

Winchester City Council's response to the proposed changes to the NPPF.

Reforming the 5 year housing land supply

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

Yes - once a local plan is adopted it should not be subject to further challenge around five year supply of housing for a minimum of five years. This will allow councils to focus on implementation delivery of the plan and give local communities confidence that the plan will not be undermined by speculative development proposals. It is recognised that this will require local plans to be subject to appropriate scrutiny at Examination stage to ensure that they are deliverable. This approach will also help local authorities such as Winchester who have to deal with unforeseen challenge of nitrates and phosphates. In such instances, councils will need time to find solutions without the threat of unplanned development coming forward.

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

Yes - it is agreed that this over complicates the assessment of housing land supply and artificially inflates housing requirement, increase the risk of unplanned development and has no obvious benefits. In particular there is no evidence that over supply of new housing has any impact on slowing house price inflation.

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

Yes - it is not reasonable to penalise LPAs who have over supplied in the past. This is a disincentive to LPAs to support housing delivery which may be at a faster rate than anticipated. Where authorities are aware that there will be high delivery in the early years of a Local Plan, there should continue to be provision for the use of a 'stepped trajectory' and phasing provisions.

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

Clarify that the 5-year housing land requirement should be based on the Local Plan's predicted trajectory of housing delivery, not simply an average annual housing requirement. Retain existing practice guidance which confirms that Local Plans do not have to provide for shortfalls against previous Plans, as these would already be accounted for by the use of the Standard Method.

Boosting the status of Neighbourhood Plans

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

Yes – this provides more protection to areas covered by Neighbourhood Plans and incentivises communities who want to prepare them. These have been seen to be useful in allowing local communities to shape planning decisions in their area and has increased support for locally led growth.

Chapter 4 - Planning for housing

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

Yes – this is a helpful reminder of a core function of the planning system We are, however, concerned that it's putting too much emphasis on housing, which could be used against us at appeals/Local Plan examination, and that the main emphasis of the NPPF's opening chapters should continue to be on achieving sustainable development (of all types).

Local housing need and the standard method

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

The suggestion of being able to take account of local constraints is supported in principle but there is little detail of how this may work in practice. There is also an over-emphasis on Green Belt, which may not have any inherent environmental value, but no mention of other important constraints such as National Parks. Also there should be recognition and support in the housing delivery test for those LPAs who have granted sufficient planning permissions to meet their identified need but where delivery of these sites has been slow for reasons over which the LPA has no control.

Protections for LPA should also be provided where unforeseen delivery constraints such as the impact of nutrients mean that LPAs are constrained from granting permission.

Introducing new flexibilities to meet housing needs

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

WCC considers there are strong reasons to have a nationally agreed consistent approach to assessing housing need using a standard method. This will avoid inconsistency across the country and avoid protracted debate at Examination. We think that it may be unhelpful to give examples of those exceptional circumstances as, by definition, these are exceptional and where a different approach is specified it could by default exclude other circumstances which couldn't be anticipated.

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

No. Most green belt is in areas of high housing need and sustainable locations and there are arguably parts of the Green Belt that do not meet the test of what should be included in a Green Belt and could be released for housing. Where a LPA chooses not to change green belt boundaries, and in consequence not meet housing need, it is not clear how any of that unmet need will be accommodated and whether neighbouring authorities (in potentially less sustainable locations) will be expected to accommodate it. Exporting that need to other areas could exacerbate unsustainable patterns of development unless considered at sub regional level.

Densities significantly out of character – generally support. There should be a balanced judgement depending on the circumstances. Given the scale of need for new homes the country faces, there should be support for higher densities in appropriate urban locations, whether or not they have the 35% uplift (e.g. city / town / district centres, transport corridors). The densities in these areas should aim to promote sustainable development and complement / enhance existing character (e.g. a judgement between different objectives). This should not automatically rule out anything which is at a significantly higher density than the existing area, although existing character is an important consideration, and in particular locations key considerations such as heritage assets will override housing need where informed by character appraisals. There should also be the potential to explore to a reasonable extent higher densities in greenfield areas, particularly on larger sites which can create their own sense of place and create new public transport corridors. This would have the aim of making effective use of land, protecting more countryside, supporting sustainable transport infrastructure and creating vibrant places, whilst the edges of the development should not be expected to be significantly above the densities of existing adjoining areas.

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

WCC has no comment.

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

We agree that the word “justified” open to interpretation which provides uncertainty in plan preparation and could provide opportunity for protracted discussion at Examination. An explanation of what are the core components of a proportionate Plan set out in National Guidance would help all participants in the plan making process.

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

Yes. But more generally there will need to be clarity and discussion between government, the inspectorate and councils like Winchester which are at an advanced stage of production to ensure a smooth passage through to adoption.

Delivering the urban uplift

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

Yes. The aim of focussing appropriate growth in sustainable locations (e.g. large cities / urban areas) is fully supported. The proposed wording in the Framework is supported. It clarifies in the Framework that the uplift should be accommodated in the cities / urban areas themselves (optimising densities on brownfield land) unless this would conflict with the Framework or legal obligations.

We note that the uplift only applies to the 20 largest urban areas including Southampton where the housing need has been increased by 35% to incentivise brownfield development. However, in this example, Southampton is unlikely to meet its existing need, even before the addition of 35%, so the result will be that neighbouring authorities will be asked to provide the shortfall under the Duty to Cooperate (or ‘alignment policy’). If the government intends to maintain this arbitrary uplift it is essential that this should require to be met within the cities concerned rather than exported to surrounding areas. If this is shown not to be possible this should be accepted as justification for a lower housing requirement.

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

To fully set out in the NPPG the reasons for the uplift and optimising densities and also examples of reasons for why it may not be met (i.e. would conflict with the NPPF). Examples could include appropriate design, focussing the highest densities in the most sustainable locations, protection of employment / open spaces / residential amenity / heritage assets, safety zones, and assessing positively whether there is a reasonable prospect of delivery of the development itself and the supporting infrastructure (e.g. transport and flood risk). These examples could still be set in the context of the overall policy aim of prioritising urban growth wherever possible and testing this positively.

The existing Planning Framework and Guidance sets the right tone for high density urban living, but without significant resources to prepare planning and design guidance (and coding) the market will dictate the pace and location of development. Those planning departments within the largest 20 cities, with the greatest uplift and expectation of delivery, should be supported properly/financially.

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

In South Hampshire the 35% uplift is applied to Southampton. In response to the introduction of the uplift, Southampton has through its emerging local plan, identified ways of increasing its housing supply figures. This includes promoting higher densities in the city centre and other appropriate locations (e.g. transport corridors and district centres). As a result, the Council has identified a supply of nearly 14,500 dwellings to 2036 as part of the PfSH Statement of Common Ground. Nevertheless, this is still around 800 dwellings short of the city's pre-uplift need figure, and around 6,100 dwellings short of its post-uplift figure. These shortfalls increase over the full local plan period to 2040. These shortfalls reflect the availability of sites in the built up area and the full range of other NPPF considerations which influence the appropriate scale of development in Southampton (key examples of these considerations are set out in the response to Q14).

Any further growth in Southampton's neighbouring authorities would essentially need to be on greenfield locations.

The uplift to the need target of the relevant cities is a policy mechanism to steer appropriate high density growth towards sustainable brownfield locations in cities / urban areas. This policy aim is fully supported and is being thoroughly tested locally. This does not mean that there has been a 35% uplift in actual housing need in these cities. The 35% relates to testing a spatial policy aim, rather than to demographic evidence that such an uplift in needs has occurred within that part of the housing market area. Therefore, where this uplift cannot be met within the relevant cities, there should be no requirement for neighbouring authorities to release green fields to meet it. To do so would be contrary to the aims of the uplift to focus growth on urban areas rather than greenfield locations. Taking this approach will not detract from meeting actual housing needs.

At present the sentiments expressed in the supporting consultation material, that the uplift shouldn't be "exported to surrounding areas, except where there is voluntary agreement to do so" should also be included in the NPPF. There should be an explicit reference in the NPPF that greenfield sites should not be released in-order to meet the uplift.

As an alternative, in policy terms it may be simpler (and more effective nationwide) to just say that all major urban authorities should aim to maximise their growth, consistent with the NPPF, rather than stop should they meet their (pre-uplift) housing need figure.

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

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

Agree.

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

No comment.

Taking account of permissions granted in the Housing Delivery Test (HDT)

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

Yes – but if councils still have to show sites are deliverable then a definition of “deliverable” permissions will be needed.

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

Yes – it is accepted that some sort of contingency is needed to account for the fact that some permissions might not be implemented. 115% appears a reasonable figure

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

This is a matter that would be better discussed with a workshop delivered by PAS.

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

The 2022 HDT should continue to be published and the existing consequences should remain. Guidance could provide that, where an authority can demonstrate a large supply of housing permissions, this could be a material consideration if faced with unjustified planning applications or appeals.

Chapter 5 – A planning system for communities

More homes for social rent

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

Yes, revise guidance to ensure that social rent is given priority rather than the current requirement for at least 10% affordable home ownership.

- Ensure Homes England funding emphasises and is sufficient to deliver Social Rented homes
- Funding for Social Rent in S106 schemes

The ability to mix funding from different sources e.g. Right to Buy 1-1 receipts.

More older people's housing

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

Agree but:

- Not at the expense of affordable housing provision
- Define what is meant by `specialist older people's housing`, perhaps in the glossary and provide some clear examples
- Emphasise the value of building homes to building regulation M4(2) so that older people can remain in their own home. LPAs should be strongly encouraged to ensure all new homes (across tenure) to be built to at least Part M(4) 2 where practical and viable.

More small sites for small builders

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

The need to encourage SME housebuilders especially those with a local connection is recognised. The policy is welcome but on its own is limited. A particular challenge in Winchester is the lack of these sites in the urban areas and villages. WCC are relying on existing small sites consents and windfall sites to show how we meet this requirement (10% to be on small sites).

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

The policy as worded is fine – but there needs to be other mechanisms to increase the supply from these sources including ensuring surplus public land makes provision. The reality is that the traditional supply from infilling, such as large back gardens is largely exhausted.

Affordable Housing should be the priority, by promoting ever smaller sites there is a danger that the threshold for the provision of affordable housing will be breached

More community led developments

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

Locally the S106 agreements already allow for the provision of a range of affordable housing providers and include safeguards with respect to matters such as management arrangements, equalities and access arrangements. NPPF changes to allow the inclusion of Community led developers and alms-houses should include similar safeguards e.g.:

- The organisation should be approved by the LPA who should take into account the Public Sector Equality Duty
- The development should meet locally assessed housing need
- The organisation should work to the same requirements as other Registered Providers
- The organisation should have a suitable Governance structure and be a viable concern in order to protect tenants

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

A change so that the number of homes developed on an exception site would provide a **Credit** for local communities against their housing requirement rather than merely being extra homes would be supported.

As community groups are often small with limited resources, then providing Interest Rate stability would be useful.

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

See above answer to question 27. In addition to this we suggest that there should be revenue support akin to the Community Housing Fund for either groups or umbrella organisations that help capacity building e.g. [Hampshire Homes Hub - Action Hampshire](#)

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

No but see questions above.

Developer accountability

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

There is no doubt that the failure of developer to comply with planning conditions or poor workmanship undermines community support for new development. However, we have significant reservations that past behaviour should start to impact on planning decision making and how this could actually work in practice. Other mechanisms should be put in place such as committing developers to communicate effectively with the LPA and the wider community all the way through the pre application and implementation stages. If there is to be legislative change then this could focus on quicker ways to fine developers for lack of compliance with conditions and other breaches. If a developer does not want to develop immediately, they will not make a planning application, so we have no control through conditions etc.

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

For reasons set out above, we do not consider these are practicable or desirable as both options. Both options depend on the developer making a planning application in the first place.

More build out

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

The 3 measures of publishing data on developers, slow delivery being material consideration and requiring developers to explain how they will diversify tenure to maximise absorption rate are all valid.

While not explicitly asked we support any increase in planning fees to fund service delivery. The fee associated with condition discharge in particular falls well short of cost recovery. Making it easier to serve completion notices is also supported.

Chapter 6 – Asking for beauty

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

These are all supported though defining beauty is challenging and often misunderstood. This should be about functionality and meeting community's needs as

well as aesthetics and relates to the wider environment, not just buildings. This is important in meeting the Public Sector Equality duty to ensure that people are not disabled by their environment.

Whether a development is well designed is a clearer test as design codes provide a benchmark. WCC is already pioneering many of these with a visionary draft Local Plan which sets high standards for design, community engagement and environmental standards. We are also exploring the use of Design Codes in areas of change and working collaboratively with landowners to master plan important development sites. However, progressing Design Codes involves Officer time and comes at a time when budgets are being stretched.

Picking up the theme of older persons options there is no mention of building neighbourhoods for older people or those with e.g. dementia - RTPPI "Dementia and Town Planning" and Lifetime Neighbourhoods (publishing.service.gov.uk)

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

Yes – but see comment above.

Refuse ugliness

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

Yes – this is good practice which Winchester City Council already follows.

Embracing gentle density

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

No - this is an issue for local communities to address where needed as part of plan making.

Chapter 7 – Protecting the environment and tackling climate change

Delivering biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery

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

Biodiversity Enhancement measures can be prescribed for developments that fall below the BNG threshold (such as householder applications) and can be based on species rather than habitat. Options can include bird and bat boxes (integral where possible) that fit local habitat (i.e. target specific species in suitable areas or allow boxes that benefit a number of species such as swift boxes) and a certain level of enhancement can be set to be deemed acceptable. Promotion of hedgerow boundaries (where appropriate) in place of closed board fencing will provide biodiversity opportunities and offer a more sustainable option, in the same way that natural (and species-rich) lawns (residential) will offer more than an artificial lawn.

Recognising the food production value of farmland

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

It is unclear how councils would assess the food production value of existing farmland in deciding on allocations for new development. The current approach of using Agricultural and Classifications as an assessment tool is well tested and clear.

Climate change mitigation: exploring a form of carbon assessment

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

It is considered to be difficult to do this without a lot of additional work. There would need to be much greater clarity in terms of how and what work would need to be undertaken and a consistent way of calculating this in a proportionate manner as this evidence would no doubt come under close scrutiny at a Local Plan Examination. In view of this, it would be essential that there was clear guidance on what work would be involved with undertaking a carbon assessment and how it could be undertaken at both a plan-making and at a planning decision stage. Allied to this, this could be an additional burden on SME's.

Climate adaptation and flood-risk management

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

SUDs should be multifunctional and offer biodiversity benefits as well as flood alleviation solutions. SUDs should be planned at an early stage of a development and form part of the masterplan of landscape and ecological connectivity, as well as safely form part of Public Open Space.

Rainwater harvesting should form part of development plans, from small scale household water-butts, to large scale underground storage that can be used for the maintenance of Open Spaces, especially for the watering of new tree planting (that

forms part of carbon neutrality solutions) and meadow creation that can all be costly and require significant water use when resources are more precious.

Chapter 8 – Onshore wind and energy efficiency

Enabling the repowering of existing onshore wind turbines

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

Introducing more flexibility to plan for new onshore wind deployment
Q.43: Do you agree with the changes proposed to footnote 54 of the existing National Planning Policy Framework?

No – this is considered unnecessary and seems an odd footnote to include in the NPPF when the document has been withdrawn.

Barriers to energy efficiency

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

No – this is considered unnecessary. The new paragraph 161 presents a risk, in that if it is misapplied, it could be used to justify works proposed ostensibly to improve the energy efficiency of a building at the expense of protecting the heritage significance of the building. Such an approach could cause irreversible harm to heritage assets, and cause their future decline through the use of inappropriate materials which alter the hydrothermal behaviour of the building or irreversibly alter the character of the area.

Despite perception to the contrary energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings are generally supported and encouraged by councils including WCC. This is the case in Winchester which has irreplaceable heritage assets but also a strong aspiration to address climate change and where both ambitions can be successfully combined. Our approach makes extensive use of the extensive energy efficiency guidance issued by Historic England online, which is the established best practice. Energy performance and affordable housing should receive more weight in decisions than other issues like conservation or archaeology.

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

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

We welcome the support for existing Local Plan Reviews to continue before the new system is place. We support the deadline of June 2025 for new plans to be submitted to examination. Winchester CC is currently processing representations that were submitted on the Reg 18 LP and remains committed to delivering a Plan which meets its development needs in full while mitigating climate change.

We note that preparing a new Plan will be expected to begin within 5 years after adoption of the previous Plan. We note that Plans will also be expected to be adopted within 30 months of starting work. There is no breakdown of the 30 months in the consultation document to be able to determine what factors have been taken into account in order to come up with this timescale.

While we support the timely production of Local Plans we consider that this is a very challenging timeline which it will not always be possible to achieve. For example in the Winchester context the emerging Local Plan needs to be shown to be nutrient neutral – and while it is working collaboratively with partners including Natural England and other affected authorities to address the issue, a solution lies outside of the Council's control.

Timeline for transitioning to the reformed plan-making system

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

We have no comment to make as our emerging Local Plan will be submitted well before the June 2025 deadline.

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

Yes.

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

We note and support the reform in legislation that authorities will no longer be able to prepare supplementary planning documents (SPDs) but will able to prepare Supplementary Plans, which will be afforded the same weight as a local plan or minerals and waste plan.

It must be made clear about what a Supplementary Plans can cover (i.e. we presume that they can still expand on a policy and provide extra detail) rather than

being stand-alone documents and deal with matters that should be dealt with in a Local Plan? We have a lot of Village Design Statements which are produced by Parish Councils for their villages (and adopted by WCC). We don't have the resources to replace these with Supplementary Plans and Parishes won't be able to produce/adopt these. This is likely to be an issue for the many villages that currently have VDSs.

Chapter 10 – National Development Management Policies

The scope of National Development Management Policies

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

Yes – in principle we support the introduction of these. They will allow Local Plans to be shorter and focussed on local place shaping including site specific allocations. It is important that there is extensive stakeholder engagement in the policies and they are tested thoroughly to ensure they are clear and unambiguous. This engagement should include planning and legal experts who are experienced at the sharp end of planning decision making. We consider there is role for the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) in facilitating discussions.

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

No additional comment

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

There should be scope for Local Plans to add to or amend national DM policies where this is justified by local circumstances and accepted following examination. Local Plan policies are more relevant to the local area and may be more up to date than the national DM policies. Therefore, rather than national DM policies taking precedence as currently suggested, the most recently adopted policy should apply. This would reflect current practice and still allow national policies to supersede out of date Local Plans.

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

Nutrient neutrality is a major issue locally and it is understood to be causing widespread problems. If so, this could be a candidate for national policies. Other issues such as AONB, flooding etc could also be possible candidates. It is essential that there is still the opportunity for LPA's to include planning policies on local issues.

Chapter 11 – Enabling Levelling Up

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

We question whether the twelve levelling up missions are issues that should be included in the NPPF. For example, the 'Transport Infrastructure' states: By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing. We would welcome this but we do question whether this is actually achievable as in Hampshire the reverse is happening bus services and frequency are being cut by Stagecoach which is causing us as a LPA great concern.

There is another levelling up mission 'Living standards' - By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing. We would question whether the NPPF is the correct place for these as without the evidence and whether they are achievable from a land use planning perspective?

Levelling up and boosting economic growth

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

No comment.

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

National policy and Local Plans already prioritise the reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites and it is not obvious what national policy could add. There are other measures connected to but outside of the land use planning framework which could make town and city centres more attractive to live such as tackling air pollution, ensuring that improvements to infrastructure are in place such as transport and health. We remain unclear what gentle densification means in practice. Density as a measure of build quality has limitations.

Levelling up and boosting pride in place

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

Yes – we support more emphasis on these issues to ensure they are reflected in all areas of policy development. National guidance would be useful as a framework but could usefully reference work by the Town and County Planning Association (TCPA) on how equality and inclusion can be imbedded in policy.

Chapter 13 - Practical changes and next steps

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

Support the principle and would highlight the revisions made to WCC web site to make its recent Local Plan consultation more accessible as good practice [here](#)

Public sector equality duty

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

This statement/question is noted but there does not appear to be any reflection of the recent Lisa Smith v The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and others Appeal Court judgement. This suggested that the definition of travellers in Annex 1 of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) was discriminatory, yet this definition continues to be cited in footnote 32 of the revised NPPF (footnote 27 of the current NPPF) and no change is proposed to the PPTS. It is disappointing that the proposed changes to the NPPF are completely silent on the needs of Gypsy and Travellers.