



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
2 Marsham Street
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To: Planning and Housebuilding Stakeholders

17 August 2026

Dear Colleagues,

CREATING A CLEAR, RULES-BASED PLANNING SYSTEM

As you know, this government has acted with ambition and urgency in response to the acute and entrenched housing crisis that we inherited, including by means of a bold overhaul of the planning system. In December 2024, we revised the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), reversing the previous government's anti-supply changes, implementing a new standard method aligned to our more ambitious national housing target, and releasing more land into the system through a modernised, strategic approach to green-belt land designation and release.

In December 2025, our landmark Planning and Infrastructure Act received Royal Assent, and we launched a consultation on a fuller and more definitive overhaul of the NPPF. This wholly restructured Framework built on the initial revisions we made in December 2024, included a range of new measures to support key economic sectors, and incorporated new clear and rules-based national policies for the making of both plans and decisions.

Following extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and detailed analysis of responses to the consultation undertaken between 16 December 2025 and 10 March 2026, we are today publishing a new NPPF and the government response to that consultation. You can find the full response and new NPPF on gov.uk [here](#), but key changes made following consultation are summarised below.

Alongside the NPPF, we are also announcing wider reforms to speed up the planning system and make it more certain. This includes publishing the response to the recent government consultation on reforms to the statutory consultee system and publishing Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results for 2024 and 2025.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2026

The new NPPF confirms reforms to make planning policy easier to use, underpin the development of faster and simpler local plans, and provide a clearer basis for decision-making. This includes separating policies for plan-making and decision-making. In order to ensure that these changes make an immediate difference, the decision-making policies will come into effect from today.

Many of the reforms reflect the positions set out in December, but I have summarised the key changes since the consultation below:

1. **Clarifying policies throughout the Framework:** including setting out more clearly the respective roles of different types of plans and what needs to be considered in decision-making (e.g. how transport impacts, pollution, heritage, protected landscapes and safety for women and girls should be reflected in planning decisions).
2. **Increasing the ambition of the ‘default yes’ for development around well-connected stations:** expanding the scope of the policy to the top 80 Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) by Gross Value Added, as opposed to the top 60 TTWAs proposed in the consultation.
3. **Updating policies to support increased densities:** supporting more types of development within the curtilage of residential properties, and ensuring that extra floorspace rather than just extra units are supported – giving more flexibility to expand accommodation of all types.
4. **Tailoring minimum densities to maximise overall supply:** by adjusting our approach to minimum densities around rail stations and ensuring local areas maximise densities where they can be supported, we have maintained an ambitious approach, while avoiding unviable requirements in areas that cannot support them.
5. **Requiring flexibility when applying parking standards to large retail and similar redevelopment schemes:** making it easier to regenerate sites.
6. **Recognising the role of strategic sites:** by creating a consistent and distinct category of sites comprising around 1,500 units or more, with policies tailored to support them where relevant.
7. **Revising policy on local standards:** by maintaining that quantitative standards in development plans should be limited to matters where local variation is justified and setting out clearly the circumstances in which local standards for energy efficiency and internal layout may be justified.
8. **Providing clearer support for telecommunications development:** ensuring schemes can come forward in appropriate locations, including where this can improve connectivity for rail users.
9. **Updating policies which safeguard against the loss of facilities:** ensuring that key facilities such as public houses are not lost where that can reasonably be avoided.
10. **Strengthening policy on Protected Landscapes:** reinserting text to make clear that major development should be refused other than in exceptional cases. Landscape and scenic beauty in Protected Landscapes will also remain protected by statute.

Statutory Consultee Reforms

Alongside the new NPPF, the government is also publishing its response to the consultation on reforms to the statutory consultee system. As you know, statutory consultees play an important role in the planning process by providing expert advice on matters ranging from transport and heritage to the environment and sport. However, where referrals are unnecessary or advice is delayed, the system can slow decision-making and hold back the delivery of homes and growth.

That is why, in November 2025, we launched a consultation on reforms designed to ensure that statutory consultees provide timely, proportionate and relevant advice on planning applications. Following careful consideration of more than 1,600 consultation responses, today the government is publishing its response and setting out a package of reforms that will streamline consultation requirements while maintaining important safeguards.

The response to the consultation confirms that Sport England will be retained as a statutory consultee, but the range of planning applications on which it must be consulted will be narrowed to ensure their advice is focused on the cases where they add most value. The statutory consultee status of The Gardens Trust and Theatres Trust is being removed, while a new notification requirement is being introduced to ensure these bodies can continue their important role in the planning process. We are proceeding with the proposals on which we consulted to reform four of the national statutory consultees that receive the highest volume of planning applications: Active Travel England, National Highways, Historic England, and the Mining Remediation Authority.

We are also maintaining the current moratorium on the creation of new statutory consultees, ensuring that the planning system remains targeted, proportionate and focused on supporting growth.

Together, these reforms will reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, help local planning authorities reach decisions more quickly, and ensure statutory consultees can focus their expertise on the proposals that matter most. You can find the full government response and details of the reforms on [gov.uk here](#).

Housing Delivery Test (HDT) Results

Alongside the new NPPF, the government has also published the 2024 and 2025 Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results. This combined publication is to help support the HDT return to a regular publication timetable and ensure that scores reflect the most up-to-date information on housing delivery. The 2025 HDT results, which can be found on [gov.uk here](#), will be used for the purposes of decision making. Alongside these results, the government has also published a revised HDT Rule Book, which can be found [here](#).

This suite of reforms represent a significant moment of change to national policy; however, there will be more to do in the coming months as we continue to modernise the planning system through a range of activities including updating relevant Planning Practice Guidance, implementing the measures from the Planning and Infrastructure Act, and continuing to support local authorities' capacity & capability.

I would like to thank you for your continued engagement with government as we deliver the reforms needed to tackle our national housing emergency and generate the sustained economic growth needed to improve the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people. We look forward to discussing this with you further at engagement sessions we will be hosting in the Autumn.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a stylized flourish at the end.

RT HON MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning