

NPPF Consultation RBBC Response Mar 2023 Final

Q.1: Do you agree that local planning authorities should not have to continually demonstrate a deliverable 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) for as long as the housing requirement set out in its strategic policies is less than 5 years old?

Agree but clarity is needed where the plan has been reviewed by the local planning authority and found not to require updating; would the 5 year housing land supply still be required?

Q.2: Do you agree that buffers should not be required as part of 5YHLS calculations (this includes the 20% buffer as applied by the Housing Delivery Test)?

Agreed. Buffers are largely unworkable in locations which are already struggling to deliver sufficient housing sites. However, without the buffer how will government ensure that authorities which consistently fail to meet the housing delivery test, actually meet housing needs?

Q.3: Should an oversupply of homes early in a plan period be taken into consideration when calculating a 5YHLS later on, or is there an alternative approach that is preferable?

Yes – Oversupply should be taken into consideration as the housing requirement is for the plan period (with an annual average). It is not an annual housing requirement but is pro-rated for recording purposes.

Q.4: What should any planning guidance dealing with oversupply and undersupply say?

Any guidance should be clear to avoid any doubts particularly on how over and under supply is calculated. Additionally, some guidance could be made available on how to calculate over and under supply where the five year period extends beyond the plan period.

Q.5: Do you have any views about the potential changes to paragraph 14 of the existing Framework and increasing the protection given to neighbourhood plans?

Reigate & Banstead currently has no neighbourhood plans or groups wishing to put a neighbourhood plan together currently despite council support being made available. Strengthening these plans seems to be of limited value and instead of looking at microscale plans, consideration should be given to looking at ways to reintroduce regional planning to develop the strategic direction which can better bring land use and transport planning back together.

Q.6: Do you agree that the opening chapters of the Framework should be revised to be clearer about the importance of planning for the homes and other development our communities need?

Whilst we appreciate the failures of the current housing market, the NPPF is already focussed on housing also needs to refocus on climate change and sustainable growth as at present it seems to risk being watered down. Plans need to support business rather than releasing nearly every available site to housing which is currently occurring through recent changes to permitted development. More needs to be done on bringing vacant homes back into use including many new apartments owned by overseas investors which are rarely, if ever occupied. This is particularly pertinent in London which has attracted large numbers of these investors, which restricts supply and drives up property prices. This exacerbates pressure on the London housing market which spreads out into Surrey and across the South-East and beyond.

Q.7: What are your views on the implications these changes may have on plan-making and housing supply?

Introducing these proposals at this time when there have been significant new requirements, with more to come in 2023/24 on the construction industry combined with local elections due in the spring and a general election in late 2024 will make some councils delay work on their local plans which would undermine housing delivery and provide less certainty to investors. Many of the proposals contradict attempts to increase housing supply without any clear direction about where shortfalls will be met.

Q.8: Do you agree that policy and guidance should be clearer on what may constitute an exceptional circumstance for the use of an alternative approach for assessing local housing needs? Are there other issues we should consider alongside those set out above?

No. It is unclear why additional guidance is needed on the definition of exceptional circumstances as it should be straightforward for a competent planning authority to identify their exceptional circumstances. What would be helpful is for PINS to get involved with the Local Planning Authority at an earlier stage to agree or disagree with any exceptional approach when the methodology is initially being consulted on under the current Duty to Cooperate. This could help de-risk plans failing late in the examination stage.

Q.9: Do you agree that national policy should make clear that Green Belt does not need to be reviewed or altered when making plans, that building at densities significantly out-of-character with an existing area may be considered in assessing whether housing need can be met, and that past over-supply may be taken into account?

With regard to Green Belt reviews, we would agree with the proposed approach. However recent work by Savills has demonstrated that there is insufficient brownfield land available nationally and particularly in the South-East to meet development needs. As a result, it would be interesting to see how Government expects development needs to be met without increasing densities, and in some cases significantly.

The term 'significant out-of-character' requires more detailed clarification i.e., is Government thinking that one storey more is out of character or 10 storeys. Increasing the detail may help reduce lengthy local plan examinations and potential legal challenges.

We would strongly support the consideration of past housing over supply when assessing housing need.

Q.10: Do you have views on what evidence local planning authorities should be expected to provide when making the case that need could only be met by building at densities significantly out-of-character with the existing area?

Yes. An intensification study should be undertaken as part of the evidence base for a local plan where significant intensification of new development is being proposed. This should look at existing character including nature of the housing stock and building heights, local distinctiveness, impact on views, effects of overshadowing, integration with the adjoining areas and access to open space, etc. Potential heat island impacts could be considered in a separate climate change mitigation study in larger settlements and cities.

Q.11: Do you agree with removing the explicit requirement for plans to be 'justified', on the basis of delivering a more proportionate approach to examination?

No. The 'justified' soundness test ensures a balanced and robust approach to plan making. It is not clear from the proposed alteration how local plan proposals will be viewed in the round and consequently how robust they are. Many would agree that evidence needs to be proportionate and over the years has grown more complex. However, this is in response to different examiners expectations and objectors demands raised at examinations.

Q.12: Do you agree with our proposal to not apply revised tests of soundness to plans at more advanced stages of preparation? If no, which if any, plans should the revised tests apply to?

No. This consultation along with recent ministerial communications, and the ongoing revisions to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has already delayed a number of plans from being adopted. Some local authorities may use the watering down of the test as a way to further delay their local plan or even return to the start on plans which are in a more advanced stage. There should be an option for local planning authorities to say which planning tests they want to be applied to their plan so as to defuse delays to plan-making.

Q.13: Do you agree that we should make a change to the Framework on the application of the urban uplift?

Neutral. Whilst the argument for placing development in sustainable urban locations is a valid one, the 35% uplift is arbitrary and does not take into account recent intensifications, local character or infrastructure capacity. Many cities have extremely ageing infrastructure that is already past its 'use by date'. Arguably infrastructure capacity and the introduction of new sustainable technologies should be improved prior to new development including new fixed public transport improvements, water system upgrades and low carbon energy networks. Unfortunately, an automatic 35% uplift could see communities rebel where they see their life styles being undermined by excessive development which are not met with similar expansions in health, education and transport systems.

Q.14: What, if any, additional policy or guidance could the department provide which could help support authorities plan for more homes in urban areas where the uplift applies?

Additional policy and guidance could focus on the timely delivery of infrastructure upgrades where there are development pressures.

Q.15: How, if at all, should neighbouring authorities consider the urban uplift applying, where part of those neighbouring authorities also functions as part of the wider economic, transport or housing market for the core town/city?

The Duty to Cooperate has failed in many areas as more often than not it has become an agreement to disagree. The reality is that such matters were historically better managed at the larger scale be it regional or structure plans. However, in the absence of such arrangements there needs to be a record of agreements to ensure that plans are aligned particularly in areas surrounding growing cities and where there are cross boundary developments.

Q.16: Do you agree with the proposed four-year rolling land supply requirement for emerging plans, where work is needed to revise the plan to take account of revised national policy on addressing constraints and reflecting any past over-supply? If no, what approach should be taken, if any?

Yes. Some plans take a long time to prepare and need to be moved forward and using a rolling 4 year housing land supply would be beneficial.

Q.17: Do you consider that the additional guidance on constraints should apply to plans continuing to be prepared under the transitional arrangements set out in the existing Framework paragraph 220?

No. Unfortunately, the very flexible approach proposed could result in less housing being delivered at a time when more housing is needed for a growing number of new households and lifting people out of temporary accommodation.

Q.18: Do you support adding an additional permissions-based test that will 'switch off' the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development where an authority can demonstrate sufficient permissions to meet its housing requirement?

Yes. It would seem a reasonable option.

Q.19: Do you consider that the 115% 'switch-off' figure (required to turn off the presumption in favour of sustainable development Housing Delivery Test consequence) is appropriate?

No. We remain opposed to the 115% uplift currently allowing the presumption in favour as these areas often have very challenging housing delivery circumstances which means that there are insufficient sites available locally and the current uplift seems particularly onerous and will fail.

Q.20: Do you have views on a robust method for counting deliverable homes permitted for these purposes?

No.

Q. 21: What are your views on the right approach to applying Housing Delivery Test consequences pending the 2022 results?

There remains a need to ensure a strong supply of housing but also a degree of pragmatism. Buffers for those unable to meet their housing requirements is not helpful and indeed can exacerbate the situation in some areas where there are local delivery issues.

Q.22: Do you agree that the government should revise national planning policy to attach more weight to Social Rent in planning policies and decisions? If yes, do you have any specific suggestions on the best mechanisms for doing this?

Yes. Social Rent tenure is the only affordable housing tenure with a linkage to local incomes and therefore provides genuinely affordable housing for local people. In terms of mechanisms, the delivery of Social Rent tenure relies on there being clear definitions of all types of affordable housing tenures. The definitions should be linked to local incomes to ensure genuine affordability. We note Social Rent is the only defined tenure in the draft Bill. Schedule 11 Part 1 204A (4) (b) should be specific and amended to ensure that other affordable housing tenures can be defined in regulations in a meaningful way.

Secondly, the ability for LPAs to require the delivery of Social Rent in their locality is needed to support its delivery based on local affordability and incomes. This would enable associated development costs of this tenure to be factored into the IL. Without the imposition of a requirement, there is a high risk that the current practice of prioritising Affordable Rent and other 'affordable' tenures will continue which are not genuinely affordable in this high cost borough.

Thirdly, a clear set of national housing delivery targets for the delivery of homes by tenure type is needed. Within this overall target, specific affordable housing targets by tenure type is needed to capture the delivery of the Social Rent homes, shared ownership etc.

Q.23: Do you agree that we should amend existing paragraph 62 of the Framework to support the supply of specialist older people's housing?

No. Whilst we would agree that consideration of older people housing is a growing factor, the current wording requires this to be taken into account in plan making. Unless government is willing to introduce separate targets for older people housing as part of the Housing Delivery Test any tweaks to paragraph 62 are unlikely to deliver the scale of older people housing needed. Our main area of concern is the provision of small homes with modest gardens for the elderly wishing to down-size from the large family home which in return would release the larger houses to growing families.

Q.24 Do you have views on the effectiveness of the existing small sites policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (set out in paragraph 69 of the existing Framework)?

The current policy is fine. Small sites in urban areas are fairly straight forward to deliver. More fundamental issues could be more challenging such as workforce availability and cashflow neither of which can be addressed in the NPPF. Small builders often have finer margins than the large companies which means that any additional building and other requirements can negatively impact the delivery of the scheme. However we consider that the nationally set policy on when affordable housing should be required in a development should be reduced to 5 or more units.

Q.25 How, if at all, do you think the policy could be strengthened to encourage greater use of small sites, especially those that will deliver high levels of affordable housing?

Develop robust funding support schemes for small site developers and tackle unreasonable utility company expectations and long waits for developments to be connected to the different networks. One particular risk is utilities trying to obtain network type improvements from a development when there are already existing network challenges which should be fixed through the utility companies' own capital programmes. Following Brexit and the current shortfall in trades people, greater support is needed for local trades training to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of trades persons to support small scale developers. Finally ensure that any additional policy burdens are essential rather than only desirable.

Q.26: Should the definition of “affordable housing for rent” in the Framework glossary be amended to make it easier for organisations that are not Registered Providers – in particular, community-led developers and almshouses – to develop new affordable homes?

No. Organisations can apply to be an RP and that process means affordable housing providers are subject to regulation.

Q.27: Are there any changes that could be made to exception site policy that would make it easier for community groups to bring forward affordable housing?

No. Based on our experience, whilst we would commend and support many communities who wish to develop affordable homes, the scale of NPPF alterations needs to be proportionate to the amount of housing actually being delivered in this way. It would be difficult for this type of community group to have the management and regulatory structures needed to deliver exception sites housing and to manage their development and either retain them in perpetuity or sell them. Potentially there is an opportunity here for trusts having a role such as the Community Land Trust.

Q.28: Is there anything else that you think would help community groups in delivering affordable housing on exception sites?

Yes. We need checks on the individuals leading such groups and their funding status. We would also suggest training or involvement from a suitable organisation such as Surrey Community Action.

Q.29: Is there anything else national planning policy could do to support community-led developments?

No. This is up to local communities and national interference would only increase the level of red tape.

Q.30: Do you agree in principle that an applicant's past behaviour should be taken into account into decision making? If yes, what past behaviour should be in scope?

Yes, in principle, a history of not building out permissions or failing to abide by consented requirements could be relevant, however the operation may be very challenging with potential legal challenges.

Q.31: Of the 2 options above, what would be the most effective mechanism? Are there any alternative mechanisms?

Option 1 would be the most straight forward to consider as well as providing the most proportionate approach. However, one particular problem would be a developer who employs different builders and has run into problem builders in the past which may have delayed delivery, affect cash flows and thereby harm the developers track record.

Q.32 Do you agree that the three build out policy measures that we propose to introduce through policy will help incentivise developers to build out more quickly? Do you have any comments on the design of these policy measures?

We strongly support government's view that developments should be built as soon as possible. However, we have some concerns with some elements of the proposed policies.

In terms of Paragraph 25a data publication, we are keen to understand how this data would be collected and when. We are also concerned that in some cases delays could be attributable to availability lack of a skilled workforce or even a lack of local authority capacity to deal with any conditions included with the original planning decision. Some of the delays can be attributed to the landowner and we would suggest that government considers ways, including the use of penalties, to address landowners' unreasonable behaviours/ expectations.

Paragraph 25b Increasing housing diversity tenure. This is a particular issue on very large sites. We agree that developers should provide a diverse mix of both tenure and type of home to ensure a variety of housing needs are met and a wide variety of buyers and renters (social and private) are met. This also reduces issues with absorption because the site delivers a variety of housing 'products' aimed different housing markets at any one time. It also benefits from the creation of more diverse communities.

Q.33: Do you agree with making changes to emphasise the role of beauty and placemaking in strategic policies and to further encourage well-designed and beautiful development?

No. The term 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is particularly pertinent here. Different communities take a very different view on what is beautiful. The terms character and local distinctiveness are more helpful. Significant changes have already been made to the NPPF with regard to beauty. Any further changes are considered unnecessary, invasive and could result in a retrospective step in terms of building design. They could also harm the roll out of new building and energy saving technologies. The term beauty also starts to place unrealistic expectations including in on industrial and infrastructure development which by their very nature have a utilitarian function.

Unfortunately, many of the most unattractive developments are undertaken under permitted development rights which national guidance has no say. Large single storey rear extensions

along whole streets, large bungalows in back gardens, paved over front gardens and ugly dormer window loft conversions all undermine the beauty of an area. If government is keen to beautify the country a review of Permitted Development rights needs to be the starting point not tinkering yet again with the NPPF.

Q.34: Do you agree to the proposed changes to the title of Chapter 12, existing paragraphs 84a and 124c to include the word 'beautiful' when referring to 'well-designed places' to further encourage well-designed and beautiful development?

No. This would have little value especially as some forms of industrial and infrastructure development cannot be made beautiful but are essential.

Q.35: Do you agree greater visual clarity on design requirements set out in planning conditions should be encouraged to support effective enforcement action?

No. We are unclear why government is seeking to require this when it is already undertaken as part of the planning application and planning enforcement process.

Q.36 Do you agree that a specific reference to mansard roofs in relation to upward extensions in Chapter 11, paragraph 122e of the existing Framework is helpful in encouraging LPAs to consider these as a means of increasing densification/creation of new homes? If no, how else might we achieve this objective?

No. Many design officers will advise that mansard roofs, particularly in many residential areas are a bad design solution that runs contrary to the beauty arguments mentioned above in this consultation. There is also no consideration of such developments on the negative construction impacts such schemes can have on neighbours or later with on street car parking issues, storage of waste and recycling bins or the hard paving of front gardens that would generally follow. Densification needs to be done in a comprehensive way and not in a piecemeal manner. A high quality scheme would consider the full impacts of the proposal and its relationship and integration with neighbouring areas and buildings. A mansard roof policy would just add to the problem and the public's poor view of the planning system.

Q.37 How do you think national policy on small scale nature interventions could be strengthened? For example, in relation to the use of artificial grass by developers in new development?

We would support efforts that strengthen small scale nature interventions provided they can form part of a more strategic area approach. The use of artificial grass, whilst useful as a pitch surface or in a play area, should be discouraged. The risk is that some would simply pave over areas where they can't put down artificial grass. Enforcement of small scale nature interventions would be extremely resource intensive and may require additional ecology skills which many local planning authorities completely lack following repeated cuts in services. However, given that BNG requirements on new development is scheduled to start in November this year – it is essential that Government publishes the secondary legislation immediately that was promised last year or else the whole BNG process will need to be delayed as the mechanisms will not be in place across the country.

Q.38 Do you agree that this is the right approach to making sure that the food production value of high value farmland is adequately weighted in the planning process, in addition to current references in the Framework on best and most versatile agricultural land?

Whilst we would support plans for protecting high quality agricultural land, detailed assessments would be required. At present government is not providing a data set that distinguishes between 'best and most versatile agricultural land. It is only possible to distinguish between Grade 3a and 3b agricultural land if detailed surveys are undertaken. It is also unclear exactly how nature recovery fits in with this agenda as they are frequently at odds with one another. Until certainty is provided, we would suggest that no further changes should be introduced at this time. We understand that both DEFRA and Natural England have no capacity to undertake additional work of this scale at the current time due to the scale of savings made in those organisations over the past decade and the post Brexit implications including the roll out of the new farming subsidies programme which is significantly behind schedule and causing harm to farming businesses.

Q.39: What method and actions could provide a proportionate and effective means of undertaking a carbon impact assessment that would incorporate all measurable carbon demand created from plan-making and planning decisions?

Unfortunately, there is no simple way of doing this and any attempt to do so would, unless nationally set, would be open to challenge. We looked at introducing carbon impact assessment in a recent project and concluded that it is far too complex and that highly specialist advice would be needed at a time when there is only very limited advice available to local authorities. Whilst it may be possible to quantify a brick for example, it is the transport of that brick that is particularly complex along with the source of energy to make that brick. However, should a supplier change the assessment for the brick would need amending. To do this for every single item used in the construction process and products introduced into the finished product would need a carbon measurement. This would take a very long time to develop and roll out. Whilst there are some tools available, their robustness is questionable to the extent that it could be easily challenged.

Q.40 Do you have any views on how planning policy could support climate change adaptation further, including through the use of nature-based solutions which provide multi-functional benefits?

Green walls and green roofs can help enhance nature recovery, but it raises concerns with insurance companies who prefer not to see these elements in a building. Government needs to work with the insurance industry to ensure embedded green surfaces in buildings are not treated any differently to traditional built forms. Planning policy could be extended to apply to existing developments to support the delivery of home insulation and energy efficiencies in the existing building stock.

Green Hydrogen networks should be developed to replace natural gas heating systems akin to the switch from coal gas to natural gas in the 1970s. Require greater retrofitting of energy efficiency improvements and carbon reduction measures when properties are being extended through both permitted development and planning applications

Q.41: Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 155 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

Yes provided it is within the limits of the existing installation i.e. a single wind turbine is replaced with a single turbine, ancillary equipment is contained within the existing dimensions of any ancillary structures.

Q.42: Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 158 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

Yes. We would broadly support efforts to upgrade existing renewable infrastructure.

Q.43: Do you agree with the changes proposed to footnote 54 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

First, all footnotes should be integrated into the text as they are not compliant with the government's own accessibility requirements. Second, the proposed wording regarding the location of new on-shore turbines appears surprisingly weak when considering the proposed introduction of National Development Management Policies and the latest extended permitted development rights for telecommunications equipment. It is unclear from the information provided in this consultation if wind turbines would be considered in protected landscapes. Clarity is needed.

Do you have any views on specific wording for new footnote 62?

All footnotes in the NPPF should be removed as they are not accessible and where appropriate the text incorporated into the body of the document. Government needs to follow its own requirements.

Footnote 63 includes reference to supplementary planning documents which this consultation seeks to remove. Government needs to be consistent in its approach.

Q.44: Do you agree with our proposed new Paragraph 161 in the National Planning Policy Framework to give significant weight to proposals which allow the adaptation of existing buildings to improve their energy performance?

No. Whilst the principle of improving energy performance in buildings is strongly supported, alterations to listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas needs careful consideration. For example, certain types of solar panel may be appropriate and others not. Similarly, the treatment of windows needs to broadly match the original window form. All too often modern window installations do not respect the building and are consequently incongruous. Potentially a local list of preferred window types and solar arrangements could be prepared to steer material choices.

Q.45: Do you agree with the proposed timeline for finalising local plans, minerals and waste plans and spatial development strategies being prepared under the current system? If no, what alternative timeline would you propose?

No. Governments have repeatedly insisted on faster delivery times for local plan making whilst at the same time increasing the evidence requirements and ignoring local democratic processes. In many local authority areas, it takes up to 3 months to take a draft local plan document out to consultation, allowing for annual local elections and the pre-election period the actual consultation period on an emerging local plan is limited the autumn and first quarter of the year. Reigate and Banstead recently started work on a new local plan to supersede the current local plan in mid-2027. We will not be able to submit a new plan until at least 2026 and as such will not be able to adopt a plan under the current legislation by 31 December 2026. Indeed, based on a number of local plan examinations we are aware of locally, the probability of submitting a local plan and getting it through examination, any main modifications consultation and then getting full Council sign off by Christmas 2026 is

unrealistic. We would request that timelines are increased by at least one year so that significant council tax-payers investment is not wasted.

Q.46: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements for plans under the future system? If no, what alternative arrangements would you propose?

No. Any proposal that a local authority who would have spent many hundreds of thousands of pounds on a new local plan which is meant to last at least 15 years from the date of adoption would start work on a new plan 5 years after the plan was adopted shows at best a squandering of public monies and at worst a contempt for the work and commitment local communities have put into the plan making process. In many parts of the country change doesn't happen that fast to warrant a new plan.

Q.47: Do you agree with the proposed timeline for preparing neighbourhood plans under the future system? If no, what alternative timeline would you propose?

No. Once a new Local Plan has been adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan should be updated within 5 years to reflect any strategic changes. It seems unreasonable that local plans will require updating every five years when neighbourhood plans are allowed to become obsolete.

Q.48: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements for supplementary planning documents? If no, what alternative arrangements would you propose?

No. Supplementary Planning Documents are a fundamental element of providing guidance to decision making without turning a local plan into a 500 page tome. Many important issues are addressed in such guidance including local affordable housing requirements, design guidance including residential, historic buildings and shopfronts, and s106 & Planning Obligations guidance. SPDs are a flexible tool that assist new development being progressed, a view shared with many in the development industry. Removing SPDs would undermine local communities' confidence in the planning system and would significantly undermine development coming forward as the judgement of decision makers would become increasingly challenged at a time when the Planning Inspectorate is barely keeping pace with the number of appeals. In conclusion retain supplementary planning documents.

Q.49 Do you agree with the suggested scope and principles for guiding National Development Management Policies?

No. We consider this fundamentally undermines local communities having a say in what their area should look like. Ministers will be able to change the policies without public scrutiny. The national development management policies and the proposed changes identified above removes the primacy of the local plan in local decision making. Recently adopted policies in new plans would lose weight.

Local decision makers are best placed to understand the intricacies of their patch.

There is a high risk that national policies will go to the lowest common denominator resulting in a set of policies that will be no more than a tick box exercise. Reference to time spent on review such policies in a local plan is over-rated as these can often be dealt with in a matter of hours.

Local communities involved in the planning process genuinely care about the places they live and work in. Ignoring local interest for top down planning undermines the past 14 years of government where local communities have been actively involved in the neighbourhood planning process.

We are very concerned that the proposed national development management policies would take multiple attempts to be fit for purpose akin to the housing delivery test and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations which have been subject to multiple alterations in a relatively short time. We would not want to see confusion among practitioners and applicants at a time when the country needs stability.

Moreover, we are very concerned of what will ultimately be included in the national development management policies. Some new national development management policies could fundamentally change the character of local areas.

As this is such a change in the democratic process, we would urge that National Development Management Policies should be subject to Parliament's consideration and scrutiny.

Q.50 What other principles, if any, do you believe should inform the scope of National Development Management Policies?

Unless government wants to adopt a national strategic approach to infrastructure including transport, energy, water, etc to support housebuilding and mitigate the effects of climate change, no other principles should be considered.

Q.51: Do you agree that selective additions should be considered for proposals to complement existing national policies for guiding decisions?

No, with the exception of the carbon reduction matter, allotments and housing are considerations for local plans as one size doesn't fit all.

Q.52: Are there other issues which apply across all or most of England that you think should be considered as possible options for National Development Management Policies?

None.

Q.53: What, if any, planning policies do you think could be included in a new Framework to help achieve the twelve levelling up missions in the Levelling Up White Paper?

The reintroduction of regional planning is one area for consideration. At present there are groups of local authorities who have been attempting to plug the gap left by the demise of regional planning and have been working together. However, following local elections some of these flexible arrangements have broken down and planning has gone into reverse in those areas. A formal regional structure needs to be reintroduced. Under the present system there is a fundamental disconnect between transport (which has sub regional groups) and infrastructure delivery and house building. Effective regional planning helps to prioritise important infrastructure delivery across a region, it also ties in with the infrastructure partners service area. Regional planning would help ensure infrastructure upgrades are actually completed rather than being undertaken in a very local piecemeal way.

Q.54: How do you think the Framework could better support development that will drive economic growth and productivity in every part of the country, in support of the levelling up agenda?

Reintroduce regional planning with realistic geographies which incorporate transport and economic development. Integrate guidance on assessing the implications of new ways of working.

Q.55: Do you think that the government could go further in national policy, to increase development on brownfield land within city and town centres, with a view to facilitating gentle densification of our urban cores?

No – Indeed the term ‘gentle densification’ could undermine the redevelopment of complex brownfield sites which are already marginal in viability terms. Many of the long term vacant brownfield sites have either fundamental contamination or land stability issues or waiting for essential infrastructure to be installed to make a scheme deliverable. Tools already exist in policy terms on these matters.

Q.56: Do you think that the government should bring forward proposals to update the Framework as part of next year’s wider review to place more emphasis on making sure that women, girls and other vulnerable groups feel safe in our public spaces, including for example policies on lighting/street lighting?

Yes. It is surprising that this has not been considered in this current consultation given the breadth of material it covers. Indeed, it could be considered a failure of this consultation not to include such proposals.

Q.57 Are there any specific approaches or examples of best practice which you think we should consider to improve the way that national planning policy is presented and accessed?

First all national planning related documents should be made fully accessible. Second when altering legislation, government should provide an updated version of the whole amended document once enacted on its website so that changes to regulations and policy are easier to understand for the user rather than cross checking sometimes multiple documents.

Q.58 We continue to keep the impacts of these proposals under review and would be grateful for your comments on any potential impacts that might arise under the Public Sector Equality Duty as a result of the proposals in this document.

The inclusion of footnotes in the NPPF and other planning documents does not comply with current government accessibility standards and arguably it fails the public sector equality duty.