



## Dramatic simplification of planning guidance to encourage sustainable growth

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A new, simpler framework for the planning system that safeguards the environment while meeting the need for sustainable growth has been published for consultation today by Planning Minister Greg Clark.

National planning policy, which is the basis for every local plan and decision, has accumulated to over one thousand pages during the last decade. Its volume and complexity have made planning increasingly inaccessible to all but specialists.

The Government in the Coalition Agreement committed to turning this thicket of national planning policy into a clear, tightly focused document, setting out national priorities and rules.

Today Ministers are inviting views on the draft *National Planning Policy Framework* - which streamlines national policy from over 1,000 pages to just 52 pages of policy - as part of a consultation to get the planning system right for current and future generations. The draft Framework draws on responses to an initial call for evidence earlier in the year. The Government intends to consult on simplifying other guidance on national policy as the next step.

Underpinning the draft Framework are powerful protections for communities to safeguard the natural and historic environment. It maintains the Government's commitment to protecting the green belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest; facilitates a new generation of renewable energy projects; paves the way for green transport of the future - the electric car - by encouraging decision makers to provide charging points; re-affirms protections for our nation's historic and cultural heritage, and for our wildlife and bio-diversity, including new protection for peat bogs; and helps tackle the light pollution affecting the beauty of the night sky.

In addition, the draft Framework delivers on the Government's commitment in the *Natural Environment White Paper* to allow communities to earmark important local green spaces for special protection - whether its value is in its natural beauty, its historical resonances, its recreational value, its tranquillity or its richness in wildlife.

The draft Framework also underlines the need for councils to work closely with communities and businesses and actively seek opportunities for sustainable growth to rebuild the economy; helping to

deliver the homes, jobs, and infrastructure needed for a growing population whilst protecting the environment. A presumption in favour of sustainable development means that proposals should be approved promptly unless they would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in the draft Framework.

Greg Clark said:

"Clarity in planning has become lost in translation. National planning policy and central government guidance has become so bloated that it now contains more words than the complete works of Shakespeare, making it impenetrable to ordinary people.

"We need a simpler, swifter system that is easier to understand and where you don't need to pay for a lawyer to navigate your way around. That's why we promised reform to make planning easier to understand and easier to use for everyone.

"Today's proposals set out national planning policy more concisely, and in doing so make clearer the importance of planning to safeguarding our extraordinary environment and meeting the needs of communities, now and in the future.

"We now want to hear the thoughts of councils, communities and businesses on the draft Framework and work together to get the planning system right for generations to come."

Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman said:

"Our Natural Environment White Paper set out how we will not only continue to protect our countryside and green spaces, but improve them. This new planning framework will help make this a reality. It will give local communities the power to protect green spaces that mean so much to them, while still giving the highest protection to our treasured landscapes such as national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It will also ensure that development needed to grow the economy is carried out in a sustainable way."

Business Secretary Vince Cable said:

"Strong, sustainable growth is the Government's top priority. The new proposals published today, a key element of the plan for growth, set out plans that are responsive to business whilst protecting the concerns of communities and their environment.

"Along with the powerful presumption for sustainable development, the new approach to planning will be a significant step forward in creating the right conditions for businesses to start up, invest, grow and create jobs."

The draft Framework requires that development is carried out in a sustainable way. Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is central to the economic, environmental and social success of the country and is the core principle underpinning planning. Simply stated, the principle, as established by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, 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.

Chair of the Major Developers Group, Sir Stuart Lipton said:

"We are delighted with the results of the proposals in the Framework as concepts. We have for years suggested that the planning system, with its accumulation of layers of directives and strategies needed radical reform. We support the strategies of the Framework which we feel will provide a more effective planning system. It will have regard for a balance of the interests of the community, the environment and the growth agenda."

Chairman of National Association of Local Councils, Michael Carter said:

"The National Association is delighted that the overarching aim of the document is to empower communities, including very local parish and town councils, to shape the areas in which they live. We agree that they should have a major say in where housing, and other types of sustainable development, should go. The National Association believes that this is vital for sustainable economic growth in England. We welcome the fact that local communities will have the power to set their own standards that will meet the needs of local circumstances."

Head of external affairs at the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Stephen Thornton, said:

"The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors welcomes the Government's draft National Planning Policy Framework as a significant step forward in unlocking the planning system to deliver the growth required by UK Plc. We are pleased to see this concise outline of national planning policy at a strategic level rather than the thousands of pages of guidance that currently lose the thrust of what the Government is trying to achieve."

Chief Executive of the Institute of Archaeologists, Peter Hinton said:

"The Framework sets out clearly Government's twin objectives of conserving the historic environment in a sustainable manner and of ensuring wide public benefit from expert investigations of those elements affected by development. We look forward to continuing to work with government in the coming weeks to make sure that the key heritage messages of the framework can be fully understood and implemented by heritage and property professionals, by local government, and by the communities they all serve."

Director of Policy and Strategy of London First, John Dickie said:

"London First welcomes the publication of the draft National Planning Policy Framework which we believe will encourage growth and investment by consolidating planning guidance into a clear and concise document. Ending pages and pages of overlapping guidance and circulars has to be right. The draft Framework published today also signals the Government's continued commitment to liberalise the planning system which we strongly support."

Chief executive of the British Property Federation Liz Peace, said:

"Planning policy should be streamlined, succinct and to the point if it is to deliver the growth and sustainable development that this country needs."

"We understand that the new draft Framework follows closely the version submitted by the Practitioners Advisory Group which fully incorporated these principles. On that basis we will have no problem in giving today's Framework our ringing endorsement."

Member of the Practitioners Advisory Group John Rhodes said:

"Most people involved in the planning industry recognise that it has become too complex and bureaucratic - and that it has lost sight of its principal purpose, which should be to deliver the homes, jobs and great places the country needs in an environmentally responsible way. The draft framework takes the opportunity to do something about that by making a real contribution to economic recovery and environmental objectives."

## Notes to editors

1. The draft *National Planning Policy Framework* can be found at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework).

2. The Government wants the fullest possible scrutiny of the draft framework. A full 12 week consultation starts today. Details can be found at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframeworkconsultation](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframeworkconsultation).

3. Ministers will ensure that both Houses of Parliament are given the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Framework. They have invited the Communities and Local Government Select Committee to comment on the draft Framework.

4. Consultation workshops have been arranged across the country to hear directly from people with an interest. These will be in London on Wednesday, 7 September; Leeds on Thursday, September 8; Birmingham on Tuesday, September 13; and Bristol on September 15. Full details can be found at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframeworkuk/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframeworkuk/).

5. A short summary of the main proposals in the draft Framework can be found at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframeworksummary](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframeworksummary).

6. The abolition of regional strategies and reforms of the planning system are central to boosting homes and jobs. Without burdensome regional planning policy councils will be free to prepare their Local Plans without having to follow top-down targets.

7. Further comments on the publication of the draft Framework include:

Chief Executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, Paul Everitt said:

"We welcome today's consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework, which looks to encourage the installation of charging infrastructure for ultra-low carbon vehicles in new developments. We hope that, through their planning powers, local authorities use this opportunity to deliver a comprehensive charging network, working with industry, to advance low and ultra-low carbon motoring in the UK."

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