

A summary of the key points of the new draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

In a nutshell, the new draft NPPF announces:

1. Planning authorities must fully examine '*all other reasonable options*' for meeting their identified development needs before releasing green belt.
2. According to the consultation document: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework> accompanying the revised draft of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the government's intention is to maintain "*strong protections*" of the green belt and retain a "high bar" before green belt land is released.
3. To justify green belt boundary changes in their strategies, it explains, strategic plan-making authorities would need to show that they have made "*as much use as possible*" of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land and have "*optimised*" the density of development, "*including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport*". (The Govt are following the Brown Not Green message here!)
4. The new policy would also require proposals for green belt releases to have been "*informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities*" about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through proposed statements of common ground to be prepared between neighbouring authorities.
5. "*Strategic plans should establish the need for any changes to green belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period,*" the draft says.
6. This approach to green belt reviews was signalled in last February's housing white paper. The revised draft also confirms that detailed amendments to green belt boundaries may be made through neighbourhood plans.
7. The draft says that, where it is considered necessary to release green belt for development, plans should give "*first consideration*" to land which has been previously developed and/or is well served by public transport.
8. "*They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the green belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining green belt land,*" it adds.
9. The draft reiterates the white paper's proposals that facilities for existing cemeteries and development brought forward under neighbourhood development orders should not be regarded as inappropriate development. Allotment buildings should be added to this list, it proposes.

10. Following up proposals in the December 2015 consultation on NPPF revision, the new draft would allow a "*limited*" amount of affordable housing on brownfield sites in the green belt, as long as it would cause no substantial harm to openness

11. In other respects, the draft retains the key elements of the original March 2012 framework. It specifies that once established, green belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. There was no further attempt to define or constrict this term.

12. It proposes no change to the five long-standing purposes of including land in green belt or to the rule that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the green belt and should only be approved in very special circumstances.

We must remember the document released is only a draft and comments are invited before 11.45 am **10 May 2018**. (I suggest BNG make a response!) The final NPPF will not come out until the summer but clearly there does NOT seem to be any appetite for loosening Green Belt policy.