

# Councillors' webinar on National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 changes and planning reform

Questions taken only via which will be can be accessed via the “slido” button at the top of the MSTeam meeting

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<https://app.sli.do/event/okeCTLGAhn3x4aA2rCzp5B>

**We are recording the presentation and will publish it on the PAS website and share it with you after the event.**



10<sup>th</sup> March 2025

# Structure for the session

- Presentation on the December 2024 changes to the NPPF and planning reform:

Michael Bingham, Deputy Director of Planning Policy, MHCLG.

- Q&A with Michael and a Panel of councillors
- Panel discussion - reflections from our councillor panel

Our panel of councillors:

Tumi Hawkins, South Cambridgeshire

Richard Clewer, Wiltshire Council

Mike McCusker, Salford City Council

Loic Rich, Cornwall Council



Ministry of Housing,  
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Local Government

# The New National Planning Policy Framework

An Overview of the December 24 Changes and what next  
for planning reform

March 2025



# Housing targets

## *The Key Changes*



### Revised NPPF

- New standard method:
  - Uses a baseline set at a percentage of existing housing stock levels
  - Plus an affordability multiplier
  - Removes arbitrary caps and additions
  - Increases total annual housing target from 300,000 to 370,000

### Changes from Dec 23

- All authorities expected to use the standard method
- New method for calculating need
- 'Urban uplift' removed

### Changes from July 24

- Higher affordability adjustment in response to feedback
- This alters the distribution, increasing need in places with most severe unaffordability



# Green Belt & Grey Belt

## *The Key Changes*

### Revised NPPF

- More strategic approach to Green Belt designation and release
- Recognition that lower-quality 'grey belt' land may be needed to meet local housing (and other) needs
- Release of 'grey belt' will be locally led and primarily managed through local plans process, but also through decision making
- Most valuable Green Belt will still be protected

### Changes from Dec 23

- Explicit obligation to review Green Belt where needed
- New definition of 'grey belt' land (previously developed + lesser value)

### Changes from July 24

- Altered definition of 'grey belt' to improve operability
- Tightened circumstances in which land may be released





# The Golden Rules

## *The Key Changes*

### Revised NPPF

- Green Belt land will only be released when it meets these conditions:
  - Provides **affordable housing** (local plan targets plus 15%, with a cap of 50%)
  - Necessary improvements to **infrastructure**
  - New or improved **green space**, improving existing green spaces and creating new ones.

### Changes from July 24

- Revised the approach to affordable housing





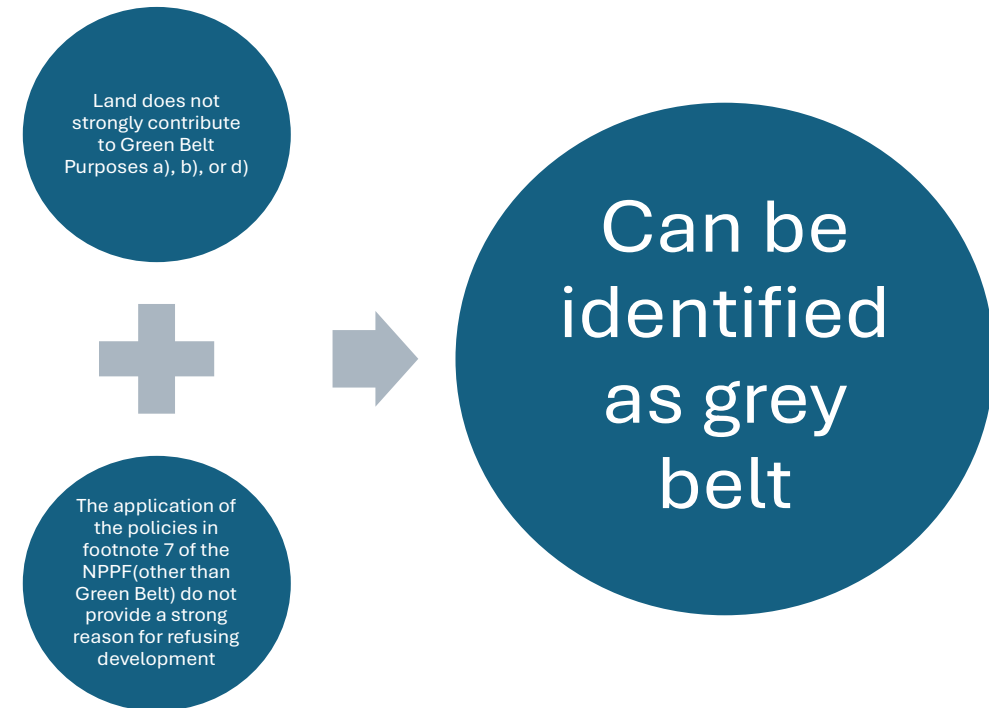
# Green Belt guidance

## Identifying grey belt

- Consultation responses were clear that further guidance and clarity were needed to drive a more consistent approach to the identification of grey belt.
- Our published guidance sets out principles for performing a Green Belt assessment to identify grey belt, including:
  - Defining location and scale of area/s to assess
  - Considerations for judging whether land strongly contributes to Green Belt purposes A, B, and D.

## Considering the release or development of Green Belt land

- Alongside the identification of grey belt, our guidance set out principles involved in considering other policy requirements, including:
  - Considering whether release or development on Green Belt land would "fundamentally undermine" the remaining Green Belt
  - Delivering Golden Rules
  - Considering proposals on grey belt land





# Local Plan Transitional Arrangements

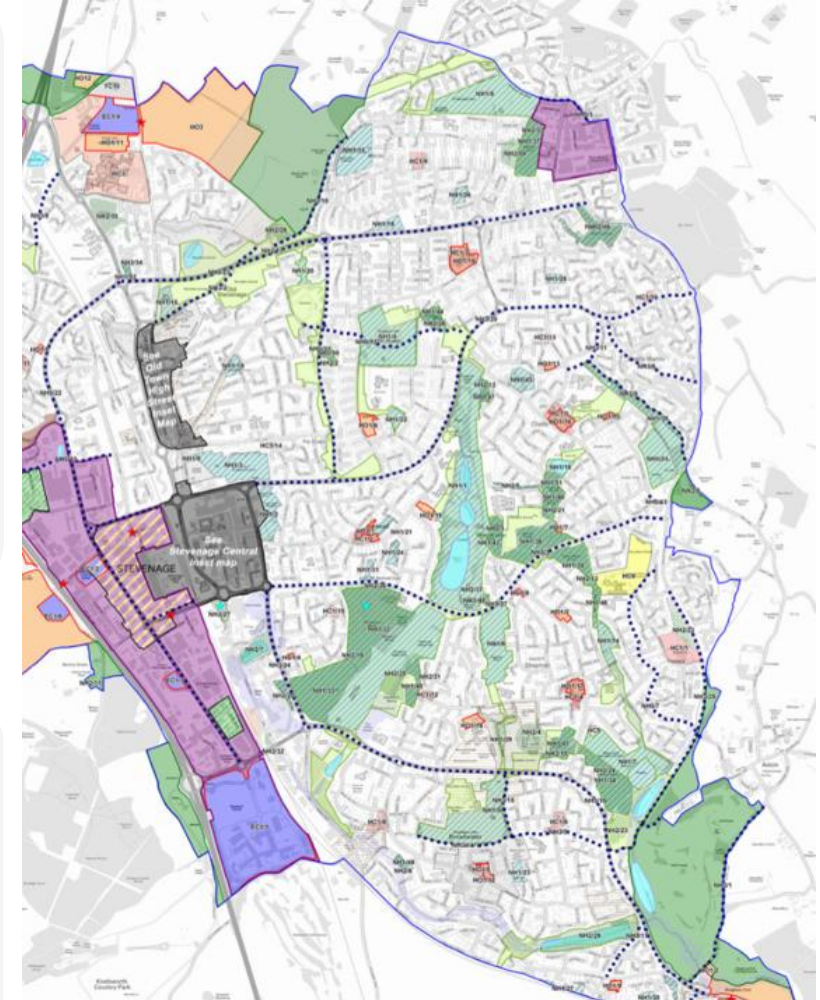
## *The Key Changes*

### Revised NPPF

- Changes to the NPPF will take effect three months after its publication (so 12/03/25).
- Local Plans that have reached examination will be allowed to continue under the relevant previous version of NPPF.
- Local Plans who have made it to Reg. 19 will be allowed to continue under relevant previous version of NPPF as long as they are providing for at least 80% of the new local housing need figure.
- ...but if less than 80% they will need to reflect policy changes and new local housing need figure.

### Changes from July 24

- Replaced the 200 dwellings per annum threshold with a percentage approach
- Extended transitional period from one to three months
- Provided additional six months where plans have to go back to Reg 18 consultation (in addition to the 18 months consulted on)





## Revised NPPF

- Stronger support for:
  - key economic sectors (including laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics)
  - provision and modernisation of key public service infrastructure
  - schemes that will deliver a high percentage of Social Rent/affordable housing
- Restricts new hot food takeaways and fast food outlets within walking distance of schools and other places where children/young people gather

## Changes from July 24

- Strengthened policy to promote good health and prevent ill health including restricting new hot food takeaways and addressing public safety risks





### Revised NPPF

- Removes the de-facto ban on onshore wind in England
- Gives more weight to benefits of renewables and low carbon energy proposals to support Government's Clean Power 2030 ambitions
- Exempts development from the sequential flood risk test where no development would be at risk from flooding
- Expanded policy on use of sustainable drainage systems
- Changes to climate change chapter to highlight importance of development management and full range of mitigation concerns
- Encourages nature-friendly features like swift bricks

### Changes from July 24

- Specific wording changes to emphasise the importance of climate change considerations
- And to amend flood risk sequential approach and deployment of SuDs



### Revised NPPF

- Sets expectation for local plans to set out a framework identifying where design guides, design codes and masterplans are prepared to deliver better design outcomes.
- Provides a stronger hook to the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code to ensure that it is used consistently in decision making.
- Greater emphasis on the use of design tools and processes in securing well-designed development.

### Changes from July 24

- The NPPF changes removed most references to 'beauty'
- We have retained this where it serves as a strategic objective
- The presumption was amended to strengthen safeguards relating to design, sustainable development and affordable housing (the latter was new, beyond what we consulted on)





# What Next?

## *Future Planning Policy changes and PIB*



### Future Planning Policy changes

- Commitment to a clearer set of national policies for decision making.
- Intend to consult in Spring 2025.

### Planning and Infrastructure Bill

- Intention to introduce this Spring. Key elements:
  - accelerating the delivery of major infrastructure projects
  - modernising planning committees and increasing local planning authorities' capacity to deliver an improved service
  - reforming compulsory purchase process
  - enabling development to fund nature recovery where both are currently stalled
  - delivering strategic planning through requiring spatial development strategies across England.





# What Next?

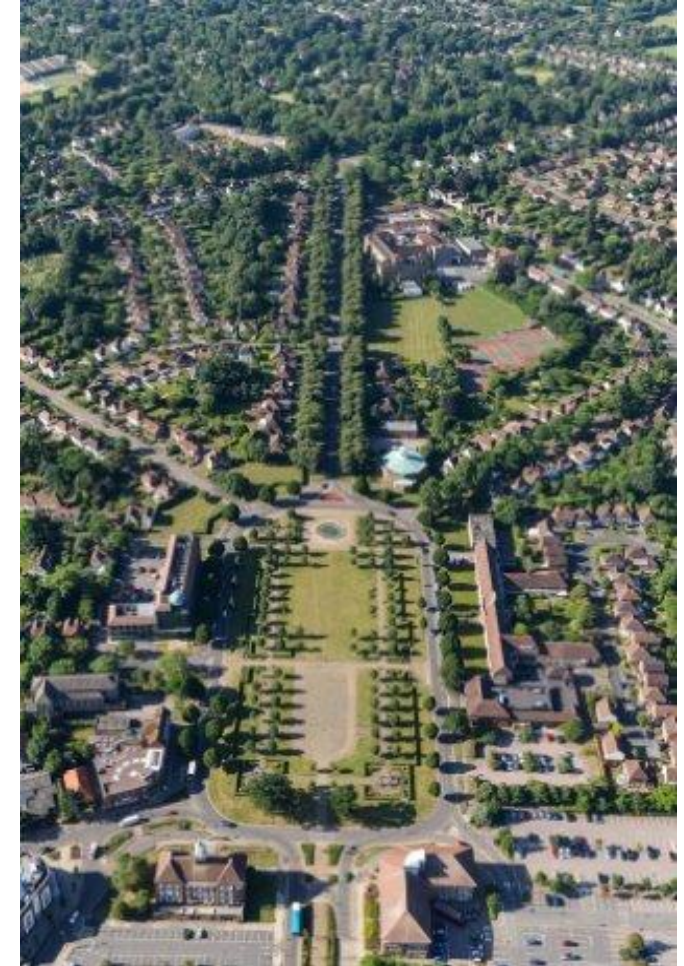
## *EORs and Working Papers*

### Environmental Outcomes Reports

- Consultation on draft outcome regulations on Environmental Outcomes Reports will take place later this year.
- Publish a 'roadmap' in the coming months

### Working papers

- We have already published Working Papers on the Brownfield Passport, Planning Committee Reforms, Streamlining Infrastructure and the Nature Recovery Fund.
- We intend to publish an additional Build Out Working Paper in the Spring/Summer, including options on financial penalties.





# What Next?

## *Planning Practice Guidance, and National Design Guidance*

### Planning Practice Guidance

- New planning guidance for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Heritage and the Green Belt have been published.
- We have launched '**create or update a local plan**', which brings together all the essential tools and guidance councils need to develop a local plan, underpinned by quality data.
- Planning guidance revisions for transport and renewables, viability, climate change and flooding will follow.

### National Design Guidance

- We intend to update the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code in the Spring.





# What Next?

## *Capacity and Capability*

### Improving capacity and capability

- We have published the Year 1 Planning Capacity & Skills Survey (9 Jan). Follow-on pulse survey to follow.
- Planning fees increased with draft regulations laid in January, to apply from 1st April (subject to Parliamentary approval.)
- Grant payments for Local Plan Delivery and Green Belt support for eligible local authorities to be completed in the Spring.
- Allocating £4.5mil to LGA Pathways to Planning initiative to fund salary bursaries for new planning roles in councils.





# What Next?

## *Planning Committees and Fees*

### Planning Committees

- We published a series of working papers on planning reform, including a paper in December that set out our proposals to modernise planning committees by introducing:
  - A national scheme of delegation
  - Mandatory training for committee members
- We will legislate for these changes in the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill
- We will consult formally on the details

### Planning Fees

- Increase in fees for householder, discharge of condition and prior approval applications.
- New three-tier fee structure for s73 applications to vary or remove planning conditions.
- Increases to apply from 1 April 2025, including inflation adjustment for all other planning fees.
- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill to introduce measures that will enable local planning authorities to set their own planning fees.
- Expectation that fee income is retained for spending on planning application services.

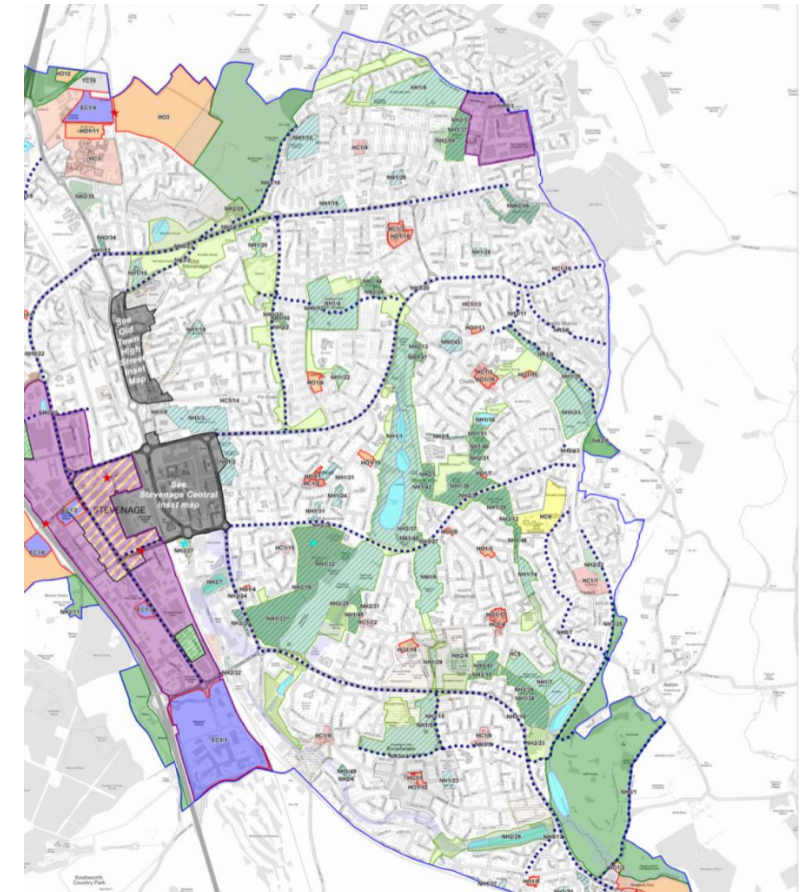


# What Next?

## *Plan-making reforms*

### Plan-making reforms

- 6th March deadline for Local Plan timetables to be updated. New plan-making system commences in Autumn 2025.
- On the 27th Feb we responded to the 'Implementation of Plan-Making Consultation' - providing clarity on how local plans should be prepared and supported by evidence, creating a more efficient process and ensuring plans are simpler for users.
- The regulations and guidance for the new plan-making system will be confirmed in the Spring.
- We also allocated £70k to 133 authorities to contribute towards the costs of carrying out Green Belt reviews in their areas.
- Grant payments for ATLAS support and Local Plans support to eligible local authorities to be completed in the Spring.
- The English Devolution Bill will be introduced in the late Spring/Summer, with aspects of planning including strategic DM powers for Mayors and changes for Combined Authorities regarding Strategic Plan making.





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# Any Questions?