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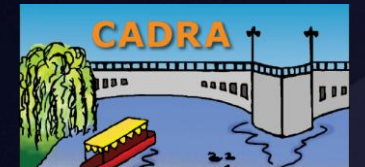
The Planning System:

How it Works and What is Changing

13 May 2025



Prepared for: FOR:



Savills Planning

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Format

The Planning System – How It Works

- Purpose
- The Plan-led system
- The Plan Process
- The Application Process

The Planning System - What is Changing

- NPPF 2024
- Standard Method for Calculating Housing Need
- 5-Year Housing Land Supply
- Green Belt, Grey Belt and the Golden Rules
- Devolution



Purpose of the Planning System

Purpose of the Planning System

“Planning ensures that the right development happens in the right place at the right time, benefitting communities and the economy. It plays a critical role in identifying what development is needed and where, what areas need to be protected or enhanced and in assessing whether proposed development is suitable”.

(Plain English guide to the Planning System, 2015)

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner”.

(National Planning Policy Framework 2024)



Types of Consent

There are four types of application.



Planning Application

Application for planning permission made to the LPA. Required for most types of development, as defined under s55 of the Planning Act – inc. new buildings, changes of use, alterations/ extensions of buildings & operational development.



Development Consent Order (DCO)

Procedure for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs), such as major transport schemes, energy projects, & large-scale development. Decided by the Secretary of State. Grants all consents required.



Local Development Order (LDO)

Grants permission for specific types of development within a defined area set out in the LDO. Typically used to streamline the planning process in projects such as regeneration schemes or developments in designated enterprise zones.



General Permitted Development Rights (GPDR)

A national grant of planning consent under the Use Classes Order of General Permitted Development Rights Order. Covers some extensions, alterations & changes of use. May require a Prior Approval application for matters of detail.

A 'Plan-led' System

How are planning decisions made?

Section 38(6), Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

*“the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan **and any national development management policies**, taken together, unless material considerations **strongly** indicate otherwise”.*



Material Considerations

What is a material consideration?

“A material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (e.g. whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission).”

- Government policy / guidance
- Previous appeal decisions and case law
- Emerging policies and guidance
- Planning history / extant permissions

Matters not usually considered material considerations:

- Issues controlled by other non-planning legislation
- Private issues / civil matters
- Loss of property value / Loss of a view



The Plan Process

Local Plan Process



Reading Local Plan Partial Update is here

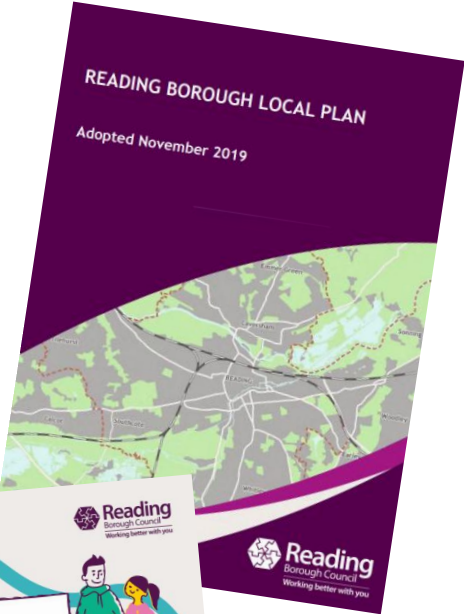


Table A1.1: Summary of important information relating to the Local Plan policies update

Title	Reading Borough Local Plan Policies Update
Role and subject	<p>Update of selected policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) based on the outcome of the review of the Local Plan, to ensure that policies are up-to-date.</p> <p>The following policies are identified as being in need of an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-cutting policies – CC2, CC3, CC4, CC7, CC9• Environment policies – EN4, EN7, EN12, EN13, EN14• Employment policies – EM1, EM2• Housing policies – H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, H14• Transport policies – TR1, TR2, TR4, TR5• Retail and leisure policies – RL2, RL3, RL4• Other use policies – OU2, OU3• Site allocation and area-specific policies – CR2, CR5, CR6, CR7, CR11, CR12, CR13, CR14, CR15, SR1, SR4, SR5, WR3, CA1, ER1, ER2, ER3 <p>The update will also include the overall Spatial Strategy and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Other policies not mentioned above will not be part of the scope of the policies update unless it is determined at a later date that this is necessary.</p>
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough
Status	Development Plan
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected
Policy lineage	National policy
Documents that would be replaced	Selected policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan
Call for site nominations	April 2023
Regulation 18 consultation	November/December 2023 – January 2024
Regulation 19 consultation	November/December 2024 – January 2025
Submission	End February 2025
Examination	May/June 2025
Adoption	September/October 2025

Reading Local Plan Partial Update - Regulation 19

The Spatial Strategy for Reading consists of the following elements:

- Central Reading as a focus for meeting much of the identified development needs at a medium and high density
- South Reading as a location for meeting much of the remainder of the development needs and the enhancement of links from the centre to South Reading and to major development locations beyond
- Some new development within identified district and local centres, including more diversity of services and facilities and some increase in densities
- Limited reallocation of some areas of employment to housing and supporting uses
- Increasing densities where appropriate in other areas with high levels of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling;
- Ensuring that urban extensions or garden villages close to the Reading urban area are provided with adequate facilities including infrastructure links into Reading.

Figure 3.2: Spatial Strategy for Reading

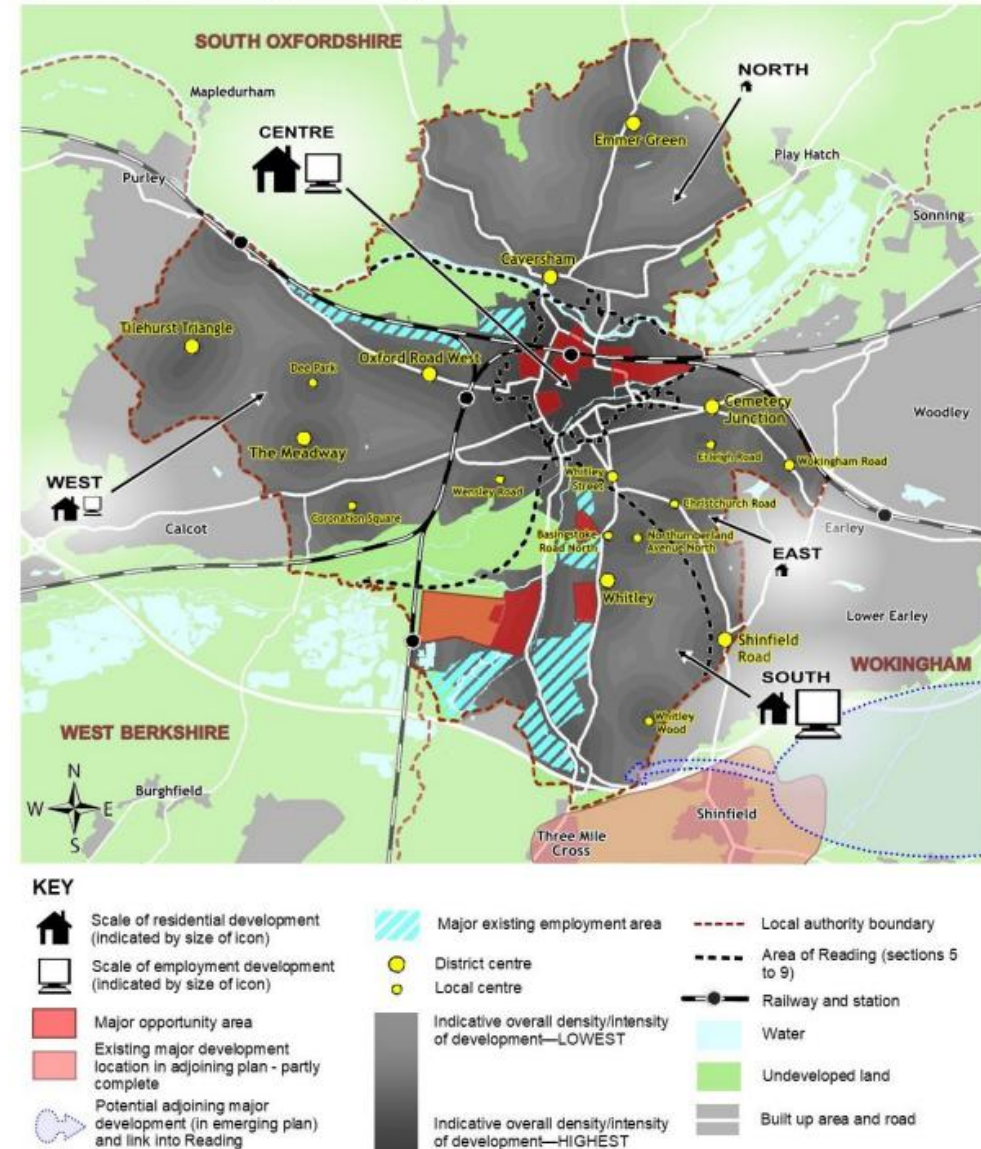
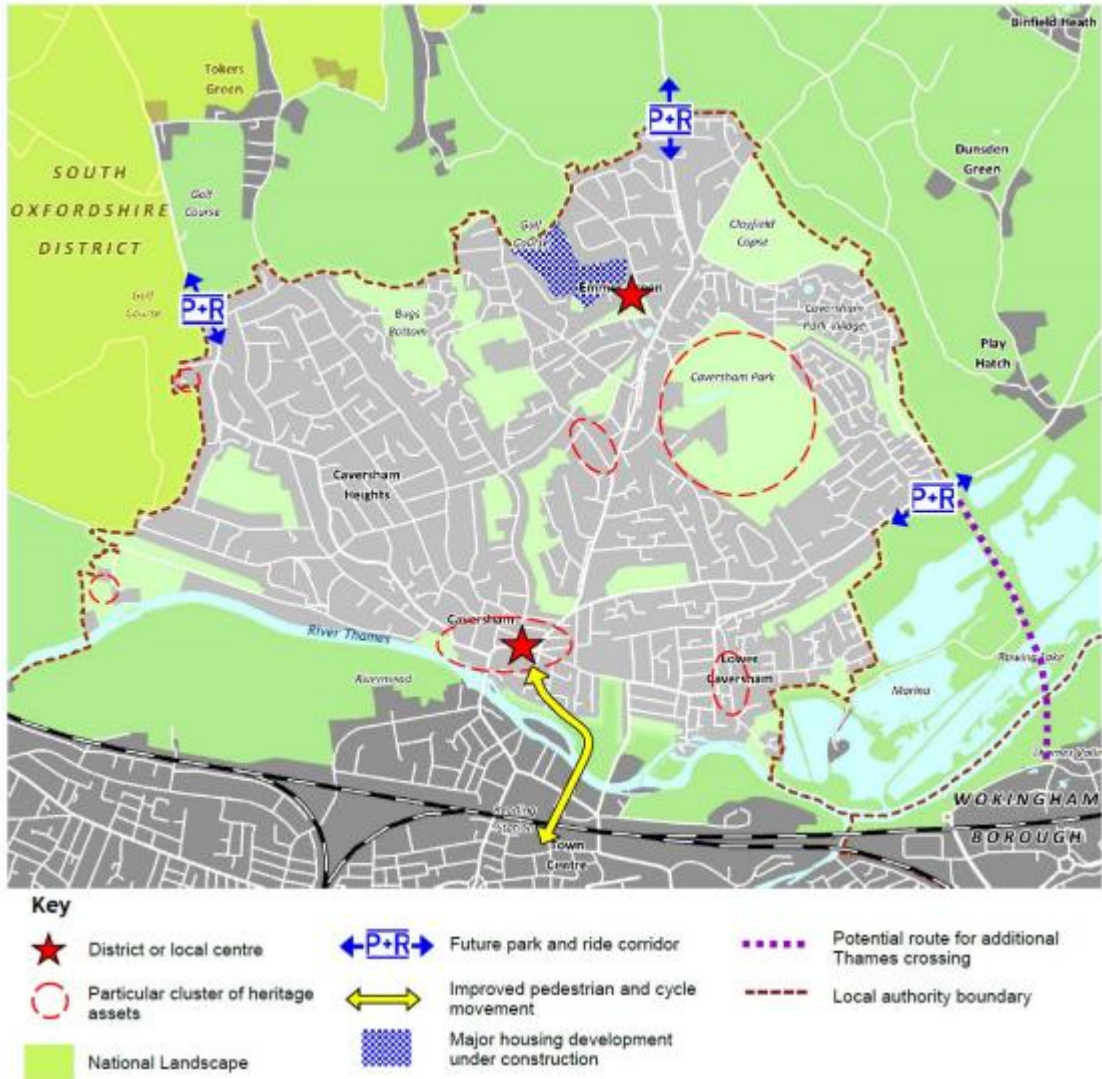


Figure 8.1: Area strategy for Caversham and Emmer Green



The following represent some key principles for the area:

- a. There will be enhanced pedestrian and cycle links between central Caversham and Reading town centre;
- b. New development will provide or contribute to infrastructure to adequately support the development;
- c. New mobility hub capacity will be sought on the A4155, A4074 and B481 corridors;
- d. The Council will continue to work with its neighbouring authorities towards provision of a crossing of the Thames east of Reading;
- e. Areas of landscape and heritage importance will be preserved, including the edge of the Chilterns National Landscape;
- f. The watercourses in the area, including the River Thames and its tributaries, will be protected and enhanced as a multi-functional resource for leisure, recreation, ecology and landscape.

Caversham and Emmer Green have relatively little scope for additional development compared to some other areas of Reading, as virtually the whole area is covered by residential areas with some public open space. Much of Lower Caversham is subject to flood risk constraints.

The Application Process

Types of Planning Application

A. Full Planning Application

“...results in a decision on the detailed proposals of how a site can be developed. If planning permission is granted, and subject to compliance with any planning conditions that are imposed, no further engagement with the local planning authority is required to proceed with the development granted permission, although other consents may be required”. (Planning Practice Guidance 2014)

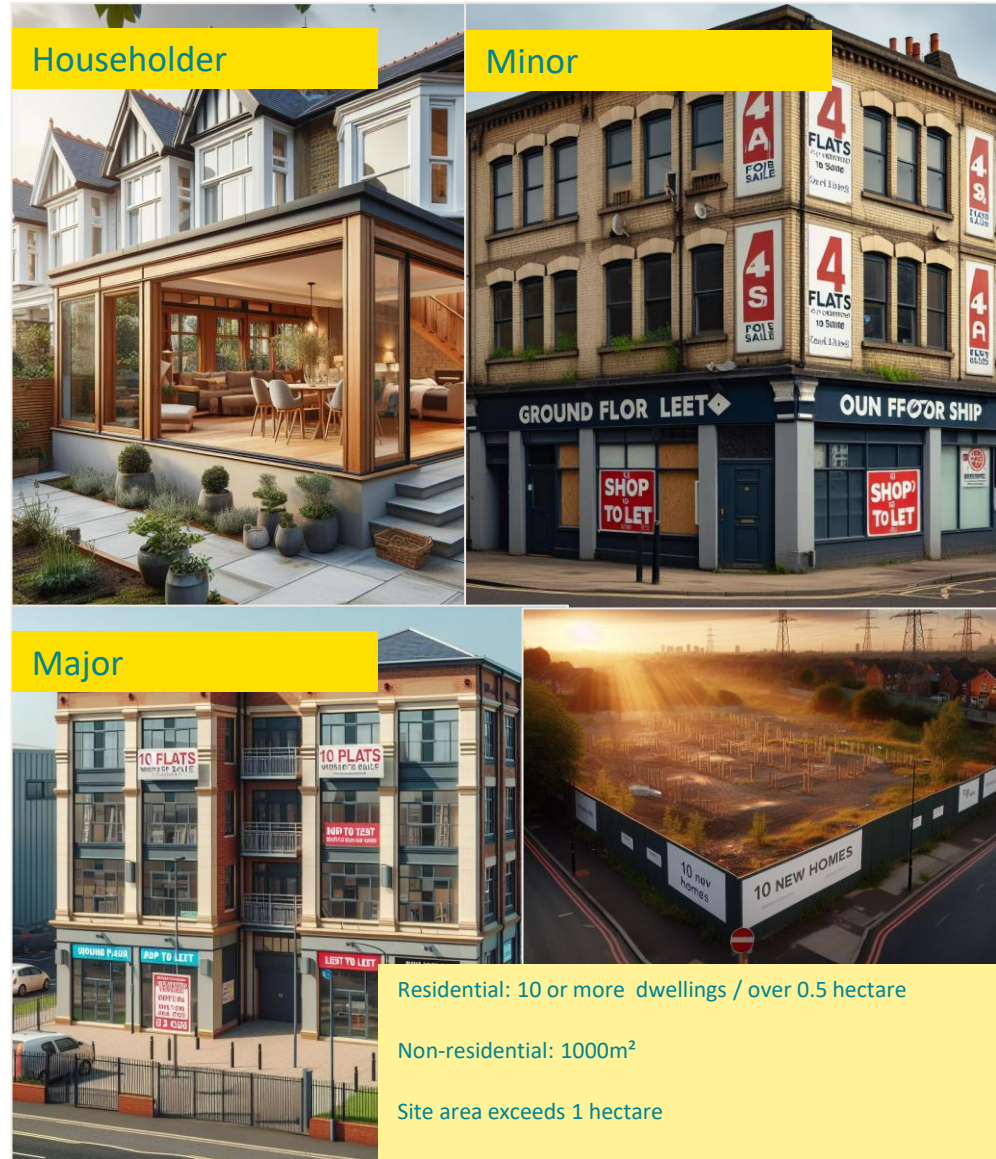
B. Outline Planning Application

“...allows for a decision on the general principles of how a site can be developed. Outline planning permission is granted subject to conditions requiring the subsequent approval of one or more ‘reserved matters’.” (Planning Practice Guidance 2014)

There are five matters that can be reserved: Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale

C. Hybrid Planning Application (i.e. Part Full, Part Outline) e.g. Phase 1 in detail, with the remaining Phases in outline

Other Types of Application: Listed Building Consent - Lawful Development Certificate - TPO consent - Advertisement Consent - Prior notification / Prior approval - Removal / Variation of a Conditions - Non-Material Amendment - Approval of Details



Residential: 10 or more dwellings / over 0.5 hectare

Non-residential: 1000m²

Site area exceeds 1 hectare

Application Process: Before Submission

- i. Understanding the site context, planning policy & history review
- ii. Pre-application engagement & stakeholder consultation (with decision makers and influencers)
- iii. Application scoping & preparation

Timescales can vary depending on nature and scale of proposals > between 6 – 12+ months



Decision Makers

- Local Planning Authority
- Planning Inspectors (*for appeals*)
- Secretary of State (*for called-in applications / appeals*)

Influencers

- Council
- Statutory Consultees
- Non-Statutory Consultees
- Politicians & Public (inc. Local Amenity Groups)

Application Process: Following Submission

- Statutory consultation period (*21 days +*)
- Planning conditions and s106 heads of terms
- Officer report
- Planning committee
- Drafting of s106 legal agreement
- S106 completion
- Decision notice

More planning processes prior to Start on Site:

- **Conditions and Obligations discharge**
- **CIL requirements**
- **Commencement notices (LURA)**



How long should the process take?

Statutory Timescales

- 13 weeks (major application)
- 16 weeks (EIA application)
- Planning Performance Agreement (bespoke timetable)
- Extension of time

Planning Guarantee

No application should spend more than a year with decision-makers, inc. any appeal.

Means major applications should be decided within 26 weeks.

If it is not, and a longer period has not been agreed, the LPA must return the planning application fee.



Broad Street – Validated in March 2024 and application determined in April 2025.

Planning Outcomes



GRANTED

...subject to conditions and s106 agreement

If in Outline, submit Reserved Matters.



NOT DETERMINED

Options:

- Agree extension of time & continue to negotiate application
- Appeal against non-determination
- Withdraw, & submit revised application



REFUSED

Options:

- Revised application
- Appeal against refusal

Appeals: How long do they take?
(cases decided in December 2024)

		Median (weeks)	Mean (weeks)	Decisions
s78 planning appeals	Written Reps	30	31	738
s78 planning appeals	Hearings	22	28	43
s78 planning appeals	Inquiries	31*	33*	10*
Householder appeals	Written Reps	18	19	291

What is Changing?

NPPF Changes (December 2024)

- Makes housing targets 'mandatory' and reverses other changes made under the previous Government regarding housing supply
- Implements a new standard method formula to ensure local plans are in line with the Government's manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this parliament
- Confirms transitional arrangements for local plans in the existing system
- Defines grey belt land within the Green Belt, to be brought forward for homes and other development through both plan and decision making
- Defines new 'golden rules' for land released in the Green Belt land, as well as policy considerations of affordable housing, design quality, and sustainable locations that are part of the presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Support for economic growth in key sectors, including laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital economies, and freight and logistics.
- Creation of healthy places and adopting a 'vision led' approach to transport planning
- Supports clean energy and the environment, including through support for onshore wind and renewables

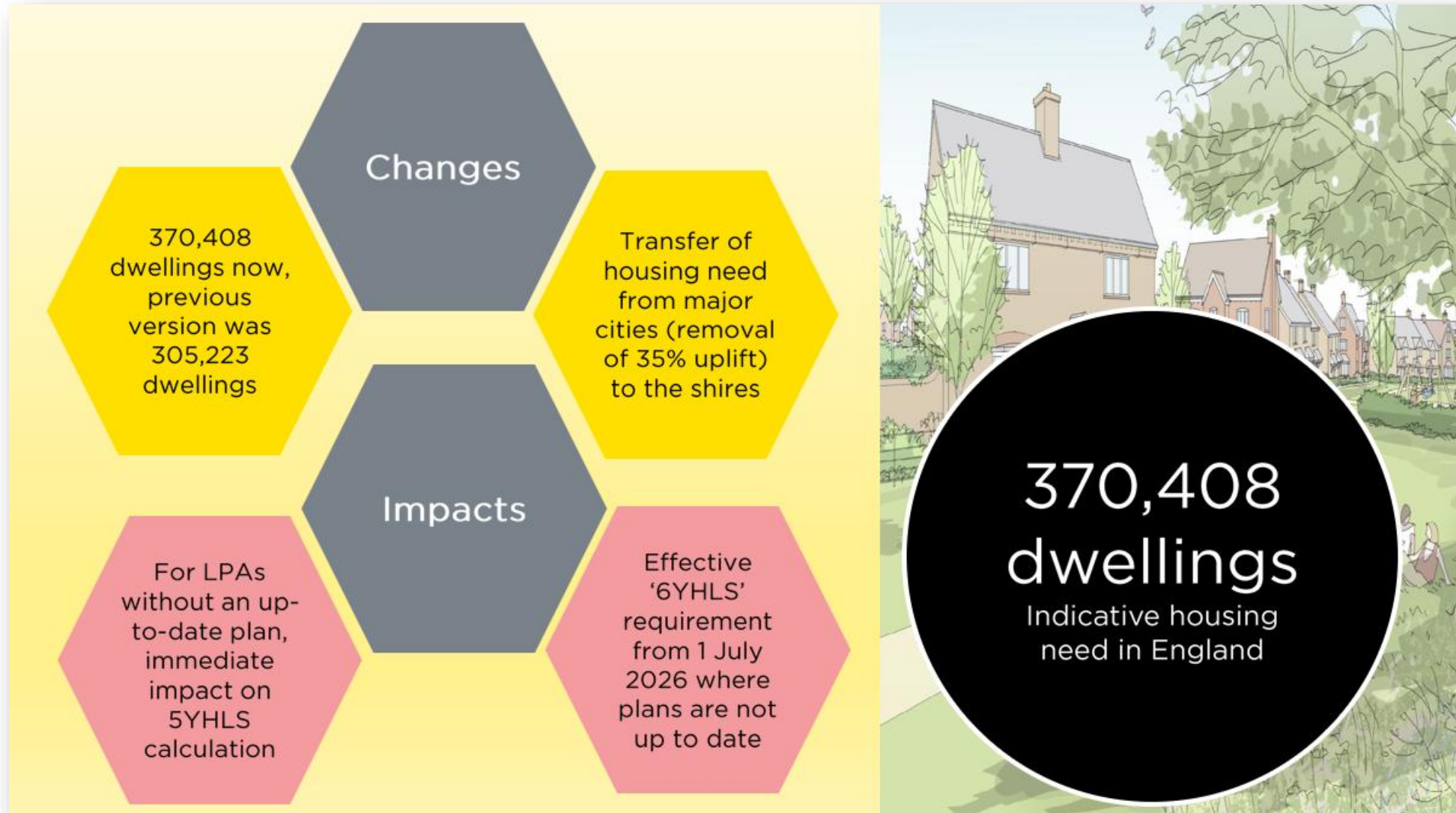


National Planning Policy Framework

December 2024



Standard Method



5-Year Housing Land Supply



5YHLS

Reinstatement of 5% mandatory buffer.

Protection for those with an up-to-date plan

6-year HLS requirement for local authorities with a local plan housing requirement over five years old, where it is 80% or less of the level set by the new Standard Method.

READING BC: 6.11 5YHLS December 2024



Housing Delivery Test

Annual measurement of housing delivery in the area of relevant plan-making authorities. The test is a percentage measurement of the number of net homes delivered against the number of homes required as set out in relevant strategic policies for the areas covered, over a rolling 3 year period.

Policy consequences under Para.78 of the NPPF if delivery falls below the housing requirement.

Reading BC: 137%

Green Belt, Grey Belt and the 'Golden Rules'



Green Belt

Paragraph 145 and 146 – Exceptional circumstances are required to release Green Belt land – now specifically mentions meeting identified need for housing.

Paragraph 235 – you still have to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances for inappropriate development within the Green Belt

Golden Rules

Paragraph 158 states that significant weight in favour of permission should be given where development complies with the Golden Rules

Grey Belt

The Grey Belt is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF.

“Land in the Green belt comprising previously development land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of the 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.”

Paragraph 155 states that housing development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt if tests met around being Grey Belt, not fundamentally undermining the purposes of the remaining Green Belt and unmet need, sustainability and where applicable meeting the “Golden Rules” requirement.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill was introduced to Parliament on Tuesday 11 March.

The key headline proposed in the bill relate to:

- Planning Committees
- Planning Application Fee Setting
- Strategic Planning
- Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)
- Nature Recovery
- Development Corporations
- Energy Infrastructure
- Transport Infrastructure

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Explanatory notes to the Bill, prepared by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, are published separately as Bill 196—EN.

EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Secretary Angela Rayner has made the following statement under section 19(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1998:

In my view the provisions of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill are compatible with the Convention rights.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENTS

Secretary Angela Rayner has made the following statements under section 20(2)(a) and (3) of the Environment Act 2021.

In my view—

(a) the Planning and Infrastructure Bill contains provision which, if enacted, would be environmental law, and

(b) the Bill will not have the effect of reducing the level of environmental protection provided for by any existing environmental law.


Looking Ahead: More Change!



More Legislation


New plan-making system
under the Levelling Up and
Regeneration Act 2023

Devolution Bill



National Development Management Policies and Slimmed Down NPPF

NPPF Consultation
expected Summer 2025
with publication in
November 2025



Planning Practice Guidance

Updated PPG on Green Belt
/ Grey Belt, Viability and
Flood Risk

EA Flood Risk Maps
updated in March 2025



Intervention

Potential for more
ministerial (or mayoral)
intervention in plan-making
and decision-making





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