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Subject: Summary of the NPPF

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Dear Neighbourhood Planning Group,

We are contacting you to let you know that a [revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) was published by the Government on 19 December 2023. The revised NPPF can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>. You can compare the changes made between the December 2023 NPPF and the previous version [here](#).

What is the NPPF?

The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF is supported by National Planning Practice Guidance (also known as PPG) which provides further context. The PPG can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>.

Overview of the changes made to the NPPF

The main changes to the NPPF are in relation to housing delivery, but there are also several other reforms which are all discussed below.

Housing supply and delivery:

Previous versions of the NPPF required all local authorities to demonstrate annually a supply of sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. Failure to do so resulted in a presumption that planning permission should be granted for sustainable development, unless the adverse impacts outweighed the benefits or the application of NPPF policies to protect areas / assets of particular importance provided a clear reason for refusal. This was known as the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' or 'tilted balance'.

The revised NPPF changes this requirement in certain circumstances:

- Local authorities will not be required to continually show a five-year housing land supply as long they have a local plan that was adopted within the last five years, and which identified at the time the examination concluded at least a five-year housing land supply. This does not apply to West Berkshire as the current Local Plan comprises of three documents all of which were adopted more than five years ago: Core Strategy Development Plan (DPD) Housing Site Allocations DPD, and West Berkshire District Local Plan.
- Local authorities will only have to demonstrate a four-year housing land supply if they have an emerging Local Plan which has either been consulted on (under Regulation 18 or Regulation 19

of the Town Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) or submitted for independent examination. The emerging Local Plan must include a policies map and proposed housing allocations towards meeting housing need. This only applies for two-years from the publication date, until 19 December 2025 (NPPF para 226). Because the West Berkshire Local Plan Review has been submitted for independent examination, the Council are required to demonstrate a four-year housing land supply.

If local authorities do not meet the above-mentioned criteria, then they must continue to demonstrate annually a five-year housing land supply.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development still applies if a four or five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated. However, the revised NPPF gives greater protection against this in areas where an adopted neighbourhood plan is less than five years old and contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.

Lastly in respect of housing supply and delivery, greater support is now given for small sites to come forward for community-led development and self-build and custom-build housing. Such an addition is intended to provide more confidence and certainty to small and medium sized builders and diversify the housing market.

Assessing local housing need

The revised NPPF confirms that the default method for calculating local housing need in a local authority area is using the standard method. However, it is now an advisory starting point, and an alternative method can be used in exceptional circumstances. The West Berkshire Local Plan Review has used the standard method to calculate the housing need in West Berkshire.

Local authorities must now assess the need for different groups in the community, including those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people (including those who require retirement and care home provision), travellers, those with disabilities, and those who want to build their own homes. Any such need must then be reflected in planning policies.

Affordable and community-led housing:

“Community-led housing” now replaces all references to entry-level housing exception sites or similar. Community-led housing is defined in the revised NPPF as development which is instigated and taken forward by a not-for-profit organisation set up and run primarily for the purpose of meeting the housing needs of its members and the wider local community, rather than being primarily commercial enterprise.

The revised NPPF expects there to be support for the development of exception sites for “community-led development” on sites that would not otherwise be suitable as rural exception sites. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authorities discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

It should also be noted that where major developments involve housing provision, there are exemptions to the 10% requirement for affordable home ownership, such as, where the site or

proposed development is exclusively for affordable housing, a community-led development exception site or a rural exception site.

Design

The revised NPPF now places greater emphasis on beauty and reference is now made to this throughout the document.

Despite the emphasis on beauty, the revised NPPF does not include detail on how to assess beauty. However, there is an emphasis on the use of local codes that are prepared in line with the [National Model Design Code](#).

Mansard roofs

The revised NPPF now allows mansard roof extensions on suitable properties where their external appearance “harmonises with the original building”. This reform will offer the ability to enable new housing by extending upwards as long as these extensions are in keeping with the local character and context, particularly in conservation areas.

Local planning authorities are now required to use planning conditions to require clear and accurate details of a schemes design and materials.

Development densities

There is now greater protection against out of character residential developments. Residential developments which result in significant uplifts in the average density of residential development in an urban area may be inappropriate if it results in developments which are wholly out of character with the existing area.

Energy efficiency

Local authorities, in determining planning applications, are to now give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements through improvements to existing domestic and non-domestic buildings.

In the assessment of applications for energy efficient improvements, heritage protection must be considered.

Allocation of agricultural land for development

The availability of agricultural land for food production must now be considered when deciding which sites are most appropriate for development.

Implementation of the revised NPPF

For the purposes of decision-making (ie. the determination of planning applications), the revised NPPF came into effect on 19 December 2023.

In respect of plan-making, where plans reach pre-submissions consultation after 19 March 2024, the policies in the new NPPF will apply. Plans that reach pre-submission consultation on or before this date will be examined under the previous version of the NPPF.

Planning Policy Team
West Berkshire District Council