

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration

Subject: Response to Government consultation – Proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

Date: 27th February 2026

Author: Planning Policy Manager

Wards Affected

Borough-wide

Purpose

To gain portfolio holder endorsement of Gedling Borough Council's proposed response contained in **Appendix 1** to the Government consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. The consultation response is required to be submitted by 10th March 2026

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

The Portfolio Holder approves the proposed response to the consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework – as set out under the relevant questions reproduced in Appendix 1.

1 Background

1.1 The Government published a new draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in January 2025. Consultation on the draft NPPF closes on 10 March 2026 at 11:45pm.

1.2	<p>The NPPF has been restructured and completely re-written to separate out policies for plan making and for decision making. The Government intends this to achieve three principal objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
1.3	<p>Although the Government has decided that decision making policies should be non statutory at this stage, they will still carry very considerable weight, and once adopted these policies will render out of date any existing local plan policies which are inconsistent with them. The decision to make policies non statutory is being kept under review, pending information on effectiveness.</p>
1.4	<p>The Government are proposing a number of substantive reforms to planning policy with the aim of “unlocking more homes in the right places, and further support the commercial development needed to drive growth”. The consultation document highlights the following points:</p> <p>1. A permanent presumption in favour of suitably located development. The Government wishes to make clear what forms of development are acceptable in principle in different locations as part of creating a more rules-based approach to development. For urban land, this approach takes forward parts of the ‘brownfield passports’ concept and builds on the December 2024 Framework update, by making development of suitable land in urban areas acceptable by default. As part of this change, a stronger presumption in favour of sustainable development is proposed.</p>

2. Building homes around stations. This establishes an ‘in principle’ support for suitable proposals that develop land around rail stations within existing settlements, and around ‘well-connected’ train stations outside settlements, including on Green Belt land. A minimum density of 40 dwellings per hectare is proposed around all stations and 50 dwellings per hectare around ‘well-connected’ stations – maximising opportunities for sustainable development, making the most of high levels of connectivity, and improving access to jobs and services.

3. Driving urban and suburban densification. The Government wish to make efficient use of land in urban and suburban areas, including through the redevelopment of corner and other low density plots, upward extensions and infill development – including within residential curtilages. These changes will support higher density development in sustainable locations, with good access to services. Authorities should set minimum densities in well-connected locations, including around train stations and town centres, and support an overall increase in density within settlements.

4. Securing a diverse mix of homes. To better support the needs of different groups through the planning system, stronger support for rural social and affordable housing, and setting clearer expectations for accessible housing to meet the needs of older and disabled people are proposed. It also means providing more flexibility on the unit mix of housing for market sale, where local requirements have been met for the mix of affordable homes.

5. Supporting small and medium sites. The Government want to make it easier to bring forward small sites, through clear support for the principle of development in different locations, the policies on building more densely in settlements and strengthened support for mixed tenure development. A new category of ‘medium development’ is introduced, linked to a range of policy and regulatory easements, to support a more streamlined and proportionate planning system – including exploring further the potential benefits and drawbacks of enabling developers to discharge social and affordable housing requirements through cash contributions in lieu of direct delivery.

6. Streamlining local standards. The NPPF limits quantitative standards in development plans to only those specific issues where local variation is justified, to promote certainty for applicants and speed up local plan production. This applies particularly to matters which are

	<p>covered by the Building Regulations – other than where there is the existing ability to use ‘optional technical standards’.</p> <p>7. Boosting local and regional economies. The Government wish to encourage economic growth by giving substantial weight to the benefits of supporting business growth, and to particular areas and sectors - including those named in the Industrial Strategy, AI Growth Zones, logistics, town centres and agricultural and rural development. They are also interested in views on whether the town centre sequential test should be removed, in order to allow greater flexibility to respond to changing patterns of demand.</p> <p>8. Supporting critical and growth minerals. The Government wants to ensure that adequate provision is made for their extraction, recognising their economic importance. In parallel, and in view of the government’s mission to achieve clean power by 2030, the extraction of coal is restricted further.</p> <p>9. Embedding a vision-led approach to transport. The Government wants to move away from a ‘predict and provide’ approach to transport planning that can create unattractive environments dominated by cars.</p> <p>10. Better addressing climate change. The Government want to set out how decisions can take a proactive approach to both mitigation and adaptation in relation to climate change, in a way that links to other relevant policies in the draft Framework.</p> <p>11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. A number of changes are proposed, including to reflect Local Nature Recovery Strategies, to recognise landscape character and conserve and enhance existing natural features, to incorporate swift bricks and to provide guidance on sites of local importance for nature.</p> <p>12. Taking a more positive approach to the use of heritage assets. A clearer and more positive approach which can better support suitable heritage-related development is proposed, replacing the current policies that are considered difficult to navigate.</p>
1.5	<p>The structural changes to the document as well as changes to policies make it very difficult to compare to the current 2024 NPPF. However, they do make the document easier to navigate, understand and use. In addition to the 12 key points highlighted in the consultation document (above) there are other changes which will impact on local plans, some of which link to wider planning reform.</p>
1.6	<p>The introduction of Spatial Development Strategies will set the strategic framework within which local plans are prepared, in particular</p>

	setting housing targets and economic development priorities.
1.6	Local plans are to be prepared and adopted within 30 months, and the preparation of the next plan should then commence within 5 years following adoption. There is policy on initiating and managing plan production, as well as on the scope of an appropriate evidence base.
1.7	Supplementary Plans allow for authorities to set design expectations or allocate specific sites for development outside the local plan cycle, while having development plan status. They will replace Supplementary Planning Documents.
1.8	Although the Duty to Cooperate has been abolished, the Government still expects to see effective cooperation and engagement between authorities.
1.9	Guidance on economic development is expanded and includes specific reference to the needs of the freight and logistic and other priority sectors.
1.10	The concept of 'grey belt' is clarified by removing reference to "footnote 7" areas, to enable grey belt to be identified with greater certainty. The expectation that Green Belt boundaries should endure beyond the plan period is replaced with the expectation that Green Belt assessments should form a routine part of plan-making, including identifying any land that constitutes grey belt. Mixed use development around 'well connected' stations is not considered inappropriate development, provided it is of an appropriate scale, does not prejudice long-term development proposals, and complies with the Golden Rules.
1.11	New provisions include requirements for plan-makers to set clear standards for green infrastructure, drawing upon national benchmarks. A policy change is also proposed to limit the circumstances in which plans may seek biodiversity net gain contributions which exceed the statutory requirement.
1.12	The new NPPF is expected to be published later in 2026. As noted above, on publication existing local plan policies which are inconsistent with the NPPF decision making policies, however recently adopted, will be considered out of date and be accorded little weight in decision making.

1.13	In terms of the implications of the new NPPF for plan making, the emerging Gedling Local Development Plan is being prepared in the context of the 2024 NPPF
2	Proposal
2.1	The proposed changes to the NPPF are accompanied by a series of questions. The Council's proposed response to these questions is contained in Appendix 1 , which should be submitted in advance of the consultation deadline of 10 th March 2026.
3	Alternative Options
3.1	The alternative options are for Gedling Borough Council not to respond to the consultation or to amend the drafted response. There is no requirement for the Council to respond to this public consultation but doing so will inform the Government's planning reform proposals from the Council's perspective. The draft response provided has been informed by the relevant Council officers and can be amended if the Portfolio Holder considers it necessary to do so.
4	Financial Implications
4.1	No financial implications. Cost of officer time drafting the response is met from existing budgets.
5	Legal Implications
5.1	None. This is an opportunity to comment on potential plan making reforms, which have not yet come into force.
6	Equalities Implications
6.1	None. This is an opportunity to comment on potential planning reforms which have not yet come into force. The consultation questions include an opportunity to comment on the potential equality implications of the proposals.
7	Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications
7.1	None. This is an opportunity to comment on potential planning reforms, which have not yet come into force. There is an opportunity, through comments on the consultation questions, to comment on the potential carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications of the proposals.
8	Carbon Impact Assessment

8.1	This is an opportunity to comment on potential planning reforms by the UK Government and therefore it is not necessary for a Carbon Impact Assessment to be carried out.
9	Appendices
9.1	Appendix 1 - Proposed consultation response to the consultation on changes to the NPPF.
10	Background Papers
10.1	National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK
11	Reasons for Recommendations
11.1	To inform the Government of the Council's perspective on proposed changes to the NPPF.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer