

Key elements of the National Planning Policy Framework relevant to the decisions to be taken by Planning and Regulation Committee on 16 April 2012

Paper to be referred to in Chairman's update

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework was published 27 March 2012. It sets out a national framework within which Councils should prepare plans and decide planning applications. Key extracts are highlighted below covered under relevant headings of the document.

Introduction

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions (Paragraph 2).

The Framework does not contain specific waste policies, since national waste planning policy will be published as part of the National Waste Management Plan for England. However, local authorities preparing waste plans and taking decisions on waste applications should have regard to policies in this Framework so far as relevant (Paragraph 5).

Presumption in favour of sustainable development (from paragraph 14)

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

For decision-taking this means:

Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and

Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted

Core planning principles (from paragraph 17)

These principles include that the planning system should play an overarching role to:

- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it

Protecting Green Belt land (Paragraphs 79 and 87)

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.

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Chapter 13: Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

It says that minerals are essential to support sustainable economic growth and our quality of life. It is therefore important that there is a sufficient supply of material to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. However, since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, it is important to make best use of them to secure their long-term conservation (paragraph 142).

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give great weight to the benefits of mineral extraction, including to the economy (from paragraph 144)

Mineral planning authorities should plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates by (amongst other things):

- preparing local aggregate assessments based on a rolling average 10 years sales data
- making provision for land won aggregates in mineral plans
- using landbanks of aggregate reserves principally as an indicator of the security of aggregate supply, and to indicate the additional provision that needs to be made for new aggregate extraction and alternative supplies in mineral plans (from paragraph 145).

Decision-taking

Local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The relationship between decision-taking and plan-making should be seamless, translating plans into high quality development on the ground (paragraph 186).

Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area (paragraph 187).