

Cabinet

3 March 2026

National Planning Policy and Guidance consultation responses

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

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Statutory Authority: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The government have launched a consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which will have implications for both the production of the Local Plan and for decision making on planning applications. The proposals are significant, separating out decision-making policies from those for plan-making. This report outlines the main changes and proposes a response to the 225 questions that form the consultation document.
- 1.2 Alongside the consultation on the NPPF, the government are also consulting on some changes to the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This guidance adds detail to the design related parts of the NPPF giving guidance on their implementation.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree the proposed responses to the NPPF and PPG consultations for submission.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Responding to the consultations means that Dorset Council has an influence on the formation of the new NPPF and associated PPG. As one of the largest local planning authorities in England, it is important that a response is made.

4. The report

NPPF Consultation

- 4.1 Over recent years, successive governments have been making changes to the planning system with the intention of making it more streamlined in both decision-taking and plan-making.
- 4.2 Released on 16 December 2025 and running until 10 March 2026, the latest consultation proposes a fundamental restructuring of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The changes separate out the different policies for plan-making and decision-making and update some policy approaches. The approach aims to simplify plan-making and deliver growth more quickly.
- 4.3 The objectives of the changes to the NPPF, stated in the introduction to the consultation are to:
 - Ensure national planning policy is accessible and understandable for everyone who uses it;
 - Establish a comprehensive suite of national policies on general planning matters which will apply across the country, to avoid these matters being repeated or deviated from in locally-produced plans – in so doing helping to speed up their preparation and preventing an unnecessary increase of different standards that can complicate development; and
 - Make the policy which it contains more ‘rules-based’ and certain, and so more capable of supporting timely and consistent planning – especially in those places where development is most desirable, where national policy should provide for a default “yes” to the principle of development.
- 4.4 The proposed changes to the NPPF are part of a suite of wider reforms to the planning system which include the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) and a simpler approach to local plans. The SDS will set a strategy for managing development over an area that covers multiple local planning authorities. It is likely that Dorset will fall within the Wessex area, alongside BCP, Somerset and Wiltshire councils. The NPPF consultation policies describe the relationship between the SDS and local plans.
- 4.5 The NPPF consultation sets out a number of decision-making policies. The intent is that these decision-making policies are set at the national level and should not be repeated in local plans however they will only be material considerations in planning decisions rather than statutory.
- 4.6 It is proposed that local plans should not set standards that go beyond those required by other regimes such as Building Regulations other than in areas of water stress or in requiring the nationally described space standards. As such, setting local policy that would require higher energy performance or requiring solar panels on roofs would not be allowed.

- 4.7 The proposed NPPF would require a local plan to identify a strategy for meeting the development needs of the area and identify settlements at which this need could be met. It includes a policy which would support appropriate development within these settlements and when the supply of homes does not keep pace with the need, allowing development adjacent to them. The consultation also proposes that development around well served railway stations should be approved.
- 4.8 The proposed policies do not alter the Standard Method for calculating housing need but do enable the cumulative housing need to be distributed across the area covered by the SDS in a way that diverges from the local planning authorities calculated need. It also requires consideration of the needs of certain economic sectors in both SDS and local plans and proposes to relax some policies on town centre developments.
- 4.9 The new NPPF proposals continue with the requirement for the review of Green Belt boundaries and continue with the concept of grey belt but add further clarity to these elements.
- 4.10 The approach to transport focuses on a vision-led approach to transport planning and the use of connectivity to understand the implications of development in certain locations and the implications for public transport provision.
- 4.11 Other policy areas include restricting hot food takeaways near schools, parameters for green space provision, policies on flood risk and coastal change, policies for minerals plans, a simplified approach to heritage considerations amongst other more minor changes.
- 4.12 The consultation includes 225 questions on various aspects of the changes. Much of the consultation proposals are to be supported although some detailed matters require further clarification. The proposed response to the consultation questions is included in Appendix A to this report.

PPG Consultation

- 4.13 The Draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published on 21 January 2026 as part of the Government's planning reform programme. It consolidates four national design documents—National Design Guide, Design: Process & Tools PPG, National Model Design Code Parts 1 & 2 into one streamlined guidance resource. Its purpose is to make national guidance clearer, more accessible, and easier to apply across planning decisions and policy making.
- 4.14 The draft PPG supports the emerging draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2025, setting out national expectations for well-designed, healthier and climate resilient neighbourhoods. The PPG proposes to base design expectations around seven features of well-designed places, replacing the existing ten characteristics. The seven features proposed are Liveability,

Climate, Nature, Movement, Built Form, Public Space. Local context is proposed as a characteristic embedded within the seven features.

- 4.15 The document clarifies a simplified, nationally endorsed structure for coding and seeks to remove ambiguity. It raises expectations around climate change, nature and liveability in terms of internal home quality. The document enhances engagement with the community and using digital tools to encourage this.
- 4.16 The findings of the pathfinder work appear to have informed the PPG document in terms of document structure. The brief created by Dorset Council to prepare a local design code took into consideration the Design Code pathfinder work undertaken by MHCLG. Therefore, it should not largely alter the thrust of the Dorset Design Code. The main change is that there is no longer a requirement to create a county wide code, the code can be specific to the issues for that area. Some of the topics that have arisen in Dorset are at a county wide level and so the intention is that Dorset Council will continue to work towards creating policies at a county wide level as well as area level coding and neighbourhood plan and master plan templates, as per the original brief.
- 4.17 A potential area for further work may come from densification, which is mentioned several times within the PPG consultation document. Density has a direct impact on character of a place and Dorset has a prevailing character that has a lower density than the figures proposed in the NPPF and PPG consultation documents. Paragraph 126 requires that development proposals are based on understanding the local and wider context and the existing pattern of built form should inform the layout grain, form and scale of new buildings. However, paragraph 175 goes on to say where the scale nature or density of new development is very different to the existing place, a new identity may be more appropriate. This later statement and the national policy push for densification may encourage contrasting forms of new development to the local situation where many of Dorset's rural settlements have particularly low density and open settlement pattern. The balance between local context and the increased housing supply was identified within engagement work as a particular issue and the Dorset Design code will go further to clarify standards for context and locally informed placemaking.
- 4.18 Additional guidance in the PPG would be helpful on issues such as tree-lined streets, the relationship between trees and lighting, and examples of development in rural or landscape-sensitive areas which are other issues that have arisen as part of the work on the Dorset Design Code. We intend to feed this back as part of the PPG consultation process.

5. **Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The proposed responses are to government consultations. By making a response, the issues that Dorset Council face can be used to influence the final versions of the documents. The only alternative would be to not respond which would mean that the concerns of Dorset Council are not considered in forming the final NPPF and PPG.

6. **Legal considerations**

- 6.1 None

7. **Financial implications**

- 7.1 The preparation of the responses has been undertaken using existing resource.

8. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

- 8.1 The proposed NPPF includes policies on the natural environment, ecology and climate. The proposed consolidated PPG focuses on Design and Placemaking. Influencing how these policies will be formed is considered to have a positive impact.

9. **Well-being and health implications**

- 9.1 The proposed NPPF includes policies related to hot food takeaways, active travel and green space which will have positive health implications, and the proposed PPG will influence how places are designed. The responses support these positive outcomes.

10. **Other implications**

- 10.1 None

11. **Risk implications**

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: low

Residual Risk: low

12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 The government have undertaken an equalities impact assessment of the proposed changes to the NPPF. There are also some questions exploring the equalities issues associated with some of the proposed changes.

13. **Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix A: proposed response to the NPPF consultation questions.
13.2 Appendix B: proposed response to the PPG consultation questions

14. **Background papers**

[National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation](#)

[Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance: consultation document](#)

15. **Report sign-off**

16. This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)