

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (CONSULTATION) (ENGLAND) DIRECTION 2024

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“the Secretary of State”), in exercise of powers conferred by articles 18(4), 31(1) and 45 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015¹ (“the Order”) directs as follows:

1. This Direction shall come into force on 26 January 2024 and shall apply to applications for planning permission relating to land in England received on or after that date.

2. In this Direction –

“ancient woodland” means an area in England which has been continuously wooded since at least the end of the year 1600 A.D;

“flood risk area” means land in an area within –

- (a) Flood Zones 2 or 3; or
- (b) Flood Zone 1 which has critical drainage problems and which has been notified for the purposes of article 10 of the Order to the local planning authority by the Environment Agency;

“Flood Zone” has the same meaning as in article 10(2)(o) of the Order;

“floor space” means the gross floor space in a building or buildings measured externally;

“inappropriate development” has the same meaning as in paragraph 143-147 of the National Planning Policy Framework, dated February 2019 or any successor document;

“major development” means –

- (a) in respect of residential development, a development where the number of dwellings to be provided is 10 or more; or the site area is 0.5 hectares or more;
- (b) in respect of non-residential development, a development where the new floor space to be provided is 1,000 square metres or more, or the site area is 1 hectare or more;

“edge-of-centre” means, for retail purposes, a location that is well connected to and within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 300 metres) of the primary shopping area and,

¹ S.I. 2015/595 to which there are amendments not relevant to this direction.

for all other main town centre uses, is likely to be within 300 metres of a town centre boundary;

“out-of-centre” means a location which is not in, or on the edge of, a town centre but not necessarily outside the urban area;

“out-of-town” means an out-of-centre development outside the existing urban area;

“playing field” has the same meaning as in Schedule 4, Interpretation of the Table, paragraph (1)(j) to the Order;

“requisite notice” means notice in the appropriate form set out in Schedule 3 to the Order or in a form substantially to the same effect; and

“setting” means the area around a World Heritage Site (including any buffer zone or its equivalent) in which development is capable of having an adverse impact on the World Heritage Site, including an adverse impact on views to and from the World Heritage Site.

3. This Direction shall apply in relation to any application for planning permission which –
 - (a) is for Green Belt development, development outside town centres, World Heritage Site development, playing field development, flood risk area development, commemorative object development or development affecting ancient woodland; and
 - (b) is received by a planning authority on or after 26 January 2024.
4. For the purposes of this Direction, “Green Belt development” means development which consists of or includes inappropriate development on land allocated as Green Belt in the development plan and which consists of or includes-
 - (a) the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or
 - (b) any other development which, by reason of its scale or nature or location, would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
5. (1) For the purposes of this Direction, “development outside town centres” means development which consists of or includes retail, leisure or office use, and which –
 - (a) is to be carried out on land which is edge-of-centre, out-of-centre or out-of-town; and
 - (b) is not in accordance with one or more provisions of the development plan in force in relation to the area in which the development is to be carried out; and

(c) consists of or includes the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is:

- (i) 5,000 square metres or more; or
- (ii) extensions or new development of 2,500 square metres or more which, when aggregated with existing floor space, would exceed 5,000 square metres.

(2) In calculating the area of existing floor space for the purposes of development referred to in paragraph 5(1)(c)(ii) this shall include retail, leisure or office floor space situated within a 1 kilometre radius of any part of the same type of use to be comprised in the proposed development and –

- (a) is already provided;
- (b) has been substantially completed within the period of 5 years immediately preceding the date an application for development to which this Direction applies is received;
- (c) in respect of which an application for planning permission has been made but not finally determined on the date an application for development to which this Direction applies is received; or
- (d) in respect of which an application for planning permission has been granted within the period of 5 years immediately preceding the date an application for development to which this Direction applies is received.

6. For the purposes of this Direction, “World Heritage Site development” means development which would have an adverse impact on the outstanding universal value, integrity, authenticity and significance of a World Heritage Site or its setting, including any buffer zone or its equivalent, and being development to which Historic England has objected, that objection not having been withdrawn.

7. For the purposes of this Direction, “playing field development” means development of a description mentioned in paragraph (z) of the Table in Schedule 4 to the Order where –

- (a) the land (or any part of the land) which is the subject of the application –
 - (i) is land of a local authority; or
 - (ii) is currently used by an educational institution as a playing field; or
 - (iii) has at any time in the five years before the application is received been used by an educational institution as a playing field; and

- (b) the English Sports Council (“Sport England”) has been consulted pursuant to articles 18 and 20 of the Order, and has made representations objecting to the whole or part of the development on one or more of the following grounds –
- (i) that there is a deficiency in the provision of playing fields in the area of the local authority concerned;
 - (ii) that the proposed development would result in such a deficiency; or
 - (iii) that where the proposed development involves a loss of a playing field and an alternative or replacement playing field is proposed to be provided, that alternative or replacement does not match (whether in quantity, quality or accessibility) that which would be lost.

8. For the purposes of this Direction, “flood risk area development” means major development in a flood risk area to which the Environment Agency has made an objection that it has not been able to withdraw even after discussions with the local planning authority.

9. For the purposes of this Direction, “commemorative object development” means development which consists of or includes full or part demolition of a statue, monument, memorial or plaque which is, or is part of, a building in place for a period of at least 10 years on the date of any proposed demolition other than a statue, monument, memorial or plaque:

- (a) that is a listed building;
- (b) that is a scheduled monument;
- (c) within a cemetery, on consecrated land, or within the curtilage of a place of public worship;
- (d) within the grounds of a museum or art gallery; or
- (e) within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse.

The references to “dwellinghouse” and “cemetery” in this -paragraph have the same meaning as Class B of Part 11 of Schedule 2, The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)².

10. For the purposes of this Direction, “development affecting ancient woodland” means development which would result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, where the local planning authority considers that potential adverse impacts cannot be mitigated.

² S.I.2015/596

11. Where a local planning authority does not propose to refuse an application for planning permission to which this Direction applies, the authority shall consult the Secretary of State.
12. Where, by virtue of paragraph 11, a local planning authority is required to consult the Secretary of State, they shall as soon as practicable send to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Planning Casework Unit at PCU@levellingup.gov.uk
 - (a) a copy of the application (including copies of any accompanying plans, drawings and any appropriate flood risk assessment) and supporting information;
 - (b) a copy of the requisite notice;
 - (c) a copy of any representations made to the authority in respect of the application;
 - (d) a copy of any report on the application prepared by an officer of the authority;
 - (e) unless contained in a report supplied pursuant to sub-paragraph (d), a statement of the material considerations which the authority consider indicate a departure application should be determined otherwise than in accordance with s.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004³.
13. Subject to paragraph 14 below, where, by virtue of paragraph 11, a local planning authority is required to consult the Secretary of State, they shall not grant planning permission on the application until the expiry of a period of 21 days beginning with the date which the Secretary of State tells the authority in writing is the date he received the material specified in paragraph 12 above.
14. If, before the expiry of the 21 day period referred to in paragraph 13, the Secretary of State has notified the authority that he does not intend to issue a direction under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in respect of that application, the authority may proceed to determine the application.
15. The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021 is withdrawn.

Saving

16. The Direction revoked by paragraph 15 continues to have effect in relation to any application for planning permission made before 26 January 2024.

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Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

26 January 2024