



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# National Planning Policy Framework

December 2024

## 12. Achieving well-designed places

131. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.
132. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.
133. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. Design guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Their geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety.
134. Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents. Landowners and developers may contribute to these exercises, but may also choose to prepare design codes in support of a planning application for sites they wish to develop. Whoever prepares them, all guides and codes should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations for the development of their area, taking into account the guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. These national documents should be used to guide decisions on applications in the absence of locally produced design guides or design codes.
135. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
  - a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
  - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
  - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
  - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users<sup>51</sup>; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
136. Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined<sup>52</sup>, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.
137. Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should, where applicable, provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy, and should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.
138. Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. The National Model Design Code is the primary basis for the preparation and use of local design codes. For assessing proposals there is a range of tools including workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life<sup>53</sup>. These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of

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<sup>51</sup> Planning policies for housing should make use of the Government's optional technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing, where this would address an identified need for such properties. Policies may also make use of the nationally described space standard, where the need for an internal space standard can be justified.

<sup>52</sup> Unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate.

<sup>53</sup> Birkbeck D and Kruczkowski S et al (2020) *Building for a Healthy Life*.

schemes, and are particularly important for significant projects such as large scale housing and mixed use developments. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.

139. Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design<sup>54</sup>, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:
  - a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
  - b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
140. Local planning authorities should ensure that relevant planning conditions refer to clear and accurate plans and drawings which provide visual clarity about the design of the development, and are clear about the approved use of materials where appropriate. This will provide greater certainty for those implementing the planning permission on how to comply with the permission and a clearer basis for local planning authorities to identify breaches of planning control. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).
141. The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

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<sup>54</sup> Contained in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

## 13. Protecting Green Belt land

142. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
143. Green Belt serves five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
144. The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions. Any proposals for new Green Belts should be set out in strategic policies, which should:
- a) demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;
  - b) set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
  - c) show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;
  - d) demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with strategic policies for adjoining areas; and
  - e) show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework.
145. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies 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. Where a need for changes to Green Belt boundaries has been established through strategic policies, detailed amendments to those boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies, including neighbourhood plans.
146. Exceptional circumstances in this context include, but are not limited to, instances where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means. If that is the case, authorities should review Green Belt boundaries in accordance with the policies in this Framework and

propose alterations to meet these needs in full, unless the review provides clear evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

147. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account the preceding paragraph and whether the strategy:
  - a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
  - b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
  - c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.
148. Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations. However, when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location is appropriate with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.
149. When defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should:
  - a) ensure consistency with the development plan's strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
  - b) not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
  - c) where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
  - d) make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development;
  - e) be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and

- f) define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
- 150. If it is necessary to restrict development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.
- 151. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land. Where Green Belt land is released for development through plan preparation or review, the 'Golden Rules' in paragraph 156 below should apply.
- 152. The National Forest and Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns and cities, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. The National Forest Strategy and an approved Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. Any development proposals within the National Forest and Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies for controlling development in Green Belts.

## Proposals affecting the Green Belt

- 153. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness<sup>55</sup>. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 154. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:
  - a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
  - b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
  - c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

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<sup>55</sup> Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate.

- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:
  - i. mineral extraction;
  - ii. engineering operations;
  - iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
  - iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
  - v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
  - vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:
- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
  - b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed<sup>56</sup>;
  - c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework<sup>57</sup>; and

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<sup>56</sup> Which, in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Tests was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years; and in the case of traveller sites means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable traveller sites assessed in line with Planning Policy for Traveller sites.

<sup>57</sup> In the case of development involving the provision of traveller sites, particular reference should be made to Planning Policy for Traveller Sites paragraph 13.



- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.
156. Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review<sup>58</sup>, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application<sup>59</sup>, the following contributions ('Golden Rules') should be made:
- a. affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;
  - b. necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
  - c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.
157. Before development plan policies for affordable housing are updated in line with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework, the affordable housing contribution required to satisfy the Golden Rules is 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of 50%<sup>60</sup>. In the absence of a pre-existing requirement for affordable housing, a 50% affordable housing contribution should apply by default. The use of site-specific viability assessment for land within or released from the Green Belt should be subject to the approach set out in national planning practice guidance on viability.
158. A development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission.
159. The improvements to green spaces required as part of the Golden Rules should contribute positively to the landscape setting of the development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan. Where no locally specific standards exist, development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development (these include Natural England standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria). Where land has been identified as having particular potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes.

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<sup>58</sup> The Golden Rules do not apply to: (i) developments brought forward on land released from the Green Belt through plans that were adopted prior to the publication of this Framework; and (ii) developments that were granted planning permission on Green Belt land prior to the publication of this Framework.

<sup>59</sup> Including where there are variations made to existing permissions (where the existing permission involved development that was subject to the Golden Rules).

<sup>60</sup> The 50% cap does not apply to rural exception sites or community-led development exception sites, or if the local planning authority has a relevant existing policy which would apply to the development which is above 50%.

160. When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

# 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

161. The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

## Planning for climate change

162. Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures<sup>61</sup>. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future health and resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
163. The need to mitigate and adapt to climate change should also be considered in preparing and assessing planning applications, taking into account the full range of potential climate change impacts.
164. New development should be planned for in ways that:
- a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems; and
  - b) help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. Any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings in plans should reflect the Government's policy for national technical standards.
165. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:
- a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);

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<sup>61</sup> In line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008.

- b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and
  - c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.
- 166. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:
  - a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and
  - b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.
- 167. Local planning authorities should also give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework.
- 168. When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should:
  - a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future;
  - b) recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;
  - c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.
- 169. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

## Planning and flood risk

- 170. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where

# 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
  - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
  - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
188. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework<sup>65</sup>; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
189. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks

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<sup>65</sup> Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

and the Broads<sup>66</sup>. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

190. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development<sup>67</sup> other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:
- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
  - b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
  - c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.
191. Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 189), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

## Habitats and biodiversity

192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>68</sup>; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation<sup>69</sup>; and
  - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

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<sup>66</sup> *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010* provides further guidance and information about their statutory purposes, management and other matters.

<sup>67</sup> For the purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.

<sup>68</sup> Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

<sup>69</sup> Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them.

## 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

202. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value<sup>73</sup>. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations<sup>74</sup>.
203. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:
- d) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - e) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
  - f) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
  - g) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
204. When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.
205. Local planning authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environment record. This should contain up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and be used to:
- a) assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment; and
  - b) predict the likelihood that currently unidentified heritage assets, particularly sites of historic and archaeological interest, will be discovered in the future.
206. Local planning authorities should make information about the historic environment, gathered as part of policy-making or development management, publicly accessible.

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<sup>73</sup> Some World Heritage Sites are inscribed by UNESCO to be of natural significance rather than cultural significance; and in some cases they are inscribed for both their natural and cultural significance.

<sup>74</sup> The policies set out in this chapter relate, as applicable, to the heritage-related consent regimes for which local planning authorities are responsible under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as to plan-making and decision-making.

## Proposals affecting heritage assets

207. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
208. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
209. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.
210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
  - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
211. In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal.

## Considering potential impacts

212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.



213. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:
- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
  - b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional<sup>75</sup>.
214. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:
- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
  - b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
  - c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
  - d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.
215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
216. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
217. Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.
218. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible<sup>76</sup>. However, the ability to

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<sup>75</sup> Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

<sup>76</sup> Copies of evidence should be deposited with the relevant historic environment record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.

record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
220. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.
221. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

## Annex 2: Glossary

**Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions<sup>90</sup>:

- a) **Social Rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.
- b) **Other affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).
- c) **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
- d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

**Air quality management areas:** Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.

**Ancient or veteran tree:** A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient, but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.

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<sup>90</sup> This definition should be read in conjunction with relevant policy contained in the Affordable Homes Update Written Ministerial Statement published on 24 May 2021. As noted in footnote 31, however, the 25% minimum delivery requirement for First Homes no longer applies.

**Ancient woodland:** An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

**Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

**Article 4 direction:** A direction made under [Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) which withdraws permitted development rights granted by that Order.

**Best and most versatile agricultural land:** Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

**Brownfield land:** See Previously developed land.

**Brownfield land registers:** Registers of previously developed land that local planning authorities consider to be appropriate for residential development, having regard to criteria in the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Registers) Regulations 2017. Local planning authorities will be able to trigger a grant of permission in principle for residential development on suitable sites in their registers where they follow the required procedures.

**Build to Rent:** Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses, but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more, and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control.

**Climate change adaptation:** Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

**Climate change mitigation:** Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Coastal change management area:** An area identified in plans as likely to be affected by physical change to the shoreline through erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation or coastal accretion.

**Community forest:** An area identified through the England Community Forest Programme to revitalise countryside and green space in and around major conurbations.

**Community Right to Build Order:** An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.

**Community-led development:** A development taken forward by, or with, a not-for-profit organisation, that is primarily for the purpose of meeting the needs of its members or the wider local community, rather than being a primarily commercial enterprise. The organisation should be created, managed and democratically controlled by its members, and membership of the organisation should be open to all beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries of that organisation. It may take any one of various legal forms including a co-

operative society, community benefit society and company limited by guarantee. The organisation should own, manage or steward the development in a manner consistent with its purpose, potentially through a mutually supported arrangement with a Registered Provider of Social Housing. The benefits of the development to the community should be clearly defined and consideration given to how those benefits can be protected over time, including in the event of the organisation being wound up.

**Competent person (to prepare site investigation information):** A person with a recognised relevant qualification, sufficient experience in dealing with the type(s) of pollution or land instability, and membership of a relevant professional organisation.

**Conservation (for heritage policy):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

**Decentralised energy:** Local renewable and local low carbon energy sources.

**Deliverable:** To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular:

- a) sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans).
- b) where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.

**Design code:** A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

**Design guide:** A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice, often produced by a local authority.

**Designated heritage asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

**Designated rural areas:** National Parks, National Landscapes and areas designated as 'rural' under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

**Developable:** To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

**Development plan:** Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and

published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

**Early years:** the provision of childcare (including education) for a young child, meaning a child from birth to the September after the child turns 5.

**Edge of centre:** For retail purposes, a location that is well connected to, and up to 300 metres from, the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.

**Environmental impact assessment:** A procedure to be followed for certain types of project to ensure that decisions are made in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment.

**Essential local workers:** Public sector employees who provide frontline services in areas including health, education and community safety – such as NHS staff, teachers, police, firefighters and military personnel, social care and childcare workers.

**General aviation airfields:** Licenced or unlicensed aerodromes with hard or grass runways, often with extensive areas of open land related to aviation activity.

**Geodiversity:** The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.

**Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

**Grey belt:** For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

**Habitats site:** Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.

**Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).