Facilitate sustainable use of energy minerals**

In addition to the general policies on minerals, local planning authorities should:

- encourage underground gas and carbon storage if local geological circumstances indicate its feasibility;
- encourage capture and use of methane from coal mines in coalfield areas;
- when planning for on-shore oil and gas development, clearly distinguish between the three phases (exploration, appraisal and production) and address constraints on production and processing within areas that are licensed for oil and gas exploration or production; and
- provide for coal producers to extract separately and if necessary stockpile, fireclay reserves so that it remains available for use; and
- indicate any areas where coal extraction and the disposal of colliery spoil may be acceptable.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that the integrity and safety of underground storage facilities are appropriate, taking into account the maintenance of gas pressure, prevention of leakage of gas and the avoidance of pollution.

For the extraction of coal, there should be a presumption against development unless:

- the proposal is environmentally acceptable, or can be made so by planning conditions or obligations; or, if not
- it provides national, local or community benefits which clearly outweigh the likely impacts to justify the grant of planning permission.

*“Planning for people - use the planning system to help promote strong, vibrant communities by providing an increased supply of housing to meet the needs of present and future generations; and creating a good quality built environment, with accessible local services, that delivers the diverse requirements of a community”*

# Housing

## Objectives

The Government's key housing objective is to significantly increase the delivery of new homes. Everyone should have the opportunity to live in high quality, well designed homes, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this objective, the Government is seeking to:

- significantly increase the supply of housing;
- deliver a wide choice of high quality homes that people want and need;
- widen opportunities for home ownership; and
- create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities in all areas, including through the regeneration and renewal of areas of poor housing.

To enable this, the planning system should aim to deliver a sufficient quantity, quality and range of housing consistent with the land use principles and other policies of this National Planning Policy Framework.

## Significantly increasing the supply of housing

To boost the supply of housing, local planning authorities should:

- use an evidence-base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full requirements for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period;
- identify and maintain a rolling supply of specific **deliverable** sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements. The supply should include an additional allowance of 20 per cent to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;
- identify a further supply of specific, **developable**<sup>21</sup> sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15;
- not include windfall sites in the first 10 years of supply, or in the rolling five-year supply, unless they can provide compelling evidence of genuine local circumstances that prevent specific sites being identified. Any allowance should be realistic having regard to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends;

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<sup>21</sup> To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available for, and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

- illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a housing trajectory for the plan period and, for market housing<sup>22</sup>, set out a housing implementation strategy describing how they will maintain delivery of a 5 year supply of housing land to meet their housing target;
- set out their own approach to housing density<sup>23</sup> to reflect local circumstances; and
- identify and bring back into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty homes strategies and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase powers.

### **Deliver a wide choice of quality homes**

To deliver a wide choice of quality homes and widen opportunities for home ownership, local planning authorities should:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as families with children, the elderly, disabled people);
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
- where affordable housing is required, set policies for meeting this need on site or through commuted payments with the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. These policies should recognise the advantages of using commuted payments to improve and make effective use of the existing housing stock.

### **Create sustainable communities**

To create sustainable and inclusive communities, local planning authorities should:

- create a shared vision with local communities of the types of residential environment they wish to see;
- plan positively for the integration of community infrastructure and other services to enhance the sustainability of residential environments;
- ensure that housing is developed in suitable locations which offer a range of community facilities and good access to key services and infrastructure; and

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<sup>22</sup> Private housing for rent or for sale where the price is set in the open market.

<sup>23</sup> Density is a measure of the number of dwellings which can be accommodated on a site or in an area.

- where large scale development is proposed in less sustainable locations, planning authorities should require investment to improve the sustainability of the site.

In rural areas, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and allow housing development and the growth of villages to reflect local requirements for market and affordable housing.

However, local planning authorities should avoid isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- the essential need for a worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or
- where development would ensure the future of buildings of special architectural or historic interest; or
- where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting; or
- the exceptional quality or the innovative nature of the design of the dwelling. Such a design should:
  - be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;
  - reflect the highest standards in architecture;
  - significantly enhance its immediate setting; and
  - be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

# Design

## Objectives

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The Government's objective for the planning system is to promote good design that ensures attractive, usable and durable places. This is a key element in achieving sustainable development.

## Deliver high quality design

Local planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

Local planning authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities and, from this, develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its present defining characteristics. Policies in development plans and decisions on applications should aim to ensure that developments:

- are sustainable, durable and adaptable and make efficient and prudent use of resources;
- ensure that a place will function well and add to the overall character and quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- respond to their local context;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.

Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.

Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, local planning authorities should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural and built environment.

Local planning authorities should refuse permission for development of obviously poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Where design of a particularly high quality is proposed, including innovative design, local authorities should encourage its development unless there is a compelling reason not to do so which is consistent with this National Planning Policy Framework.

Developers will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve design proposals that take account of the views of the community. They should also recognise the benefits of considering the views of professional bodies. Proposals that can demonstrate good engagement with the community in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably.

# Green Belt

## Objectives

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.

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Once Green Belts have been defined, local authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; retain and enhance landscapes and biodiversity; or improve damaged and derelict land.

## Designation of Green Belts

The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. It should not be necessary to designate new Green Belts except in exceptional circumstances. If proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should:

- demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;
- set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
- show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;
- demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas; and
- show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances.

The appropriateness of existing Green Belt boundaries should only be considered when a Local Plan is being prepared or reviewed. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.

When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:

- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a local plan review which proposes the development;
- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

If it is necessary to prevent development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used such as conservation area or normal development management policies and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.

There is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt; such development should not be approved except in very special

circumstances. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt.

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, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- the provision of essential facilities for: outdoor sport; outdoor recreation; and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- the extension or alteration of a dwelling provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the **original** building;
- the replacement of a dwelling, provided the new dwelling is not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed<sup>24</sup> sites (excluding temporary buildings), whether redundant or in continuing use, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

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<sup>24</sup> 'Previously-developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.' The definition includes defence buildings, but excludes:

- Land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings.
- Land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures.
- Land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments, which, although it may feature paths, pavilions and other buildings, has not been previously developed.
- Land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time (to the extent that it can reasonably be considered as part of the natural surroundings).

Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:

- mineral extraction;
- engineering operations;
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location; and
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major reconstruction.

*“Planning for places - use the planning system to help tackle climate change and adapt to its effects; to protect and enhance our natural and built environment; and to use natural resources prudently”*

# Climate change, flooding and coastal change

## Objectives

The Government's objective is that planning should fully support the transition to a low carbon economy in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change<sup>25</sup>. To achieve this objective, the planning system should aim to:

- secure, consistent with the Government's published objectives, radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions<sup>26</sup> through the appropriate location and layout of new development;
- actively support the delivery of renewable and low-carbon energy<sup>27</sup>;
- avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding by directing development away from areas at highest risk or where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere; and
- reduce risk from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas or by adding to the impacts of physical changes to the coast.

To this end, local planning authorities should adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

## Support cuts in greenhouse gas emissions

To support the move to a low-carbon economy, local planning authorities should:

- plan for new development in locations and ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- use the Government's published carbon buildings policies when applying any requirements for a building's sustainability. Local planning authorities should not develop alternative or additional standards but should adopt national standards and building regulations.

Local planning authorities should not refuse planning permission for well-designed buildings which promote exceptional levels of sustainability because

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<sup>25</sup> Coastal change means physical change to the shoreline, i.e. erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation and coastal accretion.

<sup>26</sup> The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases 'trap' energy radiated by the Earth within the atmosphere and include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases. Carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas from the UK.

<sup>27</sup> Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass. Low-carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape unless the concern relates to a heritage asset protected by a national designation and the impact would cause material harm to the asset or its setting, and this harm is not outweighed by the proposal's wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

### **Support the delivery of renewable and low-carbon energy**

To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low-carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources and:

- identify and map opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy, based on ecological sensitivity and generation potential;
- have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable sources and design their policies to maximise renewable and low-carbon energy development; and
- identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should:

- look favourably on developments that have demonstrable carbon benefits and avoid stifling innovation;
- give significant weight to the wider environmental, social and economic benefits of renewable or low-carbon energy projects whatever their scale, recognising that small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
- not presume against energy development outside mapped areas nor require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low-carbon energy or question the energy justification for why a proposal for renewable and low-carbon energy must be sited in a particular location.

### **Minimise vulnerability to climate change and manage the risk of flooding**

Local Plans should plan new development to avoid increased vulnerability to impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, authorities should ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.

Local Plans must undertake a strategic flood risk assessment and develop policies to manage flood risk, taking account of advice from the Environment Agency.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should only consider development in flood risk areas appropriate where following the Sequential Test, and if required the Exception Test<sup>28</sup>, it can be demonstrated that:

- there are no reasonably available sites in areas of lower flood risk;
- the benefits of the development outweigh the risks from flooding and it will be safe for its lifetime;
- the sequential approach has been applied at the site-level, so that the most vulnerable development is in areas of lowest flood risk; and
- the development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant, including safe access and escape routes where required, and that any residual risk can be safely managed.

Local planning authorities should also ensure that proposed developments give priority to the use of sustainable drainage systems<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> If, following application of the Sequential Test, it is not possible, consistent with wider sustainability objectives, for the development to be located in zones with a lower probability of flooding, the Exception Test can be applied if appropriate. For the Exception Test to be passed: a) it must be demonstrated that the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk, informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment where one has been prepared; and b) a Flood Risk Assessment must demonstrate that the development will be safe for its lifetime, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall. Both elements of the test will have to be passed for development to be allocated or permitted.

<sup>29</sup> Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface drainage management including: source control measures including rainwater recycling and drainage; infiltration devices to allow water to soak into the ground, that can include individual soakaways and communal facilities; filter strips and swales, which are vegetated features that hold and drain water downhill mimicking natural drainage patterns; filter drains and porous pavements to allow rainwater and run-off to infiltrate into permeable material below ground and provide storage if needed; and basins and ponds to hold excess water after rain and allow controlled discharge that avoids flooding.

## **Manage risk from coastal change**

Local planning authorities should identify as a Coastal Change Management Area<sup>30</sup> any area likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast. Local planning authorities should:

- be clear as to what development will be appropriate in such areas and in what circumstances; and
- make provision for development and infrastructure that needs to be relocated away from Coastal Change Management Areas.

When assessing applications, local planning authorities should consider development in a Coastal Change Management Area appropriate where it is demonstrated that:

- it will be safe over its planned lifetime and will not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change;
- the character of the coast including designations is not compromised;
- the development provides wider sustainability benefits; and
- the development does not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast.

Local planning authorities should also ensure appropriate development in a Coastal Change Management Area is not impacted by coastal change by limiting the planned life-time of the proposed development through temporary permission and restoration conditions where necessary to reduce the risk to people and the development.

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<sup>30</sup> Areas likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast – local planning authorities should identify these areas.

# Natural and local environment

## Objectives

The Government's objective is that planning should help to deliver a healthy natural environment for the benefit of everyone and safe places which promote wellbeing.

To achieve this objective, the planning system should aim to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting valued landscapes;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity, where possible;
- delivering open spaces and sport and recreation facilities that everyone can enjoy; and
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of land, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.

In preparing their Local Plans to meet development requirements, local planning authorities should seek to minimise adverse effects on the local and natural environment, preferring the allocation of the least environmentally significant land where that is practical having regard to other policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

To this end, local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites<sup>31</sup>.

## Protect valued landscape

Local planning authorities should:

- set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of green infrastructure;
- maintain the natural character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast<sup>32</sup>, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast;

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<sup>31</sup> ODPM Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

<sup>32</sup> A Heritage Coast is a strip of UK coastline designated as having notable natural beauty or scientific significance.

- in coastal areas, take account of marine plans and apply Integrated Coastal Zone Management<sup>33</sup> across local planning authority and land/sea boundaries;
- take into account the presence of the best and most versatile agricultural land<sup>34</sup>. Where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations or the Local Plan's growth strategy and where poorer quality land is unavailable or unsuitable;
- give great weight to protecting landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. Planning permission should be refused for major developments in designated areas except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:
  - the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
  - the practicality of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
  - any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

### **Minimise impacts on biodiversity**

Local planning policies should:

- take account of the need to plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local planning authority boundaries;
- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the recovery of priority species<sup>35</sup> populations, linked to national and local targets<sup>36</sup>; and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan; and

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<sup>33</sup> Integrated coastal zone management or integrated coastal management is a process for the management of the coast using an integrated approach, regarding all aspects of the coastal zone, including geographical and political boundaries, to achieve sustainability.

<sup>34</sup> Defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification

<sup>35</sup> Section 41 of the England Biodiversity List provides details of all Species and Habitats of Principal Importance.

<sup>36</sup> Including those identified by local biodiversity partnerships.

- identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including: international, national and local sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>37</sup>, and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated against, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;
- opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;
- planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or 'veteran'<sup>38</sup> trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss;
- the following wildlife sites should be given the same protection as European sites:
  - potential Special Protection Areas<sup>39</sup> and possible Special Areas of Conservation<sup>40</sup>;
  - listed or proposed Ramsar<sup>41</sup> sites; and
  - sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

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<sup>37</sup> Defined as: all Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites, Local Sites, natural habitats identified in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 section 74 list, and areas identified for habitat restoration and creation.

<sup>38</sup> A veteran tree is defined as 'a tree which, because of its great age, size or condition is of exceptional value culturally, in the landscape or for wildlife'.

<sup>39</sup> Special Protection Areas are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries. They are European designated sites, classified under the 'Birds Directive 1979' which provides enhanced protection given by the Site of Special Scientific Interest status all Special Protection Areas also hold.

<sup>40</sup> Special Areas of Conservation are areas which have been given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive. They provide increased protection to a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats and are a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world's biodiversity.

<sup>41</sup> Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention.

## **Deliver open spaces for recreation or sport**

Local planning authorities should:

- identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas; and
- use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities.

Existing open space, sports and recreational facilities and land should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or the land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the need for and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss.

Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. An essential characteristic of Local Green Spaces is their permanence and they should be planned so that their protection can endure beyond the end of the plan period.

The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance because of its beauty, historic importance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife;
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land; and
- if the designation does not overlap with Green Belt.

Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

## **Preventing unacceptable risks from pollution and land instability**

Local planning authorities should ensure that:

- new development which may give rise to pollution, either directly or indirectly, is appropriately located having regard to the effects on health, the natural environment or general amenity, taking account of the potential sensitivity of the area to adverse effects from pollution; and
- the site is suitable for its new use taking account of ground conditions, pollution arising from previous uses and any proposals for land remediation.

In doing so, local planning authorities should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impact of the use, rather than the control of processes or emissions themselves where these are subject to other pollution control regimes. Planning authorities should assume that these regimes will operate effectively. Equally, where a planning decision has been made on a particular development, that decision should carry substantial weight with other public authorities. Planning issues should not be revisited through other regimes.

Local planning authorities should:

- ensure that, wherever practicable, noise-sensitive developments are separated from major sources of noise and new development involving noisy activities should, if possible, be sited away from noise-sensitive land uses;
- acknowledge that much of the development needed to sustain economic development will create some noise<sup>42</sup>, and where it is not possible to achieve a separation of land uses, consider whether it is practicable to control or reduce noise levels, or to mitigate the impact of noise, through the use of conditions; and
- identify and protect areas of tranquility which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise nuisance and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

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<sup>42</sup>Applicable standards and the approach to be taken into account in determining planning applications both for noise sensitive developments and for those activities which generate noise, including mineral working and wind energy developments will be provided in technical guidance.

# Waste Management

## Objectives

The Government's objective is the prudent use of resources in ways that respect the needs of future generations. This means eliminating the unnecessary use of raw materials, waste prevention, reusing products wherever possible, and recovering value from products through recycling, composting or energy recovery, in accordance with the waste hierarchy<sup>43</sup>.

The planning system has an important role to play in delivering waste management infrastructure with the aim of moving waste management up the waste hierarchy.

## Effective waste management

In exercising their planning functions local planning authorities should work closely with neighbouring authorities to identify sufficient opportunities to meet the identified needs of their area for waste management for all waste streams over the plan period and recognise the benefits of planning beyond the plan period.

Local planning authorities should:

- drive waste management up the waste hierarchy;
- plan for disposal of waste and the recovery of mixed municipal waste in one of the nearest appropriate installations (the proximity principle) but recognise that new facilities will need to serve catchment areas large enough to justify the investment in appropriately scaled facilities;
- take into account the likely demand for waste management capacity arising from neighbouring areas to facilitate the sharing of facilities, or planning jointly for the needs of more than one local planning authority area, if appropriate; and
- reflect any waste management requirements identified nationally;

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<sup>43</sup> Waste hierarchy sets out the different types of waste management options in order of preference with the most sustainable (i.e. waste minimisation and prevention) at the top, where:

- waste prevention means to reduce the amount of waste produced;
- re-use means to use products and materials again for the same or a different purpose;
- recycling and composting which seeks to recover resources from waste;
- energy recovery where value can be recovered by producing energy from waste; and
- disposal where waste should be disposed of only if none of the above offers an appropriate solution.

- identify the type or types of waste management facility that would be appropriate for defined sites and areas;
- only identify sites and areas for waste management facilities if they are considered suitable when assessed against each of the following criteria:
  - their physical and environmental constraints on development, including existing and proposed neighbouring land uses;
  - the capacity of existing and potential transport infrastructure to support the sustainable movement of waste, and products arising from resource recovery, seeking when practicable and beneficial to use modes other than road transport; and
  - the cumulative impact of previous waste disposal facilities on the well-being of the local community, including any significant adverse impacts on environmental quality, social cohesion and inclusion or economic potential.

Local planning authorities should recognise that the ability to move waste by more sustainable modes can justify an extension of the proximity principle.

# Heritage

## Objectives

The Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

To achieve this, the Government's objectives for planning for the historic environment are to:

- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
- contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past by capturing evidence from the historic environment and making this publicly available, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

## Conserve heritage assets

Local planning authorities should set out a strategy for the conservation<sup>44</sup> and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local distinctiveness.

When considering the designation of conservation areas<sup>45</sup>, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status and that the concept of conservation areas is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the asset's significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been

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<sup>44</sup> The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and where appropriate enhances its significance.

<sup>45</sup> Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Local planning authorities are required to designate areas that possess this special interest as conservation areas and to ensure that the character and appearance is protected.

consulted. Where an application site includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest<sup>46</sup>, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset<sup>47</sup>) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should use this assessment when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should favour the conservation of designated heritage assets<sup>48</sup>. Any loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings and grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, world heritage sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Where the application will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a heritage asset local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that:

- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term that will enable its conservation; and
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is not possible; or
- the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

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<sup>46</sup> An interest in carrying out an expert investigation at some point in the future into the evidence a heritage asset may hold of past human activity. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

<sup>47</sup> The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

<sup>48</sup> A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated as such under the relevant legislation.

Harm can be caused by development within the setting of a heritage asset as well as by direct impact. Where harm is proposed to the setting of a designated heritage asset, particular justification will be required, including evidence that any significant harm is outweighed by the benefits of the development.

In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm, the significance of the heritage asset and the benefits of the development.

Loss of a building that makes a positive contribution to a Conservation Area should also be considered harmful and applications considered in a similar, balanced manner.

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal the significance of Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites. When considering applications for development that affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities should treat favourably applications that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset.

Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of an application for enabling development<sup>49</sup>, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from the planning policy.

### **Contribute to knowledge and understanding of the past**

Local planning authorities should take opportunities to capture evidence from heritage assets and use it to advance understanding, particularly where the asset is to be lost. They should require developers to record, analyse, publish and deposit information about the asset. The ability to record, however, should never be a feature in the decision on whether loss should be permitted.

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<sup>49</sup> Development that would be unacceptable in planning terms but for the fact that it would bring heritage benefits, which would not otherwise be achieved, sufficient to justify it being carried out.