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[Department for
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Consultation outcome

Government response to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy consultation

Updated 19 December 2023

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Introduction

1. The government is committed to levelling up across England, building more homes to increase home ownership, empowering communities to make better places, restoring local pride and regenerating towns and cities. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (the Act) will enable these commitments to be fulfilled by creating a simplified and strengthened plan-led system. The Act puts local people at the heart of development – making it easier to put local plans in place and requiring design codes that set out where homes will be built and how they will look. These plans will deliver more homes in a way that works for communities, ensure greater provision of community infrastructure by developers and mandate that beautiful new development meets clear design standards that reflect community views.

2. To ensure a modernised planning system that works for all, it is essential that the reforms in the Act are accompanied by an initial set of changes to national policy, through an update to the National Planning Policy Framework. The National Planning Policy Framework is a critical tool for the delivery of homes in the right places, the provision of land for development, and for the promotion of the high quality design in our built environment.

3. That is why, on 22 December 2022, the government published a consultation inviting views on our proposed approach to updating the National Planning Policy Framework. The consultation included 58 questions. Questions both sought feedback on proposals or asked for new ideas to inform future policy. This document sets out the government response to that consultation. It has been published alongside an updated National Planning Policy Framework which reflects the changes considered below. This follows the interim update to the National Planning Policy Framework on 5 September 2023, which reflected specific changes relating to onshore wind projects.

4. The changes included in this update and in response to the consultation feedback, strike the right balance between the importance of delivering the homes we need and building these homes in the right places to best serve local communities.

5. Included in the consultation were questions relating to the local and neighbourhood plan system, local housing need and the Housing Delivery Test. Questions were included on 5-year housing land supply, the status of neighbourhood plans, planning for communities such as social rent homes, older people's housing, small sites for small builders, community-led development and build out.

6. The consultation also sought views on beauty, densification, environmental protection and climate change, and considered biodiversity, ancient woodland, agricultural land, carbon assessment, climate adaptation and onshore wind. Changes as a result of the consultation on onshore wind measures were

adopted as part of the September 2023 National Planning Policy Framework update on 5 September and are therefore not included in this response.

7. Finally, the consultation sought views on our proposed approach to preparing National Development Management Policies, their scope and their relationship to Plans. It also asked about how planning can better support levelling up and boosting economic growth. This included questions on the use of brownfield land and boosting pride in place.

8. Further policy changes may be required in due course. The scope and content of those changes will depend on the implementation of the government's proposals for wider changes to the planning system, including the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act.

9. All responses to the consultation have been carefully considered. The government has made a number of important changes in response to the consultation, as set out in this document.

Overview of consultation responses

10. The consultation was open for 10 weeks from 22 December 2022 to 2 March 2023. It was published on GOV.UK. Responses were accepted via online survey, via email and via written letter.

11. The consultation received 26,072 responses, including campaign responses. 'Campaign responses' refer to responses prepared by particular campaign groups on specific issues, to which respondents attach their names. Campaign responses have only been counted once in individual question response statistics.

12. The tables below provide a breakdown of the general consultation responses by type of respondent (table 1), and a breakdown of the campaign responses received (table 2).

Table 1. Types of consultation respondent

Types of respondents	Number of responses
Private individuals	1,211
Local authorities	309
Neighbourhood planning groups/town or parish	231

Types of respondents	Number of responses
councils	
Developers	178
Private sector organisations	202
Professional bodies	60
Interest groups/voluntary organisations	223
Other	320
Total	2,734

Table 2. Campaign responses

Campaigns	Number of responses
Onshore wind campaign	17,737
CPRE Brownfield first campaign	4,770
Lewes local plan campaign	53
Mansard roof campaign	226
Don't urbanise the Downs' campaign	412
Community Planning Alliance campaign	140
Total	23,338

13. This document provides a summary of the consultation responses received. It does not attempt to capture every point made, nor does it cover comments on aspects of policy that fall outside the scope of the consultation. It sets out the changes the government has made in response to points raised in the consultation, and explains why suggested changes have not been adopted.

14. We have provided a statistical summary of respondents for each question. However responses to some questions have been consolidated where there are significant similarities in responses to avoid repetition. We have indicated throughout this document where responses to questions have been grouped.

15. A number of respondents selected - “not answered” to many of the questions. For the purposes of the statistical summary of responses to each question we have excluded them, but all relevant responses have been carefully considered.

16. The government has had regard to its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 during the preparation of the Framework.

Overarching issues

Transitional arrangements

17. To minimise disruption and ensure that communities can benefit as soon as possible from up-to-date plans, in line with our approach to previous updates to the Framework, we have set out new transitional arrangements in Annex 1 of the Framework. As part of this, we have made minor technical adjustments to the transitional arrangement introduced by the Framework published on 5 September 2023, in order to clarify its application.

Chapter 3 – Providing certainty through local and neighbourhood plans

Reforming the 5-year housing land supply

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

Question 1 – response

A total of 1,443 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 859 (60%) agreed with the above proposal, 390 (27%) did not agree and

194 (13%) were indifferent. This indicates considerable support for the proposal.

Key points:

- There is a marked divide between local authorities, neighbourhood groups/parish and town councils and individuals who largely support the proposal, and developers, private sector organisations and professional bodies, who largely do not support the proposal.
- The majority of the comments in support state that speculative development would likely be reduced if the proposal is implemented and that consequently this would put more control in the hands of local authorities and give more of a say to communities.
- Others consider that the proposal will incentivise plan preparation, allowing for truly plan-led development, and some highlighted that the current 5-year housing land supply results are a burden on local planning authorities.
- Those opposing the proposal stated there may be negative impacts on housing delivery. A minority also stated that this will reduce the provision for affordable housing.
- There were also calls to abolish the 5-year housing land supply altogether, while others said that maintaining the 5-year housing land supply is an important tool for monitoring housing supply.

Government response

The government proposed to reform the 5-year housing land supply. We sought views on whether local planning authorities should not have to continually demonstrate a deliverable 5-year housing land supply, as long as the housing requirement set out in its strategic policies is less than 5 years old. The intention of these proposals is to provide authorities with a strong incentive to agree a local plan, giving communities more of a say on development and allowing more homes to be built. The proposals were also intended to simplify the operation of 5-year housing land supply requirements.

The consultation allowed the government to hear a range of views in response to this proposal and showed that there was considerable support. Many of those in support consider that the proposal supports a plan-led system and will reduce speculative development. The government also heard views that this proposal would act as a significant incentive for local authorities to adopt local plans. The government notes, however, that over a quarter of responses opposed the proposal, with many opposing on the basis of potential shortfalls in housing supply.

The government has carefully considered these responses and has decided to proceed with the proposal, with some changes to support the overall objective of incentivising plan production and reducing speculative development, but limiting some of the potential downsides, particularly around housing supply.

The proposal will still apply where adopted plans are less than 5 years old but only where that adopted plan has identified at least a 5-year supply of specific, deliverable sites at the time its examination concluded. This will support supply by ensuring sites have been identified to meet housing need before the exemption can apply, while incentivising plan production, and rewarding local authorities who have proactively done the right thing and adopted plans in the last 5 years.

The government also heard concerns from some respondents that applying this policy to authorities who have reviewed their strategic policies and found them to not require updating could risk a supply shortfall by applying this to plans without a robustly examined land supply. Therefore, the government is clear that this policy will only apply to plans that have been adopted following examination by the Planning Inspectorate. This means that to be exempt from the requirement to annually demonstrate a 5-year land supply, a plan must be examined and adopted every 5 years and have identified at least a 5-year supply of land at the time its examination concluded.

Further, to help prevent unnecessary delays to applications already in the system, we are introducing a transitional arrangement for this policy for decision making purposes which means that these changes should only be taken into account as a material consideration for applications made on or after the date of publication of this version of the Framework.

Question 2 – Do you agree that buffers should not be required as part of 5-year housing land supply calculations (this includes the 20% buffer as applied by the Housing Delivery Test)?

Question 2 – response

A total of 1,350 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 739 (55%) agreed with the above proposal, 345 (25%) did not agree and 266 (20%) were indifferent. More than twice as many respondents supported the proposals as did not.

Key points:

- Groups supportive of the proposal to remove 5-year housing land supply buffers were local authorities, neighbourhood planning groups, parish/town councils, interest groups/voluntary or charitable organisations and individuals. Developers and other private sector organisations were predominantly against the removal of buffers. There was more of a mix of views from professional bodies, but more than half did not support the removal of buffers.
- Strong recurring themes in support of the proposal and across most categories of respondents were that buffers punish local authorities for under-delivery for factors that are outside their control. The removal of the 20% buffer applied by the Housing Delivery Test was identified as a particularly welcome change. An equally strong theme raised by respondents in most categories was that buffers undermine the plan-led system, increasing the risk of unsustainable or unsuitable sites coming forward, and that removing them would reduce the risk of unplanned development and support a plan-led system. Many view the application of buffers as adding complexity to 5-year housing land supply calculations, and consequently they thought that removing buffers would simplify the policy. Others noted that the requirement to include a buffer artificially inflates the amount of land needed to be shown as deliverable, making it harder to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
- The most common theme amongst those who made comments against the proposal, in favour of retaining buffers, was that removal of buffers will reduce contingency and the certainty of housing being delivered. Another point raised by many was that removing buffers would limit flexibility and an important mechanism compensating for under delivery, stressing that buffers are needed to incentivise local authorities to keep delivering supply and maintain their accountability.
- Some thought that buffers should be amended rather than removed altogether, though there was little consensus on how this should be taken forward. However, among this group, the most common views expressed suggested that the 5% buffer should still be retained or that buffers could be removed except for local authorities with poor delivery.

Government response

The government proposed removing all buffers associated with 5-year housing land supply calculations. The government has considered the range of responses received to this question and has concluded that the 5% and 10% buffers should be removed, while the 20% buffer, applied as a consequence of under-delivery through the Housing Delivery Test, should be retained. This will only be applied to places that have underdelivered against the Housing Delivery Test and do not have a plan in place that has identified at least a 5-year supply of land at the time its examination concluded.

The responses highlighted that the 5% and 10% buffers introduce an unnecessary complexity to 5-year housing land supply calculations and artificially inflate the amount of land needed to be demonstrated by local authorities. By removing these buffers, 5-year housing land supply policy will be simplified, and the risk of speculative development will be lowered.

The government remains committed to boosting housing supply and heard responses highlighting that the buffers provide an important mechanism for compensating for under-delivery, and incentivising housing delivery. Retaining the 20% buffer, applied only as a consequence of under-delivery through the Housing Delivery Test, will retain this important mechanism. For clarity, authorities who are not required to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply can disregard the requirement to add a buffer.

Removing the 5% and 10% buffers, but retaining the 20% buffer, strikes a balance between simplifying the 5-year housing land supply policy and reducing the risk of speculative development, while still maintaining an important mechanism for boosting housing delivery.

Question 3 – Should an over-supply of homes early in a plan period be taken into consideration when calculating a 5-year housing land supply later on, or is there an alternative approach that is preferable?

Question 3 – response

A total of 1,321 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 864 (65%) agreed with the above proposal, 237 (18%) did not agree and 220 (17%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Overall, there was considerable support for the proposal to count over-supply as part of 5-year housing land supply calculations. From local authorities, neighbourhood groups, parish and town councils and interest groups/voluntary or charitable organisations came overwhelming support. Individuals showed strong support. Developers showed strong opposition, and other private sector organisations, considerable opposition, to the proposal. There was close to an even split between support and opposition from professional bodies, but those against held a slight majority.
- Consistently throughout the comments of support was an observation that where over-supply is not counted, it punishes local authorities for delivering early in the plan period/granting permissions quickly. Many also said that planning and development run in cycles: there will always be periods of high

or low activity and as such, over-supply early in a plan period should be counted. However, that if over-supply is not counted, it will lead to more unplanned development in unsuitable locations.

- A recurring theme across many groups was that the 5-year housing land supply should take into account different types and tenures of housing and that the assessment of over-supply should reflect that.
- Some comments mentioned the link to infrastructure issues, that is, that infrastructure will have been planned, so not counting over-supply may place undue pressure on infrastructure because plan requirements would be exceeded.

Government response

To support a plan-led approach and clarify planning guidance around the use of over-supply in 5-year housing land supply calculations, we proposed to bring our position on over-supply in-line with that on under-supply. Our intention was to enable a local planning authority to include historic over-supply in its 5-year housing land supply calculations and to demonstrate it is meeting its overall housing requirements.

The government notes the strong support of allowing past over-supply to be considered when calculating a 5-year housing land supply. The government also heard views on how to implement this proposal, and recognises that there was no clear consensus on how best to do so. After considering responses, it is clear that there is a desire for this position to be set out as clearly as possible.

The government has considered this and will make clear in the National Planning Policy Framework that past over-supply can be taken into account when calculating a 5-year housing land supply. We will produce additional Planning Practice Guidance in due course, which will offer further clarification on how this can be done.

Question 4 – What should any planning guidance dealing with over-supply and under-supply say?

Question 4 – response

Although some specific recommendations for changes to specific wording of the National Planning Policy Framework or Planning Practice Guidance were received in response to this consultation question, in general, responses to this

question provided suggestions for thematic changes regarding the treatment of over-supply and under-supply. The government welcomes these recommendations.

Key points:

- Overall, we heard 2 broadly opposing themed responses to the approach on over-supply, with many variations on how to address detail. Some supported bringing over-supply in-line with under-supply in guidance for use in 5-year housing land supply calculations, and some opposed that.
- Additionally, across most groups a consistent request was for the guidance to be clear and as explicit as possible in order to avoid confusion. Some sought worked examples or clear steps setting out a methodology of approach to 5-year housing land supply calculations as well as clarity about acceptable periods of time in which over-supply had occurred, for example, during a current plan period.
- Of those who were supportive of the proposal to amend guidance to bring over-supply in-line with under-supply, many wanted local planning authorities to have greater control, with less intervention/direction from government and more flexibility to make decisions on over-supply themselves. Many also sought greater consideration to be given to the views of local communities, the environment, improving appropriate infrastructure, and greater emphasis on types of housing, rather than measuring over-supply as an aggregate figure. Some considered the changes would be logical and that any over or under-supply would, in practice, even out over the plan period.
- Those opposed to making changes to guidance opposed changes for different reasons - some opposed any over delivery/supply of housing (particularly on green field sites), others opposed allowing over-supply to be recognised because it would have the overall effect of reducing the housing ambitions for an area during a national housing deficit and some considered that 'true' over-supply was not occurring at all. A few others stated that the Affordability Ratio used in Local Housing Need calculations should already account for any over-supply and others said that if changes are made, these should be at the discretion of the local planning authority.
- Other points included general requests around planning for housing including prioritisation of brownfield land, additional protection to neighbourhood plans and allowing under-supply to occur without penalty in areas where land has an environmental/landscape designation, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

Government response

Government will consider these responses and the issues they raise further ahead of bringing forward any future guidance on over-supply, as set out in the

response to question 3.

Boosting the status of neighbourhood plans

The intention of this proposal was to bring in more protections from speculative development for areas with neighbourhood plans by extending protection for plans that are up to 5 years old rather than 2 years old, and to remove tests that require local authorities to demonstrate a minimum housing land supply and minimum amount in the Housing Delivery Test if they are to benefit from that protection.

Question 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?

Question 5 – response

A total of 1224 respondents provided substantive comments for this question.

Key points:

- The proposed changes were widely supported with some saying that the proposals better recognise the time and commitment that communities put into preparing their plans and others saying they would increase confidence in the system and the take-up of neighbourhood planning. Some respondents also suggested that the protections be further strengthened.
- Some respondents that disagreed with the changes said that the current protections were sufficient while others said that they would reduce housing delivery.
- There were also calls from some respondents to provide more clarity on how paragraph 14 should be interpreted where a neighbourhood area had an identified housing requirement of zero.

Government response

The government has decided to proceed with the proposed amendments to paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This will mean that the protection under paragraph 14 will be available for neighbourhood plans that are up to 5 years old instead of the current 2 years. Additionally, this protection will no longer be conditional on local planning authorities needing to

demonstrate a minimum housing land supply and have delivered a minimum amount in the Housing Delivery Test.

We acknowledge the concerns of those respondents who said that the proposed changes were not necessary and will impact housing supply, and the views of other respondents who wanted the protections to be further strengthened.

The government believes our proposed amendments strike the right balance. The protections will continue to only apply in cases where the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement. The changes do, however, recognise the time communities invest in preparing their neighbourhood plans and will provide the appropriate protections.

We also recognise from the responses that further clarity on how paragraph 14 applies in cases where the neighbourhood area has a housing requirement of zero is needed. We intend to publish guidance in due course to make clear that, irrespective of the housing requirement of the neighbourhood, a neighbourhood plan must allocate a housing site to benefit from the protection under paragraph 14.

Question 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?

Question 6 – response

A total of 1,215 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 858 (71%) agreed with the above proposal, 98 (8%) did not agree and 259 (21%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- The integration of supporting infrastructure with development was strongly supported across the majority of respondent groups. The need for infrastructure to be provided promptly and properly funded, and for developers to be held to account for section 106 contributions, was highlighted.
- The increased importance of local plan preparation was widely welcomed, although the need for sanctions, and review to be a mandatory requirement, was emphasised by several respondents.
- Greater clarity was requested on the meaning of ‘sufficient housing’ from several respondent types. This was seen as ambiguous and inconsistent with

the intention in paragraph 60 to significantly increase housing supply.

- The accessibility of the National Planning Policy Framework was a matter of concern across several response types. The overuse of planning jargon was noted, as it makes documents difficult for non-specialists. An 'executive summary' type document at the start, outlining the major points in simpler language, was called for.
- Those who opposed the proposed changes stated that the opening chapters of the National Planning Policy Framework were already clear about the importance of planning for housing and sustainable development. Others stated that the proposed changes would lead to fewer homes being delivered, or that the revisions would lead to housing being prioritised over sustainability.
- Others stated that the proposed changes downplay the important role of meeting needs for economic development (alongside housing), and that there should be greater clarity in the National Planning Policy Framework on what constitutes 'other development'.

Government response

The government proposed to make small additions to paragraphs 1 and 7 of the existing Framework (the Introduction and Chapter 2 on Achieving sustainable development). These changes are intended to signal that providing for necessary development that is integrated with local infrastructure is a core purpose of the planning system, while not negating the fundamental importance of respecting the overarching economic, social, and environmental objectives.

The consultation allowed the government to hear a range of views in response to these proposals, for which there was considerable support across a range of stakeholder groups. Many of those in support welcomed the increased emphasis on the provision of infrastructure and the importance of having up-to-date plans in place.

Some concerns were raised that the proposed changes would lead to fewer homes being delivered and could cut across other policies aimed at increasing housing provision.

The government has carefully considered these responses, and as a result has decided to implement the changes to paragraphs 1 and 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework, with minor wording amendments for clarity. These wording amendments are designed to ensure the opening chapters are clear on the importance of planning for housing and other development, including commercial development, that our communities need. We address issues related to housing supply elsewhere in the Framework.

Chapter 4 – Planning for housing

Local Housing Need and the standard method

Question 7 – What are your views on the implications these changes may have on plan-making and housing supply?

Question 7 – response

A total of 1171 respondents provided substantive comments for this question.

Key points:

- Among respondents, there was a common theme that the proposed changes would lead to a reduction in housing supply, with some respondents also noting the economic harm this would cause.
- Some respondents welcomed the changes, stating that they would give more power to communities and allow for more local discretion.
- On plan making, there were a mix of views expressed. Some believed that the changes would incentivise plan-making and encourage more plan-making in the long term.
- However, others noted that the proposed changes were causing uncertainty that was already leading to some plans being delayed or abandoned. There was concern that these delays would continue in the short term.
- Some respondents also noted that the changes to local housing need might lead to debates around housing requirements in local plans, that could cause delays during plan production, especially during examination.
- Respondents frequently noted that the current standard method used 2014-based household projections and called for more up-to-date projections to be used.

Government response

The government asked for views on the implications the proposed changes may have for plan-making and housing supply. Many respondents raised

concerns that the changes would lead to a reduction in housing supply, which could adversely impact the economy.

The government welcomed views that these changes would incentivise local authorities to get local plans in place and enable communities to have a greater role in planning for their areas. Some respondents, however, raised concerns that the changes could lead to uncertainty and delay plan-making in the short-term, particularly in relation to housing requirements during examination.

The government has carefully considered these responses, and as a result has decided to make some changes to the proposals consulted on in order to mitigate some of the negative supply impacts identified.

For specific details of those changes please refer to the government response to questions 1-5, 8, 9, 13-15, 18-20 and 32 included in this document.

We note the comments received around the continued use of 2014-based household projections within the standard method for assessing housing need, and the calls for more up-to-date projections to be used. Through the consultation we explained that the use of this data provides stability, consistency, and certainty to local planning authorities. Nevertheless, we committed to review the approach to assessing housing need once we have considered the implications of new 2021 Census based household projections, planned to be published by the Office for National Statistics in 2024. The Office for National Statistics recently confirmed that the next set of household projections are now planned for release in 2025. As with all policies we keep the standard method under review, and we intend to review the approach to assessing housing needs once this data is available.

Introducing new flexibilities to meeting housing needs

Using an alternative approach for assessing local housing needs

Question 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?

Question 8 – response

A total of 1,197 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 845 (71%) agreed with the above proposal, 135 (11%) did not agree and 217 (18%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- A considerable number of respondents agreed that greater clarity over the use of an alternative method would be welcome, particularly where there were concerns over existing housing need.
- Many respondents stated there should not be a closed list of exemptions as exceptional circumstances by their nature are not predictable.
- A number of respondents highlighted that allowing the use of alternative approaches would undermine the concept of a standard method and introduce more complexity and uncertainty and lead to delay and protracted debates at examination.
- Many respondents also set out that the most recent data should be used in the method; this would resolve many of their concerns over its robustness.
- A number of respondents raised concerns, particularly around the meaning of the proposed change of wording making the standard method 'advisory'.
- With regard to what else should be considered a range of issues were put forward including, but not limited to, housing waiting lists, homelessness, transient population such as students or the armed forces and second homes.
- Respondents stated this would impact on housing supply by providing local planning authorities with more 'get-outs' to meeting housing need.
- Many respondents stated that constraints such as Green Belt, flood risk and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be taken into account when considering if an alternative approach is appropriate.

Government response

The government proposed to give more explicit indication in planning policy and guidance of the types of local characteristics which may justify the use of an alternative method to assessing housing needs, such as islands with a high percentage of elderly residents, or university towns with an above-average proportion of students. We also proposed new text in policy to be clear that the outcome of the standard method is an advisory starting-point when establishing housing requirements through plan making. These changes are intended to provide greater clarity and certainty to plan-makers.

The consultation allowed the government to hear a range of views in response to these proposals and showed that there was considerable support for greater clarity over the use of alternative methods across a range of stakeholder

groups. Many of those in support welcomed further clarity, particularly in instances where there were concerns over meeting housing need. The government welcomed views received on other issues that could constitute exceptional circumstances. Some issues raised, such as constraints due to flood risk, should be taken into account via existing policy when local planning authorities are planning for housing in their areas, rather than when establishing need. We also heard concerns over the lack of clarity that may emerge through the addition of 'advisory starting point' wording in relation to the standard method and housing requirements.

The government has carefully considered these responses, and as a result has decided to implement the changes to paragraphs 61 of the National Planning Policy Framework as set out in the consultation, with some changes to be clearer on the intention of the policy. This will be accompanied by a footnote providing additional explanation of what such demographic characteristics could include such as islands with no land bridge that have a significant proportion of elderly residents. We have made the change to policy to be clear that the outcome of the standard method is an advisory starting-point when establishing housing requirements through plan-making. The government is clear that the standard method should still be used to inform the process of planning for new homes. Policy continues to expect local housing need to be determined using the standard method, unless there are exceptional circumstances which justify an alternative approach.

Existing policy (paragraph 67) expects strategic policy-making authorities to establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the plan period. This could include consideration of constraints on land as set out in paragraph 11b and footnote 7 of the Framework such as areas at risk of flooding and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Opportunities to plan for higher than identified local housing need should also be considered, for example, to plan for growth ambitions or infrastructure investment as set out in paragraph 67. The purpose of our changes to the Framework are to make clear that the outcome of the standard method is not an end point, but an advisory starting point to inform the preparation of plans, when establishing local plan housing requirements.

Ministers have been clear that the standard method is a starting point. In response to our consultation on '[Changes to the Planning System](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-local-housing-need-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-local-housing-need-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system>) in 2020 we said that the standard method does not present a 'target' in plan-making, and instead it provides a starting point for determining the level of need for the area. It is only after consideration of this, alongside what constraints areas face and the land that is actually available for development, that the decision on how many homes should be planned for is made. We are now confirming that long standing position in the language of the Framework.

These changes are designed to remove ambiguity from existing policy and clarify what is meant by exceptional circumstances, including a non-exhaustive list of examples, and how the outcomes of the standard method should be considered when establishing housing requirements. We intend to revise supporting guidance to provide further clarity in due course.

Question 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?

Question 9 – response

A total of 1,221 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 618 (51%) agreed with the above proposal, 444 (36%) did not agree and 159 (13%) were indifferent.

Key points:

Green Belt

- Over a quarter of respondents said that Green Belt boundaries should be capable of being reviewed or altered when planning for housing. This was within the most common feedback from local planning authorities, developers, other private sector organisations and professional bodies.
- Many respondents considered it most appropriate for local authorities to decide what is best for their local area.
- Respondents stated that Green Belt is not an environmental designation and that suggesting that Green Belt does not need to be reviewed to meet need could lead to development being directed to other designated land (such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) even less appropriate than Green Belt land.
- Other respondents commented that this will lead to a fall in housing supply.
- A number of respondents noted the need for clarity on whether the same approach would apply to meeting the needs of other land uses such as employment land.

Density or character

- Many respondents stated that densification can be appropriate in some cases as higher densities can maximise use of brownfield land and help make homes more affordable and reduce the need for travel. Respondents

said that these changes will need detailed guidance, including saying when the changes would apply and how they would operate.

- In terms of character specifically, the majority of comments asked for clarity around the definition of 'out of character' and how this would apply in practice.
- Respondents stated that the proposal would disincentivise densification, and work against sustainable development aims.
- Other comments stated that character should be decided at a local level, and that this would conflict with efforts to direct development to urban areas through the urban uplift.

Past over supply

- There was limited support for past over-delivery being taken into account. Where comments were provided, most asked for clarity around how this would operate and over what timeframe.
- Many stated that over-supply is already counted through the affordability ratio in the standard method and some respondents stated that this would have a negative impact on supply of housing.

Government response

The government proposed 3 changes to introduce new flexibilities to meeting housing needs. These changes related to matters that may need to be considered when assessing whether a plan can meet all of the housing need which has been identified locally. Responses to questions 9 and 10 have been considered together, given the close links.

Green Belt

Green Belt is vital for preventing urban sprawl and encroachment on valued countryside, while enabling towns and cities to grow in a sustainable way. To support our position on Green Belt, we proposed to make clear that Green Belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed and altered if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed need for housing over the plan period. Local authorities would still have the ability to review and alter Green Belt boundaries if they wish, where they can demonstrate that exceptional circumstances exist. We proposed this change to remove any ambiguity about whether authorities are expected to review the Green Belt. This has previously caused confusion and often led to protracted debates during the preparation of some plans.

The consultation allowed the government to hear a range of views in response to these proposals. Many respondents considered that Green Belt should be capable of release to meet housing needs where appropriate. Some

respondents considered that Green Belt should not be released for this purpose, and raised concerns about the impact this proposal may have on housing supply. We heard strong views that local planning authorities are best placed to make decisions on Green Belt designation and protection.

Following consideration of these responses, the government has decided to make the change to Green Belt policy. The consultation responses identified that the textual changes consulted on did not go far enough to provide nor improve clarity on policy intent. We also noted the concerns on how policy changes may apply to non-housing uses and if this would unintentionally limit the application of the policy. The revised wording changes respond to the need for greater clarity of the policy intent and now sets out that there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated, but that authorities may however choose to do so. National policy continues to expect that Green Belt boundaries can only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, and that this should only be through the plan-making process. We consider that the revised policy wording now removes any ambiguity about whether authorities are expected to review the Green Belt.

Density or character

The Framework sets out the importance of development that makes efficient use of land, alongside the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, including that of residential gardens. To further support our approach to density and local character, we proposed a change to policy to make clear that local character can be taken into account when local planning authorities consider their ability to meet their housing needs. This was to recognise the importance of being able to plan for growth in a way which recognises the distinctive character of places and creates attractive environments which have local support.

The government heard a range of views in response to these proposals. Some respondents raised concerns over how this could be implemented and how it would differ from what local planning authorities can already do through existing policy and planning tools. Other respondents felt that this should be decided at a local level.

Many respondents sought further clarity on the definition of 'out of character', and how this would apply in practice. We also heard comments around the importance of densification in some places. Others raised concerns that this proposal would conflict with efforts to direct development to urban areas through the urban uplift.

We also asked what evidence local planning authorities should be expected to provide on character. Many respondents stated that local authorities have existing evidence that can be used to support this proposal, such as conservation area appraisals and site suitability assessments. Others raised concerns that additional evidence burdens will have resource implications for

local authorities who do not have the specialist skills, resources, and expertise in place.

The government has carefully considered these responses and has decided to implement this proposal with some changes. This proposal will apply to plan making only. However, we will insert a new paragraph to chapter 11 of the existing Framework (as opposed to paragraph 11 as consulted on), to better align with existing policy related to the efficient and effective use of land. The changes to the wording seek to respond to concerns around local discretion and to address potential negative supply impacts.

The additional policy qualifies existing policy on density by setting out that in existing urban areas, significant uplifts in the average density of residential development may be inappropriate if the resulting built form would be wholly out of character with the existing area. To support implementation, we will link this proposal directly to authority-wide design codes. Consideration of character will need to be fully articulated and evidenced through an authority-wide design code which is adopted or will be adopted as part of the development plan and which will have been subject to public consultation.

It is expected that these changes will help local authorities to meet local housing need through gentle densification while having due regard to local character and the community's wishes and concerns. We intend to revise supporting guidance in due course.

These changes should help local authorities clearly evidence the use of this policy through locally defined 'character' as set out in authority-wide design codes. It will help optimise the use of land in their areas and ensure housing comes forward in the most appropriate locations. Importantly, it should also incentivise local authorities to get authority-wide design codes in place to support high quality placemaking. We expect character considerations to be included as part of the process for preparing an authority-wide design code. This will provide a consistent approach to evidencing design and character and will be subject to rigorous examination and consultation. Authority wide codes will be mandatory for local planning authorities to produce, part of the development plan, through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. The application of authority-wide codes for this purpose also responds to the concerns we heard that any additional evidence burdens will have resource implications for local authorities.

Past over supply

The government proposed a change that would allow authorities to take account of past 'over-delivery' when preparing new plans. This would recognise that in some cases authorities feel that they are having to plan for more housing than they need, having delivered more homes than were planned for during the preceding plan period.

The government heard that there was little support for accounting for past ‘over-delivery’. Many respondents considered that the proposals, as drafted, may have a significant negative impact on the supply of new homes because local authorities would be able to offset future delivery against past delivery.

The government has carefully considered these responses, and as a result has decided not to take forward this change at this time. Whilst, in principle, we consider that past performance on housing delivery could be able to be taken into consideration when planning for future needs, we want to further explore how this could work in practice. For example, we may want to consider if past under-delivery should be taken into account to help ensure that, where housing supply has fallen below expectations, there would be a mechanism for this to be rectified. We also want to consider further the interaction with the standard method. We intend to set out further details on historic delivery as part of future policy work.

Question 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?

A total of 1084 respondents provided substantive comments for this question. Although the question specifically asked for comments on the types of evidence that could be used when considering density and character, many respondents also used this question to provide general comments on the proposal itself.

Key points:

Evidence types

- There were many comments highlighting that local planning authorities have existing evidence that can be used in this, such as conservation area appraisals or site suitability assessments, and that they already undertake such assessments in their plan making.
- There were also comments that additional evidence burdens will have resource implications for local planning authorities who do not have the specialist skills, resources, and expertise.
- Alternatively, it was proposed that the burden for evidence should be on developers rather than local planning authorities.
- Various suggestions of the types of evidence that could be taken into account including design guides or codes, strategic housing land availability assessment, character studies, capacity studies and many responses agreed this would have to be a site-by-site analysis rather than a broad-brush assessment.

General comments

- Some stated that out-of-character development should not be acceptable in any circumstance, though others said that higher density should not be stifled as this makes best use of urban area (as opposed to greenfield/rural land) and supports sustainable development and that density out-of-character with the existing area is not always harmful or unacceptable, and often may be appropriate.
- Others stated that the decisions should be left to local authorities in consultation with local communities, rather than add more complexity to the planning system.
- Some stated that the proposal would allow local planning authorities to claim character concerns and seek to reduce housing need and supply.

Government response

The government has considered these responses. For our policy position, please see the response to question 9.

Question 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?

Question 11 – response

A total of 1,207 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 318 (26%) agreed with the proposal, 623 (52%) did not agree and 266 (22%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- A range of views were expressed. Those that agreed with the proposal felt that the change would help to embed a more proportionate approach to evidence, simplify and speed up the plan making process, and lead to more timely plans being put in place.
- Some respondents in favour of the proposals felt that the remaining tests of soundness would ensure quality plans, and the change would not take away the need for plans to be appropriately evidenced. Others felt the proposal would provide more flexibility for local planning authorities.
- Some of those that did not agree with the proposals felt that plans would be less likely to be robust and transparent as a result of the removal of the

'justified' test, or that the change could cause confusion and challenge at examination in the absence of further guidance.

- Some felt that the change would not meet its aims of reducing the amount of evidence required during plan-making, given the remaining expectations set out in national policy. There were calls for a better definition of what a 'proportionate' evidence base is, and/or standardised and simplified evidence expectations.
- Finally, some respondents raised views around the removal of the explicit reference to an appropriate strategy and reasonable alternatives from the tests of soundness.

Government response

This proposal was intended to ensure that plans are subject to proportionate assessment when they are examined. The government welcomes the range of views in response to these questions. These views have been considered and, as a result, we have decided not to proceed with the changes to the tests of soundness in this update to the National Planning Policy Framework.

We are, however, considering a wider range of measures to streamline evidence and provide greater clarity around expectations in a new plan-making system enabled by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. We have recently consulted on these measures as part of the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: consultation on implementation of plan-making reform](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation>). We will respond to that consultation in due course.

Question 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?

Question 12 – response

A total of 1,097 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 412 (38%) agreed with the proposal, 379 (35%) did not agree and 306 (28%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Many of those who responded to this question reiterated their views on the proposed removal of the 'justified' test of soundness, covered under Question 11. These views have not been summarised here as this question instead focuses on the proposed transitional arrangements.
- Whilst a range of views were expressed, there was considerable support for the proposed transitional arrangements, with respondents viewing them as fair to those authorities that have an advanced plan.
- Those who did not agree with the transitional arrangements tended to think that they would incentivise delay and the withdrawal of plans to benefit from the revised tests of soundness. Others felt that transitional arrangements would be unnecessary as the revised tests would not be more onerous than the existing tests.
- Finally, some respondents felt that local planning authorities should be given flexibility to decide which tests of soundness they should be examined against.

Government response

Given that, based on consultation responses, the government has decided not to make changes to the tests of soundness as part of a future update to the National Planning Policy Framework (see response to Question 11). There is no longer a requirement for the transitional arrangements set out in this consultation question.

Delivering the urban uplift

Question 13 – Do you agree that we should make a change to the Framework on the application of the urban uplift?

Question 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?

Question 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?

Question 13 – response

A total of 1,025 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 375 (37%) agreed with the proposal, 244 (24%) did not agree and 406 (40%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Overall, there were mixed views on whether changes should be made in the Framework on the application of the urban uplift.
- A number of respondents expressed that the figure of 35% in the 20 largest towns and cities is arbitrary and there is not enough evidence to support these figures or show that they are deliverable. In addition, views were expressed that the method should be balanced using up-to-date data (rather than 2014 based projections).
- Some respondents stated that the removal of the duty to co-operate may lead to urban local authorities struggling to meet the urban uplift and unmet need not being accommodated.
- Some respondents stated that the focus on brownfield sites in urban areas will have significant negative consequences in terms of not meeting the need for the right kind of housing, with family housing being mentioned several times, and the housing developments not being affordable due to viability issues of brownfield development.
- There was some concern about the conflict between proposals in the consultation, with the uplift being at odds with densification resulting in developments being out of character with the existing area and changes to Green Belt.
- There were a number of responses to the effect that the urban uplift should be expanded to medium sized towns, so that the pressure is lessened on the larger areas and to ensure a balance between growth in existing urban areas and rural areas.
- Some respondents stated the changes proposed will cause overcrowding in these 20 cities and towns.

Question 14 – response

A total of 740 respondents provided substantive comments to this question.

Key points:

- More funding and infrastructure support would be needed to help unlock urban sites particularly where viability is low, alongside stronger powers for

compulsory purchase orders, land assembly, and removing VAT from brownfield development.

- Planning for urban areas needs to be coordinated rather than constrained within arbitrary local authority boundaries - with calls for some form of strategic planning – sub regional, city region.
- However, many responses highlighted the need to ensure that urban areas preserve other necessary functions to ensure sustainability including employment opportunities, parks and open spaces, leisure, and that land should not be lost to housing development just to meet targets. Responses also highlighted the need to consider the ecological value of brownfield sites.
- We also heard that even with strong brownfield policies and support there would still be a need for greenfield development to meet housing needs across England.
- Concerns were raised that this proposal is contrary to other proposals in the consultation: it will reduce supply, hamper densification and brownfield developments and that forcing more growth into urban areas will just mean less growth due to capacity constraints in urban areas.

Question 15 – response

A total of 764 respondents provided substantive comments to this question.

Key points:

- The majority of respondents who provided a substantive response agreed that neighbouring authorities should take on some of the urban uplift.
- There was also strong support for some form of strategic regional or sub-regional system of planning to ensure a strategic approach to housing (and other development needs) over larger areas.
- However, there were also strong views that the uplift should not spill onto surrounding areas and should be addressed by the towns and cities themselves, not rural areas.
- There was support for the duty to cooperate to remain (but also views to the contrary) and concerns that there is little detail of the proposed alignment policy and if this will be better or worse than the duty.
- A number of respondents raised concerns that the uplift is arbitrary and unevicenced.
- Housing Market Areas, Functional Economic Market Areas, city regions and travel to work areas were also mentioned several times as suitable geographic levels at which to plan for housing in urban areas.

Government response to questions 13, 14 and 15

The government asked 3 questions related to delivering the standard method urban uplift. These included making changes to the Framework on the application of the urban uplift, planning for homes in urban areas, and the role of cross-boundary planning when neighbouring authorities also function as part of the wider economic, transport or housing market for the urban uplift core town/city. The intention for these questions is to better support opportunities to locate more homes in sustainable urban locations and make the best use of brownfield land. Responses to questions 13, 14 and 15 have been considered together, given the close links.

The consultation allowed the government to hear a range of views in response to these questions. There were mixed responses on whether changes should be made to the application of the urban uplift, with the majority of respondents indifferent. Some respondents raised concerns that there is insufficient evidence to support the 35% uplift in the 20 largest towns and cities, with others raising concerns that the emphasis on brownfield land will have negative impacts on meeting housing needs.

Some respondents raised concerns that the urban uplift was at odds with other proposals in the consultation, particularly densification resulting in developments being out of character with the existing area and changes to Green Belt.

We asked what additional policy or guidance the department could provide which could help those authorities plan for more homes in urban areas where the uplift applies (question 14). A number of respondents highlighted the need to ensure urban areas preserve other necessary functions to support sustainability, employment and leisure opportunities. Other respondents identified the need for more funding and infrastructure support to unlock more brownfield land for redevelopment, as well as other financial incentives to improve viability. We have set out, in our response to question 55, our intention to continue policy development work on ways we can support and incentivise the effective and efficient use of brownfield land, including a review into measures that would prioritise the use of brownfield land.

Whilst some respondents felt that the urban uplift should solely be met within the core city or central urban area, a greater number felt that this need should be shared across a wider urban area where those cities were covered by more than just the core city authority. This does not necessarily mean development of green field sites but recognises that there may be opportunities for the redevelopment or intensification of other parts of the functional urban area.

The government recognises the importance of planning for strategic and cross-boundary issues. The Levelling -up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces a new form of development plan – the Joint Spatial Development Strategy. This is an optional tool available to all local planning authorities outside of London

and combined authorities, which enables those authorities to produce a strategic level plan, if they believe it is in their best interests. In addition, the government is pursuing greater devolution for communities around the country. As part of devolution discussions, combined authorities are able to request the duty to produce a Spatial Development Strategy, in a similar way to the Mayor of London produces his Spatial Development Strategy, which is known as the London Plan.

Having considered the consultation responses to these questions we intend to implement the proposed change so that the Framework sets out that the urban uplift should be accommodated within those cities and urban centres themselves (as set out in national planning guidance), except where there are voluntary cross boundary redistribution agreements in place, or where it would conflict with the policies in this Framework. This change includes an addition to the wording as consulted on related to cross boundary agreements. Although we explained the role of these agreements in the consultation document, this was not reflected in the wording consulted on at the time. We will also revise the associated footnote to ensure consistency with existing policy in Chapter 11 on making the most effective use of land, optimising densities and prioritising brownfield and other under-utilised urban sites.

It is important that we take advantage of opportunities to locate new development in the most sustainable locations where we can maximise use of existing infrastructure and help reduce the need for high-carbon travel. The uplift in need within our biggest cities and urban centres in England also supports our wider objectives of regenerating brownfield sites, renewal and levelling up.

Enabling communities with plans already in the system to benefit from changes

Question 16 – Do you agree with the proposed 4-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?

Question 16 – response

A total of 1,057 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 472 (45%) agreed with the proposal, 318 (30%) did not agree and 267

(25%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- In general, there was strong support for this measure among local authorities and neighbourhood planning bodies, while there was general opposition from developers and other private sector organisations.
- Those who supported the measure generally saw it as a reasonable position to allow time for local authorities to amend emerging plans in response to wider changes to policy. Some noted that this measure would help incentivise the continued production of local plans and there was some support for the notion that this measure would reduce speculative development in the interim period.
- Among those respondents who disagreed with the proposal, many raised concerns that this measure would have a negative impact on housing supply. Some argued that it would be better to maintain the current rules on the 5-year housing land supply, and there was some concern that this measure would add unnecessary complexity to the system. Some were also concerned that this measure could incentivise local authorities to “rush” to prepare a plan up to the point where they could make use of this measure, without then progressing any further.
- Some commented that the measure should go further, by applying to more emerging plans, applying for a longer period of time, or by scrapping all land supply requirements entirely.
- There were also some calls for clarity on exactly which plans would be eligible for this measure. This included calls for clarity over whether a “policies map” was required at Regulation 18 stage, when the 2-year transition period would run from, and whether it would only apply to eligible plans where the local authority is proposing to change its housing requirement considering the wider changes.

Government response

The government proposed introducing a transitional arrangement for emerging plans to only be required to demonstrate a 4-year rolling land supply where work is needed to revise plans. About half of respondents supported the proposal, considering it as a reasonable measure to allow authorities to amend emerging plans in light of policy changes. Some respondents felt that this would help incentivise and speed up plan production and adoption.

The government notes some opposition to this proposal, with concerns raised about the complexity this would introduce to the plan-making system and the potential impact on housing supply. There was also some disagreement about

which plans this measure should apply to, and some confusion about plans which would be eligible.

The government has carefully considered the range of responses and has decided to proceed with the proposal to reflect the support shown in the consultation responses. Given confusion regarding eligible plans, the reference to paragraph 61 contained in the consultation version of the Framework has been removed. To help further address concerns about interactions with other supply policies, we have made clear that the policy will apply to local plans at examination, Regulation 18, or Regulation 19 stage with a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need. When an authority has an emerging plan that meets these requirements, the respective authority need only demonstrate a 4-year housing supply for decision making purposes.

Question 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?

Question 17 – response

A total of 893 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 344 (39%) agreed with the proposal, 141 (16%) did not agree and 408 (46%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Very few substantive responses were received to this question which is not unexpected as it is a specific issue which relates to a very small number of local plans.
- Over a third of respondents commented that the guidance on constraints should apply to plans continuing to be prepared under the transitional arrangements set out in the existing Framework paragraph 220.
- Of those who did provide more detailed comments, about half stated that additional guidance on all constraints should apply. Over a quarter stated the additional guidance should not apply because it would delay plan making progress for the affected local planning authorities.
- Other comments included that national policies should be fixed at a certain point in plan making to increase certainty, that plans being prepared under transitional arrangements have already had significant time to bring those plans forward and this change would add unnecessary complexity, and that plans at advanced stages should not be required to consider additional guidance.

Government response

We asked if local plans that continue to be prepared under legacy transitional arrangements set out in Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework should also benefit from the proposals on constraints set out in the consultation on how character, Green Belt and over-supply can be taken into account when planning for homes.

Limited responses were received to this question, which is not unexpected as it relates to a very specific issue relating to a small number of local plans submitted on or before 24 January 2019. However, the government notes the views from a number of respondents that these policies should apply to all plans regardless of status, and the contrasting views that considered that additional changes now would slow down plan making, particularly for plans that will have already been at examination for a number of years.

Some stated that very few plans continue to be prepared under these arrangements and that the National Planning Policy Framework explains that the policies in the March 2012 National Planning Policy Framework will apply for the purposes of examining those plans.

Notwithstanding our final position on the character, Green Belt, and over-supply proposals, in light of the consultation responses, government will not change the very clear position set out in Annex 1 of the Framework. Based on the consultation responses, and for the importance of clarity, the government has decided that additional guidance on those constraint proposals should not apply to plans continuing to be prepared under the transitional arrangements as set out in paragraph 227 of the revised Framework. Transitional arrangements for local plans are set out in detail in Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Taking account of permissions granted in the Housing Delivery Test

Question 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?

Question 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?

Question 20 – Do you have views on a robust method for counting deliverable homes permissioned for these purposes?

Question 18 – response

A total of 1,122 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 647 (58%) agreed with the proposal, 297 (26%) did not agree and 178 (16%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- There is a clear division of viewpoints between developers and local authorities / neighbourhood planning groups. Local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups tended to support the proposal, whilst developers tended to disagree with the proposal.
- The key theme from responses that were against the permissions-based switch-off is that permissions do not always equate to a completion and the process takes a long time.
- The key theme from responses that were in favour of the permissions-based switch-off is that local planning authorities should not be penalised when enough permissions have been granted to meet their housing need. Local planning authorities have no control over completions.

Question 19 – response

A total of 1,001 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 184 (18%) agreed with the proposal, 518 (52%) did not agree and 299 (30%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- About half of all substantive comments across all groups disagreed with the 115% proposal, and only 18% agreed. Notably, of those that agreed, there was a mix of those that considered the figure should be higher or lower. Many also sought clarity on the methodology for choosing 115%, with some suggesting that a more localised approach should be taken, rather than applying the same for all local authorities.
- Over a quarter of developers that left substantive comments asserted that the 115% figure was too low and should be increased. Conversely, over a third of

local authority comments against the proposal stated they were not convinced of the 115%, stating further that the 115% was either excessive or should be decreased. Many developers also sought clarity about how the term, 'deliverable' would apply to permissions.

- Neighbourhood planning groups, parish and town councils were not convinced that the 115% figure was correct and believe more guidance/evidence is required to determine whether this contingency is correct or not. Interest groups/voluntary or charitable organisations took a similar stance and level of opposition, again suggesting they required more guidance/evidence. About half of individuals (personal views) who responded with a substantive comment suggested that they did not agree with the 115% figure and supported the idea for it to be increased/decreased with the majority stating the figure should be reduced.
- Overall, the proposal received minimal support (approximately 18%). There was clearly a strong polarisation between the reasons respondents were against the proposed 115%, unlike related questions which saw respondents share similar reasons for supporting or opposing proposals. What themes are consistent here, are the calls for more evidence backing up the chosen figure, 115%, and that there is a clear divide between those who think the 115% is too high and those who think it is too low.
- Across a number of groups, many made the comment that they did not understand the question and were not able to comment as a result.

Question 20 – Do you have views on a robust method for counting deliverable homes permissioned for these purposes?

Question 20 – response

A total of 716 respondents provided substantive comments for this question.

Key points:

- Among respondents, there was little consensus on the most robust method for counting deliverable permissions for this purpose.
- There were a variety of methods proposed by respondents. These ranged from simply counting all residential permissions, with no requirement for a 'deliverability test', to only counting full permissions with all pre-commencement conditions discharged, excluding any outline permissions or permissions in principle.
- Many respondents called for a robust and consistent approach and advised that detailed guidance on 'deliverable' permissions would be required. The existing definition of 'deliverable' as set out in the National Planning Policy

Framework was suggested as a starting point for this, while noting that further guidance would be required.

- However, others noted that deliverability was very difficult to define, and that there is a myriad of reasons why a site with permission might not be delivered, including issues with utilities, section 106 agreements, and the discharge of conditions. Some respondents therefore suggested that this measure was unworkable.
- Many local authority respondents suggested that this data should be collected through existing mechanisms. The most common response was that existing 5-year housing land supply monitoring should form this basis of this data collection, with others noting that this data is already collected through annual monitoring reports or annual position statements. A common response among London authorities was that this data is already routinely collected and reported to the Greater London Authority datahub.
- Some respondents called for further measures to tackle slow build out. Others suggested that monitoring of permissions shouldn't just focus on number of units, but should also focus on type, tenure and affordability of permissioned houses.

Government response to questions 18, 19 and 20

The government proposed the introduction of a new permissions-based test to the Housing Delivery Test. The intention of the proposal was to apply the Housing Delivery Test in a way that does not penalise local planning authorities unfairly when slow housing delivery results from developer behaviour. To qualify, this would require a local planning authority to have sufficient permissions for enough deliverable homes to meet their own annual housing requirement, or where there is not a plan adopted in the last 5 years, local housing need plus an additional contingency.

The government has considered the responses to question 18, 19 and 20 as a whole, given the close links, and welcomes the range of responses received. While there was strong support for this proposal in general, there was less agreement about the specifics of the policy. Some responses highlighted that the proposed permissions-based test would help local authorities to avoid being penalised through the housing delivery test, despite granting sufficient permissions to meet their housing need.

However, the government also notes that the responses highlighted a number of challenges with how the proposal would be implemented. Some respondents commented that permissions don't always equate to completions, for a variety of reasons, or that there is often a significant time gap between permissions and completions. Some respondents also raised concerns that the proposed measure would reduce the application of Housing Delivery Test consequences and would therefore have adverse impacts on housing supply.

Some respondents also raised some specific concerns about the operability of the proposed policy. These concerns meant there was no clear consensus on how to count deliverable permissions for this proposal. Issues raised included the lack of standardised permissions data collected by authorities, difficulties defining deliverable permissions for this purpose, problems deciding which permissions should count, and what timeframes should be looked at. Some respondents also raised concerns that this would represent a significant new burden for local authorities. Respondents noted that these issues would mean the proposal would add significant complexity into the system.

In considering these responses, the government has weighed up the positive benefits the proposal would introduce against the potential negative impacts on complexity, as well as the significant concerns presented by respondents around operability. The government has concluded that, although the proposal offers clear benefits, the operability challenges mean it is not viable to introduce this policy at this time. The government will continue to consider ways in which this approach could be introduced in a future policy update.

Question 21 – What are your views on the right approach to applying Housing Delivery Test consequences pending the 2022 results?

Question 21 – response

A total of 487 respondents provided substantive comments to this question. Given the broad and open nature of the question, some respondents raised matters in relation to questions posed earlier in the consultation as well as providing a range of nuanced views in respect to this question.

Key points:

- Over a third of responses set out that the 2022 Housing Delivery Test should retain the usual approach to consequences. Half of these sought changes to the Housing Delivery Test in the future, but not to the 2022 measurement and the other half did not seek changes to the Housing Delivery Test at all.
- Over a quarter considered that consequences attached to the 2022 Housing Delivery Test results should be suspended. There was weak support for amending the consequences before applying them (a mix of views were shared on how to do this) and a similar level of support was received for continuing to apply the 2021 consequences by ‘freezing’ them.
- Nearly half of the responses received to this question came from local authorities. As a group, there was considerable support for publishing the 2022 results. However, nearly half were in favour of suspending

consequences. There was also minimal support for other approaches, such as freezing the 2021 consequences.

- There was overwhelming support from developers to publish the 2022 Housing Delivery Test with consequences. About half of responses from developers sought to retain the current approach to the Housing Delivery Test and update it next year. Less than half set out that the Housing Delivery Test should continue unamended. Other private sector organisations took a similar stance overall. Nearly half considered the 2022 Housing Delivery Test should be published with consequences and should continue unamended in future years. A very small minority sought harsher consequences.
- As a group, neighbourhood planning bodies and parish/town councils shared a varied mix of views, with a very slight majority seeking the suspension of consequences attributed to the 2022 Housing Delivery Test. A quarter of interest groups and voluntary organisations held the same view, but another quarter would like the current approach to the Housing Delivery Test to be retained for the 2022 Housing Delivery Test results publication, with some of these seeking amendments in the future.
- Half of professional bodies sought to retain the current approach to the Housing Delivery Test, before updating it next year to accommodate other proposals. This was also the most commonly held view from individuals, shared by over a third of respondents in this group.
- There was minimal support across most groups for the abolition of the Housing Delivery Test. There was also minimal support across some groups for a full review of the Housing Delivery Test and its purpose.

Government response

The government's intention is to apply the Housing Delivery Test measurement in a way that does not unfairly sanction local planning authorities when slow housing delivery results from developer behaviour. We sought views on whether the measurement's consequences should be applied from the publication of the 2022 measurement or if they should be amended, suspended until the publication of the 2023 Housing Delivery Test, or frozen to reflect the 2021 Housing Delivery Test results while consideration is given to whether changes should be made to it.

In light of the responses, the government has carefully considered the publication of the 2022 Housing Delivery Test and the fairest approach to the consequences, where these apply. The consultation allowed the government to hear views that, broadly speaking, either supported the application of consequences in some way or opposed the application of consequences. It was clear there were strong feelings on both sides, and the government recognises it will not be possible to satisfy all those who responded to the consultation. Nevertheless, the responses will feed into ongoing policy development.

As set out in responses to questions 18 and 19 above, the government is not proceeding with any substantive changes to how consequences in the Housing Delivery Test will operate at this time. Therefore, the results of the 2022 Housing Delivery Test will be published, and consequences applied as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. No changes will be made to suspend, alter or freeze the consequences, nor will changes be made to when consequences apply.

Chapter 5 – A planning system for communities

More homes for social rent

Question 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?

Question 22 – response

A total of 1,162 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to the first question, with the remainder leaving it blank. Of these, 840 (72%) agreed with the above proposal, 140 (12%) did not agree and 182 (16%) were indifferent.

There was support across most categories of respondents who answered yes/no/indifferent to the proposal, bearing in mind that only 1,162 out of a total of 2,733 respondents to the consultation provided an answer to the first part of this question.

As a proportion of those who did respond to the first part of the question, there was most support for the proposal from local authorities (89% yes, 9% no), neighbourhoods, parishes and town councils (89% yes, 3% no), and interest groups and voluntary organisations (82% yes, 2% no).

There was also support from the 'other' category (71% yes, 15% no), individuals submitting their personal views (69% yes, 11% no), professional bodies (67%

yes, 0% no) and other private sector respondents (52% yes, 21% no). Developers were the least supportive of the proposal (32% yes, 45% no).

Key points:

- A common theme among those in support of the proposal was that there should be a minimum percentage of homes on new developments set aside for Social Rent. However, a shared view amongst all categories of respondent was that there should also be some scope for local planning authorities to be able to take into account local factors when deciding the tenure mix.
- Some respondents commented that the planning system should do more to recognise Social Rent as distinct from other tenures. There were a mix of views among respondents as to whether Social Rent should take priority over other tenures, including home ownership tenures.
- It was proposed amongst several categories of respondents that there should be stronger limitations on the ability of developers to negotiate down their affordable housing commitments on new developments. However, a common theme was the impact that placing greater weight on Social Rent would have on overall viability and affordable housing supply.
- Examples of further points raised by some respondents in each category included the suggestion that the proposal should apply to larger sites (individuals), the importance of this proposal in rural areas (neighbourhood planning bodies, parishes and town councils), arguments for removing the minimum site size threshold for affordable housing contributions (local authorities), and that a large number of affordable homes are delivered through the s106 system (developers).

Government response

The government welcomes the points raised by respondents and notes the range of views put forward in response to this proposal. These views will be used to inform policy development as we consider this proposal further as part of any future updates to the Framework.

Question 23 – Do you agree that we should amend existing paragraph 62 of the Framework to support the supply of specialist older people’s housing?

Question 23 – response

A total of 1,130 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 865 (77%) agreed with the above proposal, 60 (5%) did not agree and 205 (18%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Around 2 thirds of respondents who provided substantive comments commented that there is a need for more older people's housing with access to services, shops and other facilities, in rural as well as urban areas. Some commented that such housing must be affordable.
- Around a fifth of respondents commented that individual needs and preferences must be considered in generalised older people's housing allocations in plans. Revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and/or Planning Practice Guidance should make clear that plan-makers are expected to carry out detailed, evidenced interdisciplinary assessment of the care and lifestyle needs of older and retired people in each area, so they can plan for a full range of older people's housing and care types.
- Some respondents stated that older people are not a homogenous group. For some, independent living, with access to care and health services as necessary, is the primary need. Moreover, needs may intensify or vary over time.
- Some respondents commented that older people's housing provision generally has to be social or affordable housing, but plans should accept that many older people wish to keep their independence, to live in multigenerational settings close to relatives, to purchase small market homes to downsize, and to have ready access to shops and services as well as care. In light of this, some respondents suggested amendments should not be made in advance of the Older People's Housing Task Force's report.
- References were made to the importance of suitable land, the provision and retention of specialised and dedicated housing for older people, and accommodation for those who provide their care. In particular, several respondents stated that more land, including settlement expansions, should be allocated but restricted for affordable older people's housing so that commercial developers cannot acquire and build larger houses or luxury private retirement homes there.
- There were some concerns that unless protected as older people's housing, many affordable bungalows, and small dwellings suitable for older people are lost to the open market or so enlarged as to become unaffordable.

Government response

The government brought forward this proposal to support the supply of older people's housing, particularly in the context of a rapidly ageing United Kingdom population. It proposed to do this through the insertion of the words 'including

for retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes' into existing National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 62 (new paragraph 63).

The government has considered the responses to the suggested insertion. Since respondents showed a clear majority in favour of the change, with extremely limited opposition, the government has decided that this revision should be included in the revised Framework. The government has made some minor wording amendments to improve the flow of this paragraph.

The government takes the wider comments that many consultees expressed in relation to older people's housing seriously. Longer term, the government will give further detailed consideration to how national planning policy and/or guidance can further improve the diversity of housing options available to older people and boost the supply of specialist elderly accommodation. The government will consider any recommendations of the Older People's Housing Task Force as part of this process.

More small sites for small builders

Question 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)?

Question 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?

Questions 24 & 25 – response

In total, there were 642 responses to question 24, including those who gave a 'no' response or similar without substantive content. There were 856 responses to question 25, including those who made unrelated comments or did not provide substantive content.

Key points:

- Around 15% of respondents who provided substantive comments said that the existing policy was not particularly effective in bringing forward small sites. However, there were mixed views on whether the policy should be

strengthened, or whether in fact it should be altered to allow for more local discretion or removed entirely.

- Other issues raised included concerns about the ability to provide necessary infrastructure when delivering large amounts of housing on small sites. Another common point was the need to ensure that small sites respect local character and amenity and are developed sustainably.
- There was a common theme that small site delivery is influenced by factors outside of the planning system, including the higher relative cost of developing such sites for reasons such as contamination. Another comment was that wider incentives outside of the planning system would be necessary, including funding for small and medium size enterprise developers, infrastructure or brownfield remediation. This view was particularly prominent among individual respondents and local authorities.
- Some respondents, particularly local authorities, parish councils and neighbourhood planning groups, suggested that local authorities should be able to take contributions for affordable housing on sites of fewer than 10 units. Among developers, this view was far less commonly expressed.
- A number of respondents stated that local authorities should plan for small sites as part of their local plans, with a general consensus that they should look to allocate more small sites rather than have them come forward as windfall sites outside of the local plan. This view was especially common among developers and professional bodies.
- Some respondents commented that there is a need for greater focus on brownfield development.

Government response to questions 24 and 25

Due to the significant overlap between responses received to questions 24 and 25, we are responding jointly to them. The government is committed to supporting delivery on small sites and supporting small and medium sized builders to do so. These consultation questions sought to understand what could be done in the National Planning Policy Framework to support these government objectives on housing delivery and small sites. The government welcomes the broad range of views given in response to these questions which recognise the role that small sites can play in delivering much needed housing across England, in both urban and rural areas, and supporting small and medium sized builders.

The consultation responses showed significant support for going further on small sites policy, with a range of comments suggesting that the existing National Planning Policy Framework policy was not always effective, albeit with mixed views on whether it should be strengthened or whether local authorities should be given more discretion on how to tackle small site delivery in their areas. Also noted were the potential wider challenges around delivering small

sites such as availability of finance and issues of contaminated land on small brownfield sites.

We have carefully weighed up the responses and recognise the importance of small sites in delivering housing diversification, including affordable housing. We have therefore amended the Framework to say that local authorities should seek opportunities, through policies and decisions, to support small sites to come forward for community-led housing and self-build and custom build housing. Our policy changes also encourage 'permission in principle' alongside other routes to permission (such as local development orders), to remove barriers for smaller and medium-sized builders in the planning system.

Our consultation highlighted that the current small sites policy could be further improved, and there have been a number of different suggestions as to how best achieve this. We therefore intend to undertake a further consultation on specific proposals to strengthen our small sites planning policy in due course.

A number of comments received fall outside the scope of this consultation, including on financial incentives and funding, and these will be considered separately.

More community-led developments

Question 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?

Question 26 – response

A total of 1,052 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 741 (70%) agreed with the proposal, 102 (10%) did not agree and 209 (20%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- There was widespread agreement that community-led housing and almshouses have an important contribution to make in boosting housing supply and supporting affordable housing delivery.

- The responses focussed on the requirement in the current definition of ‘affordable housing for rent’ that the landlord must be a registered provider of social housing. That requirement is seen by some as a barrier to non-registered organisations providing new affordable housing. Many responses suggested that the removal of the registered provider test is widely seen as being helpful in enabling more community-led groups and almshouses – and potentially other organisations – to deliver more housing.
- There was widespread agreement that, in the absence of a registered provider test, some other strong safeguards would be needed to ensure good landlord practice, appropriate standards and appropriate pricing.
- Several respondents suggested that the current registration scheme may be the best way of ensuring adequate standards are maintained.
- In many cases, it was not clear from the responses that those who supported the proposal (that is, that the definition of ‘affordable housing for rent’ should be amended) were clear about why the current restrictions are in place. No respondents suggested that the removal of the registered provider test need to be accompanied by some other form of regulation or safeguarding of standards.
- Although not explicitly asked within the question, many responses included comments about accommodation falling within the definition of affordable housing not being affordable in practice.

Government response

This proposal was intended to support and encourage more community-led affordable housing to come forward, specifically through amending the National Planning Policy Framework glossary which defines ‘affordable housing for rent’. The government has carefully considered the responses to the consultation and is grateful for the range of views received.

As a result of the responses, the government will consider – as part of future updates to the National Planning Policy Framework – whether the definition of ‘affordable housing for rent’ should now be amended to include homes of which the landlord is not a registered provider. In doing so, we will consider what alternative safeguards might be required to ensure that appropriate protections are in place for the residents who will live in those homes.

Question 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?

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

Questions 27 and 28 – response

In total, there were 544 substantive responses to question 27, and 516 responses to question 28.

Key points:

- Although question 27 was not a yes/no question, around a third of respondents answered this question ‘yes’ or ‘no’. It was fairly balanced between those who explicitly said that changes could be made to exception site policy to make it easier for community groups to bring forward affordable housing, and those who answered ‘no’.
- Around 20% of respondents who answered these questions commented that national policy should make it easier for community groups to bring forward affordable housing, either through an exception sites policy or other suggestions included a presumption in favour of such sites, the use of Local Development Orders or Neighbourhood Development Orders, or the introduction of a ‘planning passport’.
- A number of those who supported changes to make it easier for community-led housing to be brought forward, commented that the definitions within the Framework should be amended to make it easier for organisations that are not registered providers (including community-led groups and almshouses) to develop new affordable homes.
- Some respondents commented that local plans including neighbourhood plans should be required to make provision for community-led affordable housing.
- A number of respondents raised issues around viability and that this presented a barrier to community groups in bringing forward affordable housing. Some suggested greater flexibility is needed on the proportion of market housing to improve viability (including changes to the thresholds set in national policy). Conversely, other respondents raised concern that the provision of market housing would increase hope value which would, in turn, make it much harder for community groups to compete against larger developers in accessing sites.
- Around 20% of respondents commented that more practical support from local authorities is needed as community groups often lack the resources or expertise to bring these sites forward. Some respondents suggested that changes could be made to the planning application process to make it easier for community groups to navigate the planning system.

- Around a third of those who responded to these questions considered that funding should be offered to encourage community-led affordable housing. This included the suggested reintroduction of the Community Housing Fund. Others suggested a Homes England grant, access to government loans or tax incentives for landowners.
- A number of respondents commented that they did not think there is anything else national planning policy could do to support community-led developments.
- Although not specifically in reference to community-led exception sites, some respondents commented that the National Planning Policy Framework should be updated to remove references to entry level exception sites as this policy has been superseded by First Homes exception sites. Some also commented that the National Planning Policy Framework should incorporate the government's policy on First Homes exception sites.

Government response

Due to the significant overlap between responses received to questions 27 and 28, we are responding to them jointly. The government welcomes the range of views in response to these questions, and the recognition given to the role that community-led development can have in responding to local housing needs and supporting the provision of more locally-led affordable homes.

We received a wide range of comments from across the sector. This included suggestions for planning policy changes to support community-led housing, as well as wider comments around how viability could be boosted to help community groups bring forward more small sites, and proposals for financial support. Having considered the responses received, the government has concluded that the proposed amendments to paragraph 78 (new paragraph 82) of the National Planning Policy Framework to emphasise the importance of community-led housing development should be brought forward as proposed, as this will send a clear signal that the government is serious about community-led development.

As set out in the government's response to questions 24 and 25, in recognition of the importance that small sites play in delivering housing diversification, including affordable housing, the government has amended paragraph 70 of the Framework to specifically reference that local authorities should seek out opportunities, through policies and decisions, to support small sites to come forward for community-led housing and self-build and custom-build housing. Our policy changes also encourage 'permission in principle' and other routes to permission (such as local development orders).

To further support the provision of community-led housing and help address the concerns of respondents who felt that it should be more straightforward for

community groups to bring forward affordable housing in urban areas, we are also replacing the existing entry-level exception site policy at new paragraph 73 of the Framework to focus exclusively on newly introduced community-led housing exception sites. This policy sets out that local authorities should support the development of community-led exception sites that deliver affordable housing to meet local need. Community groups will continue to be able to bring forward affordable housing in rural areas through the existing Rural Exception Site policy. To address comments received as part of the consultation, we are amending footnotes 37 and 38 to reflect the replacement of the entry-level exception site policy. Footnote 38 retains the reference to footnote 7 to ensure that community-led housing exception sites do not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance.

While we expect community-led developments brought forward under this policy to be predominantly for housing, we recognise that the development may include other supporting land uses.

This policy will exist alongside our First Homes exception sites policy, as set out in our Affordable Homes Update Written Ministerial Statement dated 24 May 2021. We have made an amendment to paragraph 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework to refer explicitly to this First Homes Policy, but will continue to consider whether and how to further incorporate the First Homes planning policy.

A number of wider comments received fall outside the scope of this consultation, including some on financial incentives, and these will be considered separately.

Question 29 – Is there anything else national planning policy could do to support community-led developments?

Question 29 – response

A total of 588 respondents provided substantive comments for this question.

Key points:

- There was broad acknowledgement that more strongly advocating the benefits of community-led housing in the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance on neighbourhood plans would encourage local authorities to support the sector.
- The idea of extending exception sites policy for community-led housing was suggested by several respondents, including the principal membership

organisation for community land trusts (CLT Network).

- Several respondents suggested that the introduction of percentage allocations on large sites – whereby a minimum proportion of plots on large sites would be reserved for community-led housing – would be helpful in encouraging the sector to grow.
- There was widespread agreement that better resourcing within local planning authorities – and better engagement from local planning authorities – would greatly help expedite planning proposals for community-led housing.
- Several respondents suggested that local authorities should be required to identify the level of demand for community-led housing and provide land, in much the same way as is currently the case for self-build and custom-build.
- Many other non-planning policy measures were suggested, including the provision or facilitation of financial support (including loans and private sector investment), including for advice and training to community groups, and increased resourcing in local authorities, for example, by reinstating the Community Housing Fund.

Government response

The government welcomes the broad range of views given in response to this question which reflects the importance of the role that community-led developments can play in delivering much needed housing across England, in both urban and rural areas.

The government recognises that the community-led housing sector (including community land trusts and housing co-operatives) offers significant untapped potential for helping to meet housing need across England. In addition to helping increase the rate of delivery of new housing, it will help deliver a range of benefits including diversifying the housebuilding sector, improving design and construction quality, developing modern methods of construction and helping sustain local communities and local economies. The support and close involvement of the local community enables the community-led approach to secure planning permission and deliver housing that could not be brought forward through mainstream development.

The government wishes to encourage more emphasis on the contribution that community-led housing can make to meeting housing need as well as a range of other policy objectives. We also recognise that the inclusion of a definition on community-led housing will encourage local authorities to provide support for this kind of development and reduce the risk of that support being provided for developments that do not help meet the same policy objectives.

A number of suggestions received fall outside the scope of this consultation, including on financial support and the provision of training and advice to community groups. These will be considered separately.

As a result of the responses, the government will:

- Amend paragraph 78 (new paragraph 82) in Chapter 5 of the National Planning Policy Framework to place more emphasis on the role that community-led development can have in supporting the provision of more locally led affordable homes.
- Amend the existing exception site policy at new paragraph 73 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework to focus exclusively on newly introduced community-led housing exception sites.
- Add a definition of community-led development in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework to assist in the implementation of this policy change.

The following further changes will be considered as future revisions of the Framework:

- Whether the definition of 'affordable housing for rent' should be amended to include homes of which the landlord is not a registered provider;
- Whether there is anything else national planning policy could do to support community-led housing.

Question 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?

Question 31 – Of the 2 options above, what would be the most effective mechanism? Are there any alternative mechanisms?

Question 30 – response

A total of 1,199 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 709 (59%) agreed with the above proposal, 356 (30%) did not agree and 134 (11%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Respondents who supported the proposal cited a number of reasons for doing so. Views expressed included that some developers manipulate or take advantage of the planning system by actively breaching planning rules or consistently seeking reduced obligations/conditions after permission has been granted. Respondents also expressed that developers' irresponsible

behaviour undermines the public's confidence and trust in the planning system. Others felt that existing enforcement powers and local authority resources were inadequate to tackle the problem of poor behaviour by developers.

- Views expressed by those who did not support the proposal included that planning permission should be based on the merits of the development and in accordance with the development plan, not on the behaviour of the applicant. Other comments included that the onus or responsibility for determining developers' behaviour should not rest with local planning authorities.
- Many respondents commented on potential issues with how such a proposal might work in practice. In particular, issues were raised about the difficulty in defining, measuring and assessing irresponsible behaviour and that there would be a need for a robust definition and greater clarity on what it meant. Respondents also felt that it would be easy to circumvent the process, for example, by submitting applications in others' names, using a shell company or an agent. It was also felt that it could add additional complexity, burden, bureaucracy and delays to the planning application process and lead to more legal challenges. Some respondents commented that it could lead to otherwise acceptable and much needed development (for example, for housing) being turned down.
- A number of suggestions were put forward by respondents who commented on the second part of the question on what types of applicant behaviour should be in scope. Suggestions included situations where there has been a history of enforcement action, repeated retrospective applications, repeated applications to vary the permission granted, or where there has been a failure to comply with approved plans/ planning permission (including conditions and obligations) particularly where the breach is serious, continuous or unreasonable. Views on other behaviour which should be in scope included providing misleading/inaccurate or deceptive information in planning applications, or a poor environmental record.

Question 31 – Of the 2 options above, what would be the most effective mechanism? Are there any alternative mechanisms?

Question 31 – response

A total of 829 respondents answered Option 1/Option 2/ Neither or Indifferent to this question. Of the 2 possible options put forward in the consultation, 133 (16%) selected Option 1, Making behaviour a material consideration, 199 (24%) selected Option 2, giving local authorities the right to decline applications, 221 (27%) selected neither option and 276 (33%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- A range of views were expressed on the 2 options put forward in the consultation.
- On option 1, making such behaviour a material consideration in planning decisions, some respondents commented that it was preferable to option 2 as it would require evidence which could be examined by Planning Inspector at appeal. Others felt that it would be open to legal challenge as it would be subjective, would place greater burdens on local planning authorities and add further complexity to the planning decision making.
- Those who favoured option 2, allowing local planning authorities to decline applications, felt it was a more substantial deterrent and more resource efficient than option 1. Other respondents commented that option 2 upholds the principle of applications being determined on their planning merits. Some respondents felt that option 2 would be open to legal challenge.
- A number of alternative mechanisms to tackle the issue of poor developer behaviour were put forward; for instance, more investment in local planning authority enforcement services to allow them to take more effective action. In a similar vein, other respondents suggested that financial penalties should be introduced in addition to existing enforcement powers: for example, civil penalties, daily fines or requirements to meet the authority's costs in taking enforcement action. There were also calls for both options to be introduced to give local planning authorities more flexibility.

Government response to questions 30 and 31

The government is clear that effective enforcement is needed to maintain public confidence and trust in the planning system, and we are keen to ensure that local planning authorities have the powers they need. We welcome therefore, the range of views expressed in the consultation responses and will consider these carefully in any future policy development.

More build out

Question 32 – Do you agree that the 3 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?

Question 32 – response

A total of 928 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 370 (40%) agreed with the build out measures, 253 (27%) did not agree and 305 (33%) were indifferent. Neighbourhood planning body, parish or town councils were most supportive of these measures with 35% responding 'yes', followed by 28% of local planning authorities. Developers were most against the proposed build out measures with 33% answering 'no' to this question.

Key points:

- There was recognition that slow build out is often caused by a range of factors beyond the control of the developer, such as wider economic factors or access to labour or materials.
- Developers noted that the planning process itself sometimes causes delays; for example discharging pre-commencement conditions, obtaining reserved matters approval or section 106 negotiations. Poor resourcing within local planning authorities often causes delays, as does the negotiation of infrastructure or utilities provision.
- In relation to the proposal to publish data when slow build out occurs, some felt that clarity is needed on the types and size of development this measure would apply to. Some commented that this shouldn't be limited to developers who are building too slowly – data should be published on developers who are building out in accordance with their commitments to promote good practice.
- In relation to the proposal to require developers to explain how they propose to increase the diversity of housing tenures to maximise a development scheme's absorption rate, respondents commented that a scheme's absorption rate must not outweigh local need or quality, and proposals must still accord with local plan policies on housing mix and tenure. Respondents also commented that policy/guidance is needed to clarify how absorption rates should be measured and evidenced. Some also commented that a mechanism needs to be in place to ensure the diversity of housing tenures is secured (for example by a planning condition).
- In relation to the proposal to highlight in the National Planning Policy Framework that delivery can be a material consideration in planning applications, respondents considered that the policy must clarify what is meant by 'slow delivery rate', and it should ensure that developers submit trajectories that are realistic.
- Respondents commented that the proposed measures should be designed in such a way that ensures that the reasons for slow build out are taken into account, so that developers aren't penalised unfairly when delays are caused by factors beyond their control. The measures should also provide clarity on exemptions, such as specialist housing or small sites, and guidance on what happens if sites are sold or subject to new planning applications.

- A number of respondents commented on the potential impacts of the proposals. While some considered the measures would increase transparency, some raised concern that they may lead to priority being given to build out/absorption rates over quality or affordable housing provision, that the measures may discourage applications for more complex sites that will take longer to build out, or that the measures will cause further delay or increase burdens.
- A number of respondents commented on the build out measures in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act and the announcement to consult on a financial penalty.

Government response

The government proposed 3 measures in national policy, reinforcing its position that developments should be built out as soon as possible once planning permission is granted. Those 3 proposals were:

- Publishing data on developers of sites over a certain size in cases where they fail to build out according to their commitments.
- Requiring developers to explain how they propose to increase the diversity of housing tenures to maximise a scheme's absorption rate.
- Highlighting in the National Planning Policy Framework that delivery rate can be a material consideration in planning applications.

The government welcomes the range of views in response to the question and the 3 proposals. There was broad support for these measures, albeit less so among housing developers. As such, the government proposes to take forward these changes, after a full consultation on them and related issues of build-out in due course. For this future consultation, we will consider how the policy can be drafted to be as clear as possible while providing flexibility to be applied in different circumstances. There will be an opportunity to provide further comments.

A number of respondents commented on the build out measures contained in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act and the announcement of a further consultation on a financial penalty. While these comments fall outside the scope of this consultation, they will be considered as we prepare further policy or legislation on these areas. We will publish a separate consultation seeking views on proposals for a build out financial penalty to incentivise developers to build out homes more quickly in due course, and after the Competition and Markets Authority has published its report following its study on the housebuilding market.

Chapter 6 – Asking for beauty

Ask for beauty

Question 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?

Question 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?

[to note, respondents recognised that there was a misprint in the consultation relating to the existing National Planning Policy Framework (2021) paragraph numbering as 124c should read 124e]. Respondents also recognised that the additional reference to ‘beautiful’ in paragraph 84a did not appear as a track change in the supporting consultation version of the draft National Planning Policy Framework text. The responses they provided reflect the changes set out in the intended correct paragraph numbers.

Questions 33 and 34 – response

A total of 1,160 respondents answered ‘yes’/‘no’/‘indifferent’ to question 33. 1,115 respondents answered ‘yes’/‘no’/‘indifferent’ to question 34.

Of those who responded to question 33, 797 (69%) chose yes, that they did agree with making changes to emphasise the role of beauty and placemaking in strategic policies and to further encourage well-designed and beautiful development; 233 (20%) chose ‘no’, and 130 (11%) chose ‘indifferent’.

Of those who responded to question 34, 533 (48%) chose yes, that they agreed to the proposed changes to the title of Chapter 12 and existing paragraphs 84a and 124e to include the word ‘beautiful’ when referring to ‘well-designed places’ to further encourage well-designed and beautiful development; 401 (36%) chose ‘no’, and 181 (16%) chose ‘indifferent’.

Key points:

- There was considerable support for the principle of encouraging beautiful and well-designed development. However, many of those who supported the principle qualified their statements by adding that the term 'beauty' is subjective and highlighted the need for further national guidance (or within the glossary) to define/clarify what is meant by 'beauty', and for this to be undertaken with the local community and accompanied with examples of good practice.
- About half of those respondents who provided supporting text felt that 'beauty' is unsuitable to use in national planning policy as it is too subjective and cannot be defined. Respondents also commented that its use may also lead to legal disputes, appeals and delays in the planning process, which may impact on the delivery of houses. Some respondents also felt that the term 'beauty' may be used by those assessing planning applications to refuse development.
- Others also had the viewpoint that using the term beauty could create a new subjective bar for development to meet, which may result in greater community opposition, viability challenges and undermine housing supply, including the supply of affordable housing.
- It was suggested that it is more important to focus on placemaking to ensure, through the planning process, places that are sustainable, consider local context and the natural and historic environment, energy efficiency, climate change, health and inclusivity, and have infrastructure in place.
- Alternative wording for use in the Framework was suggested, including 'well-designed', 'high quality' 'design-led' or 'attractive', whilst others commented that national policy and guidance needs to be consistent across all documents in its use of wording relating to design.
- There were comments that delivering good design should be based on an objective approach using detail set out in design codes that are prepared with the local community, but for these to be flexible to allow for innovative design.

Government response

The government welcomes the range of views in response to the proposal to strengthen the emphasis on beauty set out in questions 33 and 34 of this consultation.

It is acknowledged that there was support for the principle of encouraging beautiful and well-designed development, but this support was qualified with views that beauty is subjective and therefore difficult to define and apply practically in the planning process. The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in 2021 to include the term 'beautiful' within Chapter 12, in response to recommendations from the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission. It is intended, as set out in the government response to the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework revisions consultation, that this should be

read as a high-level statement of ambition rather than a policy test and government would encourage local planning authorities, communities and developers to work together to decide what beautiful homes, buildings and places should look like in their area, which should be reflected in local plans, neighbourhood plans, design guides and codes.

The changes made to paragraph 138 of the revised Framework support the 2021 revisions to the Framework on strengthening the emphasis on beauty, placemaking and good design by reflecting that the National Model Design Code is now in widespread use and that local design codes, prepared in line with the Code, is the primary means of assessing and improving the design of development.

As a result of the feedback received as part of this consultation, government will retain the changes consulted on, as referred to in questions 33 and 34.

Refuse ugliness

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

Question 35 – response

A total of 1,125 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 838 (74%) agreed with the proposal, 134 (12%) did not agree and 153 (14%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- There was considerable support (just under 3 quarters of those who answered 'yes'/'no'/'indifferent') for the principle of encouraging greater visual clarity on design requirements set out in planning conditions.
- Many commented that the proposed change to existing paragraph 135 would add clarity and reduce ambiguity, helping local authorities to effectively take enforcement action where development has not been built out in accordance with the plans and drawings referred to in a planning condition.
- However, some respondents who supported the proposal set out in question 35 qualified their statements by commenting on the need for this not to slow

the planning process down, whilst others raised that providing visual clarity would not always be possible in all circumstances.

- There were comments that further guidance is needed from government to set out how local authorities can ensure the proposal is applied properly in the planning system. This includes guidance showing best practice examples.
- Some had the viewpoint that visual clarity on design needs to be sought and agreed earlier on in the planning application process, as the conditions stage is too late, and that this clarity can come forward in local design codes and guides. Others also commented on the lack of enforcement resource in local planning authorities, as well as the need for appropriate design skills within local planning authorities to determine what plans and drawings are acceptable, and that this proposal leaves too much open for interpretation.
- Those respondents who were indifferent about the proposal commented that this is already common practice and already an expectation through tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting planning practice guidance and therefore do not see a need to change the Framework to include this.

Government response

The government welcomes the views heard in response to this consultation. As a result of the consultation, we will proceed with the proposed changes to paragraph 135 of the current National Planning Policy Framework (2021) to encourage greater visual clarity on design requirements set out in planning conditions, with amendments to further clarify that the proposed changes will provide greater certainty for those implementing the planning permission on how to comply with permission and that this will give a clearer basis for local authorities to identify breaches of planning control.

In response to the specific comments on the need for further guidance to support the proposal, the consultation responses will be used to inform policy development and identify necessary wider updates to planning practice guidance in due course.

In response to the comments made on the lack of local authority resource, we will continue to work to ensure that local planning authorities are well equipped and supported to deliver development now and in the future. This includes a comprehensive capacity and capability programme which provides the direct support that is needed now, delivers funding to local government, providing upskilling opportunities for existing planners, and further developing recruitment into the profession.

Embracing gentle density

Question 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?

*to note, respondents recognised that there was an error in question 36, as the changes related to existing National Planning Policy Framework (2021) paragraph 120e, which is new paragraph 122e in the supporting consultation version of the draft National Planning Policy Framework text. Their responses therefore reflect the changes as set out in new paragraph 122e, as intended.

Question 36 – response

A total of 1,021 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 239 (23%) agreed with the above proposal, 419 (41%) did not agree and 363 (36%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- There was support, including through a campaign, for the proposal set out in question 36 to include specific reference to mansard roofs in existing National Planning Policy Framework (2021) paragraph 120e. Those who supported commented that it:
 - offers a sustainable, attractive and traditional way to enable new housing by extending upwards,
 - would provide additional space for young families, and
 - would help ensure more favourable treatment at the planning stage for development that is in keeping with the rest of the building.
- Others supported the principle of densification and extending upwards, but qualified their statements with suggestions that:
 - mansard roof development is not the only way of extending buildings upwards.
 - it should be in keeping with the local character and context, particularly in conservation areas.
 - there is the need for mansard roofs to be energy efficient.
- However, just under half of those who provided text answers (43%) commented that the reference to mansard roofs as a form of upward extension is too specific to be included in the Framework. There were suggestions that this form of development is best decided locally and would

therefore be more appropriately placed in a design policy, design guide or design code. It was also suggested that it would not be suitable in all areas, but only in urban areas where there are certain styles of buildings already in existence. Some felt that mansard roofs are generally not a suitable form of upward extension in terms of the living spaces they deliver, are often badly lit and are poorly insulated.

- Others commented that mansard roof development will not provide more homes and lead to gentle densification, but instead will only increase the size of existing homes.
- Some commented that no change is needed as the existing wording on upward extensions in the Framework is sufficient.

Government response

The government welcomes the comments received on the proposal to include a specific reference in Chapter 11 to encourage local planning authorities to consider mansard roofs as a means of increasing densification/creating new homes.

The government recognises the feedback in the consultation responses that the encouragement of mansard roof development is more appropriately set out at a local level, through local design policies, guidance and design codes, taking into account other local planning considerations, including the relationship with heritage assets and the wider character of the building and area. We also recognise the feedback that mansard roof development will not be suitable in all areas and only suitable on certain types of buildings in urban areas.

As a result of the feedback received, and in recognition of the importance that mansard roofs could have in providing additional homes on suitable existing buildings, the government will continue with the wording as consulted on in National Planning Policy Framework existing paragraph on upward extensions, with an amendment to recognise that mansard roof development should be allowed only on suitable properties and the inclusion of an explanation in the Glossary of the Framework in the form of a definition of mansard roof development and the type of building for which is it appropriate.

The wording consulted on and the associated amendments intend to recognise the value of mansard roof development in securing gentle densification and to encourage the approval of mansard roof development only in areas and on building types where this is suitable and appropriate, where the development is well-designed and harmonises with existing buildings and is consistent with the overall street scene.

Chapter 7 – Protecting the environment and tackling climate change

Delivering biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery

Question 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?

Question 37 – response

A total of 1134 respondents provided substantive comments for this question. There was strong and overwhelming support for changes in line with those discussed in Chapter 7 of the consultation in general. Of particular note, the responses identified both existing mechanisms through which small interventions for nature could be strengthened, as well as which policy areas could be prioritised.

Key points:

There was a range of ideas put forward in response to this question. They included:

- Use of artificial grass should be limited or banned in planning (though noting that regulating through planning would have a limited scope for impact on, for example, on homeowners introducing artificial grass to gardens).
- Specific measures should be implemented through planning, for example swift bricks, hedgehog highways, green walls and / or roofs and flower meadows. Existing mechanisms could be used to deliver small-scale interventions for nature, for example design codes, urban greening factors, building standards or covenants.
- Proposed changes can be achieved through effective join-up across government policy including biodiversity net gain, local nature recovery strategies and planning (including changes proposed through reforms such as National Development Management Plans).
- Water management and flood prevention measures should be key considerations, including through limiting hardscaping and wider use of sustainable urban drainage systems.

- Consideration of activities managed through permitted development rights may need to be considered to ensure alignment of policy objectives.
- Large scale habitats and wildlife corridors could be prioritised, and existing measures could be strengthened for example, on protected sites and species, Tree Preservation Orders and ancient woodland.

Views varied on what the appropriate delivery mechanism for small interventions for nature should be:

- Individual respondents emphasised that small interventions for nature should be outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Local authorities, neighbourhood planning bodies and parish councils emphasised that small interventions for nature should be outlined through local plans and local planning policy.

Government response

The government welcomes the positive responses and wide range of views received in response to these broad proposals; we will explore how small-scale interventions for nature can be promoted in any future updates to the National Planning Policy Framework.

We will seek further views on any specific policy interventions, as well as proposed delivery mechanisms, which reflect the responses to this consultation. This will include any additional changes that result from the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, and any other relevant government policy.

Recognising the food production value of farmland

Question 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?

Question 38 – response

A total of 1,025 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 530 (52%) agreed with the proposal, 265 (26%) did not and 230 (22%)

were indifferent.

Key points:

- Some respondents stated that agricultural land for food production is a finite resource and requires greater protection than it is currently afforded in the planning system and that the amended text also supports the United Kingdom's transition to net zero, through reducing air miles, when importing food from abroad.
- Others noted that agricultural land is already afforded protection in the National Planning Policy Framework para 174b, but some also agreed that the amended text would strengthen protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land and other agricultural land for food production, providing greater food security.
- Respondents stated that local authorities need to ensure that agricultural land for food production is not lost, given the finite availability of our best and most versatile agricultural land, when deciding which sites are most appropriate for development. Others noted planning decisions need to be supported by robust evidence before allowing agricultural land for food production to be lost, whilst at the same time developers need to take an evidence-based approach towards determining the condition of agricultural land, before a development scheme is proposed, which this amendment encourages.
- Some respondents included information about the ability to determine the availability of land. They set out that whilst there is limited data available when it comes to determining the availability of agricultural land and the mapping of agricultural land at site level is incomplete, specialist surveys can distinguish between Grades 3a and 3b (Grades 1,2 & 3a are best and most versatile agricultural land). These respondents felt that it is essential that developers undertake robust surveys of agricultural land, and an evidence-based approach is considered when making planning decisions, which is essential to ensure land for food production is not lost.
- Respondents stated the amended policy does not conflict with National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) because land type is one of a suite of factors in determining the suitability of the site location for renewable schemes. Therefore, other reasons take precedence when determining the location of renewables schemes.

Government response

The approach proposed in the consultation was to amend the Framework by adding detail on the consideration that should be given to the availability of agricultural land for food production, where significant development of higher

quality agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary compared to areas of poorer quality land.

We welcome the range of views offered on this proposed change. Considering the feedback received, and the majority of responses that support the proposal, the government will make the change set out in the consultation, to ensure the availability of land for food production is adequately weighted in the planning process.

Climate change mitigation: exploring a form of carbon assessment

Question 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?

Question 39 – response

A total of 790 respondents provided substantive comments for this question.

Key points:

- There was strong support for carbon impact assessments being incorporated or required as part of the planning and development process. Although some respondents suggested carbon impact assessments would be better placed within building regulations.
- There were suggestions that carbon impact assessments should form a mandatory part of planning applications, with a national minimum standard to be demonstrated prior to permission being granted. Some suggested introducing sanctions for developers who fail to meet minimum standards.
- Some suggested that a holistic approach to carbon impact assessments is needed, and whole life carbon assessments should be used as part of a wider sustainability assessment to account for all emissions associated with planning, including immediate operational carbon impacts, transport emissions and embodied carbon, along with a long-term environmental impact assessment, spanning the entirety of all new developments.
- Respondents noted that measuring and assessing carbon impacts is a complex and technical area, and there are numerous methodologies for

carrying out carbon impact assessments, so a single standardised approach would be welcomed.

- There were suggestions that carbon impact assessments would need to be flexible by design to account for different contexts and new technologies, and that specialist expertise would be essential to develop a nationally standard approach as it is an evolving area.
- Some respondents had concerns that it will not be possible to develop a carbon impact assessment approach that can be applied nationally, with suggestions that local planning authorities should develop baseline standards that need to be demonstrated and that account for variances between rural and urban areas.
- Respondents commented that any agreed approach to carbon impact assessments must be clearly outlined and simple to implement, to not place additional burdens on local planning authorities and avoid adding further complexity that could slow down the planning process.
- Respondents commented that there is an immediate need to develop a robust carbon assessment approach to mitigate carbon impacts on the environment, and that government should produce guidance on how impacts should be monitored and evaluated as part of the planning and development cycle.

Government response

The government welcomes the range of views provided on carbon assessments and the role planning can play in supporting the mitigation of carbon impacts on the environment. The government's interest in this follows the calls from industry, the third sector and the Environment Audit Select Committee to embed a broad form of carbon assessment in planning policy.

As committed to in the Net Zero Strategy, we intend to review national planning policy in due course to make sure it contributes to climate change mitigation as fully as possible.

The government is carrying out research into the project-level and sector-wide economic, practical, and technical impacts of measuring and reducing embodied carbon. This research will inform potential future policy decisions in this area.

Climate adaptation and flood-risk management

Question 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?

Question 40 – response

A total of 1084 respondents provided substantive comments to this question. Comments mainly suggested how planning policy could be further expanded as part of a potential future update to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Key points:

There were a range of ideas put forward in response to this question. They included:

- The National Planning Policy Framework should reflect the third National Adaptation Programme, government's policy response to the latest assessment of United Kingdom's climate risk and the third Climate Change Risk Assessment. The consultation made clear that any changes needed for adaptation will include such consideration.
- Climate adaptation measures should be explicitly addressed in the Framework, including measures relating to flood risk, coastal change (including sea level rise), sustainable drainage systems, nature protection and recovery, overheating/cooling and nature-based solutions.
- Natural England's green infrastructure standards should be integrated into the National Planning Policy Framework. In particular, the elements on access to green/blue space, tree canopy cover and urban greening factor.
- Requirements for the provision of and therefore the cumulative benefits of various nature-based solutions including for biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality, sustainable drainage systems, open space, and green infrastructure provision, should be recognised (also referred to as staking).

Government response

The government is grateful to have received a range of views and suggestions from respondents. As committed to in the Net Zero Strategy, we intend to review national planning policy in due course to make sure it contributes to climate change adaptation as fully as possible. Responses will be used to inform any future consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework.

Chapter 8 – Onshore wind and energy efficiency

Enabling the repowering of existing onshore wind turbines

Question 41 – Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 155 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

Question 42 – Do you agree with the changes proposed to Paragraph 158 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

Introducing more flexibility to plan for new onshore wind deployment

Question 43 – Do you agree with the changes proposed to footnote 54 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework? Do you have any views on specific wording for new footnote 62?

Questions 41, 42 and 43 – response

The government made changes in relation to these questions by updating the National Planning Policy Framework in September 2023. The changes brought forward were as consulted on, with minor changes to reflect the responses to the consultation, and to provide clarity on how policy should be applied in practice. See the published [government response for these questions](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy/outcome/onshore-wind-national-planning-policy-reform-government-response#:~:text=Government%20response%3A&text=The%20range%20of%20views%20has,views%20of%20their%20local%20communities.) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy/outcome/onshore-wind-national-planning-policy-reform-government-response#:~:text=Government%20response%3A&text=The%20range%20of%20views%20has,views%20of%20their%20local%20communities.>).

Barriers to energy efficiency

Question 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?

Question 44 – response

A total of 1,084 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 878 (81%) agreed with the proposal, 57 (5%) did not agree and 149 (14%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Many respondents proposed changes to the text to improve readability and to remove unnecessary repetition, specifically the ‘need to support energy efficiency improvements’, which is repeated twice in the first sentence. Many called for greater clarity on what we mean by ‘large non-domestic buildings’, and ‘significant weight’; it was considered these terms were too ambiguous.
- Others suggested more positive wording about seeking energy efficient solutions for listed buildings/conservation areas rather than simply stating ‘... also take into account the policies...’. There were consistent suggestions across groups about the need to emphasise heritage protections, stating that the text should make clear that proposals affecting conservation areas and listed buildings should be determined by reference to national and local guidance on specific measures and the weighting to be applied between environmental and heritage concerns.
- There was strong cross-sector support for the need to ensure heritage protection and that the design of existing developments would need to be carefully considered when assessing applications for energy efficiency improvements. A few argued that the appearance of listed buildings should not be a reason to refuse energy efficient measures, and in the case of large, non-domestic buildings, solar panels/heat pumps would not normally be detrimental to their appearance.
- Some respondents argued that equal weight should be given to the adaptation of domestic (household) buildings as well as non-domestic, including new developments. It was argued that the text for new paragraph 161 placed too much emphasis on large non-domestic buildings, when it should apply to all scales of buildings. Some suggested that this broad approach should include listed buildings and those in conversation areas as

well. A few suggested that weight should also be given to energy efficiency for homes for the elderly.

- A number of respondents suggested that financial incentives be given for the elderly and those on low incomes, including those who reside in listed buildings, for energy efficiency schemes, such as retrofitting. In line with this, some suggested that the government introduce a national retrofit strategy to improve energy efficiency of existing housing stock. Support could include, for example, key retrofit measures such as external wall insulation, window replacements and double glazing.
- A few responses suggested that permitted development rights be extended to support a wider range of energy efficiency measures than is currently allowed, and that the appearance of listed buildings should not be a reason to refuse such measures, where mandated.

Government response

The government welcomes the range of views in response to this question, and the strong support shown for proposals encouraging energy efficiency improvements to buildings. Consequently, we will include the proposed new paragraph 164 in the National Planning Policy Framework with some amendments to reflect issues raised by respondents.

The amendments make it clear that this policy should apply to all existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic. We will also amend the paragraph to be clear that local planning authorities should also apply (not just take account of) the policies in Chapter 16 of the Framework. Finally, we will revise the text to reflect that the policy might be relevant to other types of designated heritage assets besides listed buildings and conservation areas. These amendments will not impose any cost implications to home and building owners.

Further to this, the government has committed through the Third National Adaptation Programme published in July 2023 to further support climate change mitigation and adaptation in future policy work including any future revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Chapter 9 – Preparing for the new system of plan-making

Giving time to finalise and adopt plans already in development before the reformed plan-making system is introduced

Question 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?

The government's response to this question was set out in paragraph 235 of our July 2023 [publication on proposals for implementation of plan-making reforms](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms>), which set out that:

'We confirm our intention that the latest date for plan-makers to submit local plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for examination under the current system will be 30 June 2025. We also confirm our intention that those plans will, in general, need to be adopted by 31 December 2026... these dates are contingent upon... Parliamentary approval of the relevant regulations. However, we are setting this out now to provide planning authorities with as much notice as possible of these dates.'

Setting out the timeline for preparing local plans, spatial development strategies, minerals and waste plans and supplementary plans under the reformed system

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

Question 46 – response

Government's response to this question was set out in paragraph 240 of our recent [publication on proposals for implementation of plan-making reforms](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms>), which set out that:

‘We confirm our intention to have in place the regulations, policy and guidance by autumn 2024 to enable the preparation of the first new-style local plans and minerals and waste plans... this deadline is contingent upon Parliamentary approval of the relevant regulations.’

Question 41 in our July 2023 publication on proposals for implementation of plan-making reforms sought further views on finer details of the roll-out of the new plan-making system. We are currently considering the responses and will set out further details in due course.

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

Question 47 – response

A total of 853 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 385 (45%) agreed with the proposal, 114 (13%) did not agree and 354 (42%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Respondents that agreed with the proposed changes said the deadline was reasonable, though some called for further support for neighbourhood planning groups to help them meet the deadline.
- Respondents that disagreed with the deadline raised concerns about its impact on the preparation and examination of some neighbourhood plans and some also called for more support for groups and local authorities.
- Some respondents also called for clarity on the new system and future changes to national policy to help avoid a slowdown in plan-making and to avoid groups undertaking abortive work.

Government response

Having carefully considered the responses to this consultation question, the government intends to proceed with the proposed deadline for submitting neighbourhood plans that are subject to the existing legal framework. This means that all neighbourhood plans submitted for examination after the 30 June 2025 will be required to comply with the new legal framework. ‘Made’

neighbourhood plans prepared under the current system will continue to remain in force under the reformed system until they are replaced.

We recognise that some respondents felt that this deadline for submission would be challenging to achieve and that in some cases additional support may be required to assist neighbourhood planning groups that are working to get their neighbourhood plan in place, especially in areas which do not yet have one. The government believes that this will provide groups with sufficient time to submit their plans, if they wish for their plan to be examined against current legal requirements.

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

Question 48 – response

Government's response to this question was set out in paragraph 204 of our recent [publication on proposals for implementation of plan-making reforms \(https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms), which set out that:

'Based on feedback received, we confirm our intention, contingent upon... Parliamentary approval of the relevant regulations, supplementary planning documents will remain in force until planning authorities adopt a new style local plan or minerals and waste plan.'

Chapter 10 – National Development Management Policies

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

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

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

Question 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?

Questions 49, 50, 51 and 52 – response

For Question 49 a total of 956 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 444 (46%) agreed with the proposal, 223 (23%) did not agree and 289 (30%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Respondents generally felt that existing national development management policy is an appropriate starting point but that policies should allow for local policy innovation – for example, National Development Management Policies acting as a floor not a ceiling.
- Many respondents felt that an important role of National Development Management Policies would be to speed up the planning system.

For question 51, A total of 829 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 420 (51%) agreed with the proposal, 102 (12%) did not agree and 307 (37%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Existing government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework – most respondents agreed with including matters covered by existing national policy. These often focused on protections already in the National Planning Policy Framework, such as Green Belt, environmental protections, heritage protections, contaminated land policies. Gypsy and traveller policies were also raised by some respondents. Minerals and waste authorities tended to suggest minerals and waste should be included as National Development Management Policies.
- Carbon reduction policies - most respondents agreed that this was an area National Development Management Policies should cover. However, local authorities raised concerns about policies being over-prescriptive, reducing their ability to create complementary policies to 'go further' or having a detrimental impact on development viability. Developers raised concerned

that the benefit of a consistent, nationally appropriate policy would be lost if it would only set a 'baseline' policy to be varied by local authorities. Many local authorities also suggested wider climate change related policies as areas they would like to see National Development Management Policies cover.

- Allotments and housing in town centres - there seemed to be some confusion about what policies on these topics would look like, with some local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups concerned they would not be able to create local policies to, for example, allocate allotment sites. This is not the intention of the suggested selective addition, and it shows greater articulation of the role of complementary local policies is needed as National Development Management Policies are developed.
- Other suggestions- many further selective additions were suggested by different groups about how they wished to see areas already covered by existing national policy treat those issues as National Development Management Policies. More proactive policies on digital infrastructure (and its inclusion in new development) was a notable recurring addition.

Government response

The government welcomes the broad agreement from respondents on the scope and principles for National Development Management Policies that we set out in the consultation. We will, therefore, use existing national development management policy as the starting point for developing the first suite of National Development Management Policies.

A number of respondents were concerned that if a National Development Management Policy was made on a given topic at all, then this would prevent local planning authorities including that topic in their plan. This is not our intention; it will remain possible for locally produced policies to address matters of particular local importance, provided that they are not inconsistent with or repeat National Development Management Policies.

We will take the various suggestions for selective additions to existing national policy into account when preparing an initial set of National Development Management Policies for consultation.

Chapter 11 – Enabling Levelling Up

Question 53 – What, if any, planning policies do you think could be included in a new Framework to help achieve the 12 levelling up missions in the

Question 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?

Question 53 – response

A total of 717 respondents provided substantive comments to this question. Generally, feedback from respondents was mixed, some respondents felt that no new policies were required and that the National Planning Policy Framework is not the right vehicle for delivering levelling up whilst other respondents felt that the twelve levelling up missions should be more explicit within the National Planning Policy Framework. Many respondents provided constructive suggestions emphasising the need to strengthen the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to levelling-up.

Key points:

There were a range of ideas put forward in response to this question. They included:

- National/regional spatial planning: several respondents commented that the National Planning Policy Framework lacks a clear spatial dimension outlining national infrastructure and investment. Respondents called for a national or regional spatial plans or strategies in order to deliver levelling-up.
- Strategic development and funding: several respondents called for development and funding to be focused outside the Southeast and for the centralised bidding framework to be withdrawn. There was a consensus that to deliver levelling up greater funding will be required for infrastructure and services and should be linked to local plan growth.
- Environment: several respondents focused on more policies regarding natural green space and good quality accessible green infrastructure to help address issues of social disparity.
- Greater integration of levelling up in the National Planning Policy Framework: several respondents set out that national planning guidance should be framed around the levelling-up agenda and local plans should be required to support the twelve levelling-up missions.
- Transport and active travel: many respondents thought that transport policies should be strengthened with a greater focus on active travel and public transport and development should be planned around public transport.

- Sustainable development: a number of respondents commented that development should be focused towards existing urban areas and brownfield development.
- Skills: a few respondents set out that skills and planning should be more interlinked with a suggestion that employment developers work with local education providers to ensure that the qualifications and skills necessary to perform jobs are being developed locally.
- Economic development: respondents noted that the National Planning Policy Framework is very focused on housing with little regarding the protection of employment land. A number of respondents stated that the removal of permitted development rights from commercial to residential would be beneficial in providing stronger protection of employment land.
- Requiring health impact assessments to be mandatory for any major application such that developers are required to consider the impact their development will have from the start and prior to submission of any application.
- Health and wellbeing: several respondents stated that the consideration of health and wellbeing should be strengthened in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework should support health inequality and meet the needs of an ageing demographic population.
- Housing: many respondents commented on housing within the National Planning Policy Framework. A number of respondents set out that the Framework should introduce a commitment and clear target for social housing and more weight should be given to social rent. A specific policy should be included for specialist older persons' housing.
- A number of respondents called for net zero to be made a central requirement in all planning policies at a national and local level.

Question 54 – response

A total of 767 respondents made substantive comments on this question. In general, respondents were supportive of the aims of levelling-up and of making these more explicit in the National Planning Policy Framework, though some expressed concern that the levelling up agenda did not pay sufficient attention to the needs of certain regions (for example, within the Southeast) or types of place (for example, rural communities) and, if applied to the National Planning Policy Framework, could disadvantage those places. Other respondents stated that planning policy was not the major obstacle to regional growth and that changes to the National Planning Policy Framework would not meet the aim of levelling-up.

Respondents raised a wide variety of issues and concerns, including some specific suggestions on strengthening the focus on growth and levelling up within planning policy. Respondents also highlighted economic sectors which

were considered key to levelling up or had the potential to help deliver regional growth.

Key points:

There were a range of ideas put forward in response to this question. They included:

- **Economic focus:** some respondents considered the National Planning Policy Framework should have more explicit focus on economic growth through the introduction of overarching principles of growth and references to levelling-up aims and policies (such as freeports and investment zones).
- **Housing:** many respondents highlighted the importance of housing supply to labour mobility and growth and the contribution of the house building sector to regional economies. It was suggested the government promote greater housing delivery – especially through local supply chains and small and medium-sized enterprise builders - while revising the standard method to allow better matching of development to local demand and economic ambitions.
- **Infrastructure:** many respondents commented on the essential role of infrastructure (including – but not limited to - health, education, transport and green infrastructure) in promoting growth and the viability of developments. It was suggested that provision be made to front-load a wide variety of infrastructure types in developments and to consider infrastructure requirements prior to development.
- **Net zero:** a number of respondents pointed to economic opportunities from support for net zero, in particular through facilitation of onshore wind development and related projects including hydrogen and energy storage, and through greater support for retrofitting of existing building stock.
- **Employment land:** many respondents considered that reform was needed to the methodology for assessing employment land need and that additional means were needed to safeguard employment land from undesirable conversion to residential or other uses (including review of Permitted Development Rights and use classes). A number of respondents suggested particular focus on allocating land for specific high-growth sectors such as research and development and logistics.
- **Brownfield regeneration:** many respondents were supportive of a greater focus on brownfield development and urban regeneration but cautioned that further support and incentives could be required to bring forward these more complex sites.
- **Strategic planning:** some respondents thought the National Planning Policy Framework should consider the introduction of national and/or regional spatial plans to aid the planning and delivery of major developments and strategic infrastructure and to ensure matching between development and industrial strategies.
- **Community wealth building:** a number of respondents thought the National Planning Policy Framework should promote community wealth building

through facilitation of developments with local benefits and measures to involve local (and small and medium-sized enterprise) businesses and supply chains in development.

- Specific sectors: respondents highlighted the need to support various sectors which could deliver regional growth, including aviation, farming and food production, mineral extraction, tourism, logistics, manufacturing and research and development.

Government response to questions 53 and 54

The government welcomes the wide-ranging responses to these questions and the considerable support expressed for the aims of levelling up. The government remains committed to securing economic opportunity for all parts of the country and tackling the geographic disparities that hold areas back from meeting their full potential. Levelling up requires a multi-faceted approach and is a long-term programme across central and local government.

To help places take advantage of the economic opportunities available to them, we have already committed separately to consulting on adding requirements to the National Planning Policy Framework for decision-makers to pay particular regard to research and development needs (including the need for additional laboratory space and to proactively engage with potential applicants), as part of the government's 'Life Sciences Growth Package'. We will consult further on this in due course.

We acknowledge the responses that suggested more emphasis should be placed on Freeports. The government is clear that these are a key element of our economic strategy, and we intend to publish our Freeports Delivery Roadmap shortly which will detail the steps government will take, including on planning policy, to support Freeport delivery.

The government recognises the importance of planning for strategic and cross-boundary issues. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces a new form of development plan – the Joint Spatial Development Strategy. This is an optional tool available to all local planning authorities outside of London and combined authorities, which enables those authorities to produce a strategic level plan, if they believe it is in their best interests. In addition, the government is pursuing greater devolution for communities around the country. As part of devolution discussions, combined authorities are able to request the duty to produce a Spatial Development Strategy, in a similar way to the Mayor of London produces his Spatial Development Strategy, which is known as the London Plan.

We also intend to update Planning Practice Guidance to help local authorities take fuller account of the commercial land needs of businesses and to better

plan for inward and high value investment. We will work with stakeholders and consider respondent views from this consultation, where appropriate, to further understand the potential changes needed to the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance, this includes considering the role transport infrastructure delivery can play in delivering sustainable growth and how we can enable enhanced active travel and public transport provision. We are also committed to ensuring that local planning authorities give adequate consideration to the need for new health infrastructure, and will be taking forward the commitments in our Primary Care Recovery plan to consider how the planning system can support this.

Boosting economic growth

Question 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?

Question 55 – response

A total of 936 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 630 (67%) agreed with the above proposal, 141 (15%) did not agree and 165 (18%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- The majority (67%) of respondents answered 'yes' to this question, with the view that the government could go further in national policy to increase development on brownfield land within city and town centres.
- Whilst most respondents showed support for building on brownfield first, a number of respondents, across all organisational groups, commented on the lack of viable brownfield sites, and citing issues such as contamination, flood risk. A number of respondents suggested funding is necessary to deliver brownfield sites, whilst some suggested incentives such as lowering of VAT rates for brownfield.
- There was general support for densification and building on brownfield for areas where infrastructure was in place. Some respondents commented that a comprehensive mandatory database of brownfield land/improved brownfield register is needed to help bring forward those sites. There were some comments that raised the issue of densification affecting the character of an area and the need for design coding.
- A number of respondents commented that it should be for local authorities to determine the housing needs of an area and identify brownfield sites to be brought forward. Developers and private sector organisations commented on

the need for varied housing and a wider focus on development, in greenfield and brownfield, to meet housing needs.

- Respondents in interest groups/voluntary or charitable organisations and professional bodies raised issues surrounding sustainable development. A number of these respondents suggested the prioritisation of maintaining green spaces. Some professional bodies commented that areas of historical and biodiversity value should be retained.
- Some respondents commented that the phrase 'gentle densification' is ambiguous and must be clearly defined/or supported with better guidance.

Government response

To help guide future policy development we asked what the government could do to increase development on brownfield land within city and town centres, with a view to facilitating gentle densification of our urban cores. We were particularly interested in proposals for boosting existing planning policies on brownfield land.

Government welcomes the wide range of responses we received to this question. In particular we note the strong support for making best use of brownfield land as a priority, and the support for densification where this is supported by infrastructure. We will consider the concerns around the viability of brownfield sites and issues related to site clearance and decontamination. We note the interesting comments related to the importance of maintaining green space in urban areas and of retaining important areas of historical and biodiversity value.

The responses highlighted a range of policy interventions and other incentives that could support brownfield development. We will continue to review the detailed comments received as part of our on-going policy development work on supporting and incentivising the effective and efficient use of brownfield land.

We have already committed to a review into identifying further measures that would prioritise the use of brownfield land and we will provide further detail in due course.

Boosting pride in place

Question 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?

Question 56 – response

A total of 943 respondents answered yes/no/indifferent to this question. Of those, 694 (74%) agreed with the above proposal, 73 (8%) did not agree and 176 (19%) were indifferent.

Key points:

- Responses that expressed support for the policy often mentioned that safety considerations, such as this one, should always be a part of high-quality design.
- Many of the responses expressed support but also made clear that, during the implementation of this policy regard for other related priorities such as light pollution and habitats would be crucial.
- Responses, most of which expressed support for the policy, made the point that violence against women and girls (and other vulnerable groups) cannot be tackled by this policy change alone. Suggestions for further policies ranged from ‘designing out crime’, to better education on the topic and increased policing.
- There were also a number of responses which suggested that the National Planning Policy Framework may not be the best vehicle for the change, with other possibilities being National Development Management Policies or design codes.

Government response

The government agrees that national planning policy should do more to enable local authorities to consider the safety of women and girls, and other vulnerable groups, when setting policies or making decisions. As a result of the consultation, we will consider how we can best bring forward policy to support safety and pride in place in future updates to the National Planning Policy Framework. We will not be making any policy changes at this time.

Chapter 12 – Practical changes and next steps

Question 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?

Question 57 – response

A total of 554 made substantive comments highlighting a variety of specific approaches and examples of best practice to consider, to improve the way that national planning policy is presented and accessed.

Key points:

- There was support for presenting national planning policy in plain, clear and concise English, with fewer acronyms and less jargon, so that it is more comprehensible. There were also calls to make planning policy more accessible, by adhering to the government's own accessibility guidance, publishing versions with Braille, in large print and with audio and pictorial descriptions. Respondents also underlined that national planning policy and written ministerial statements should be better publicised, so the public are able to easily identify and access them.
- Some responses recommended avoidance of footnotes within national planning policy documents, and suggested including hyperlinks to any wider documents that are referenced. Alongside this, it was also suggested that government consider publishing tracked change versions of updated national policy documents.
- Some respondents flagged that national planning policy should be presented in an interactive web-based format that supports the integration of wider digital technology, including 3D modelling. The website should also be searchable through use of key words and should include interactive mapping of flood zones and the Green Belt. Some respondents requested though that PDFs still be made available alongside these web-based versions.
- A number of individuals who represented local authorities recommended that National Development Management Policies specifically be drafted and presented in a way that enables them to be readily used with Development Management Software, while wider respondents felt the National Planning Policy Framework and National Development Management Policies should be published as separate documents, or that National Development Management Policies should otherwise be clearly identifiable within the National Planning Policy Framework if published jointly. Respondents also

recommended keeping a version of the National Planning Policy Framework/National Development Management Policies non-digital, so that a physical document would still be available to be accessed by those who may require this.

- Several respondents suggested looking to the private sector, abroad to countries such as Sweden, to local planning authorities, to Planning Practice Guidance and to former non-Departmental public bodies like the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and English Partnerships for examples of best practice.

Government response

The government has carefully considered the responses to this question and welcomes all the suggestions made as to how to improve the way national planning policy is presented and accessed.

We are committed to enhancing how we present national planning policy and will seek to achieve this in a way that maximises the evolving technology available to us.

It is imperative that there are as few barriers as possible preventing the public from accessing national planning policy documents. As we are currently in the process of updating the National Planning Policy Framework and moving towards developing the first suite of National Development Management Policies for consultation, we will ensure that the language used throughout is plain and concise, and that we present national planning policy in a way that is easy to follow.

Further to this, government will also ensure that any future national planning policy documents are published in line with our accessibility guidance.

We will continue to review the suggestions that we have received in response to Question 57 of the consultation and will implement the necessary improvements to achieve our overall objectives to make national planning policy as accessible and usable as possible.

Question 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.

Question 58 – response

A total of 252 respondents provided substantive comments for this question.

Key points:

- Many respondents raised intergenerational unfairness, suggesting proposals included in the consultation will reduce housebuilding and this will disproportionately affect young people.
- Some respondents raised issues in relation to accessibility for those groups least likely to use the internet (elderly and disabled) both in relation to the consultation and the National Planning Policy Framework itself – such as the inclusion of footnotes.
- Others stated that accommodation for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers was not mentioned in the consultation, and that the Planning Policy for Travellers Sites should not be separate from the National Planning Policy Framework or National Development Management Policies.
- A few respondents, particularly local authorities, noted that a decrease in the provision of housing would negatively affect those more likely to be on housing waiting lists and temporary accommodation such as ethnic minorities and disabled people.

Government response

The government acknowledges that there are likely to be impacts on people with protected characteristics through the measures in the National Planning Policy Framework and will continue to keep the impacts of these proposals under review.

It is recognised that any decrease in housing supply as a result of these immediate changes would affect the availability and affordability of housing, with a particularly adverse impact on younger people. It should be recognised that, alongside planning policy, a wide range of factors may affect housing supply and affordability at any given time. These concerns have been carefully considered. We consider the policy changes, as implemented, will not have a significant adverse impact on housing supply in the short term. As such, the changes are not expected to have a negative impact on individuals, or groups of individuals with protected characteristics, who typically are more likely to be impacted by the challenge of access to affordable housing.

The policies of the National Planning Policy Framework should be read in conjunction with the government's [planning policy for traveller sites](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>) (as amended in December 2023).

The government has made decisions in discharge of its equalities duties. An equalities impact assessment which forms part of the considerations in discharging these duties, has been published alongside this consultation response.

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