

NCALC

Annual Conference

Presenter:

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Date: 3 October 2026

Agenda

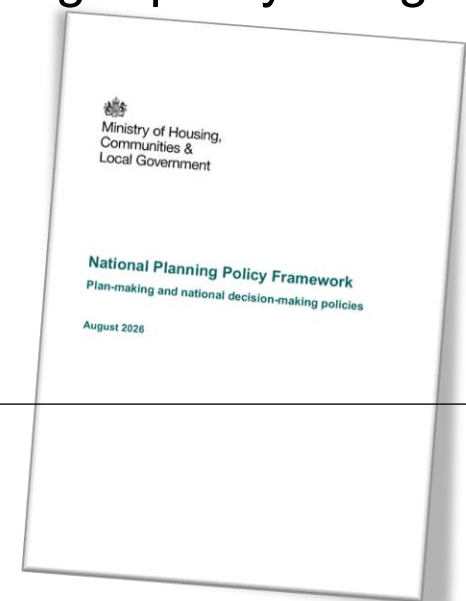
- Summary of changes to the new National Planning Policy Framework
- North Northamptonshire Local Plan
- North Northamptonshire Local Plan – Town & Parish Council engagement
- Update on the Planning service at NNC



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What is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- The Government's framework setting national planning policies for England, guiding both local plan-making and decisions on development proposals
- It was first published in 2012 in an effort to reduce over 1,000 pages of national policy to make planning clearer and more accessible – now at 128 pages
- Primary purpose is to provide guidance for local planning authorities and decision-makers on how to manage land sustainably, promote development, and ensure high-quality design standards
- The messages it gives are getting more pro-development focussed
- Continues to emphasise a plan-led system, encouraging local communities to shape their surroundings



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The New NPPF

- Published on 17 August 2026, replacing the December 2024 version
- Introduces a new structure: separates plan-making policies from national decision-making policies
- NPPF and National Decision-Making Policies **become material considerations immediately**
- Local Development Plan policies if “**in any way inconsistent with the national decision-making policies**” outlined in the NPPF, **should be given “very limited weight” in decision-making** unless examined and adopted against new NPPF (Annex A para 2).
- Local Plans should be prepared and adopted within 30 months of publishing Gateway 1 self assessment. Three Gateways in all, gaining advice on potential soundness issues.
- The Government’s direction remains firmly pro-housing, with a permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development, replacing the previous “tilted balance” approach.



Key changes to NPPF:

Plan-making

- Strengthens the distinction between National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs), Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) and Local Plans, making local plans shorter, more delivery-focused documents while elevating SDSs as the principal strategic planning mechanism and reinforcing the primacy of NDMPs in decision-making
- Minimum local plan period reduced from 15 years to 10 years. Plans can cover a longer time period where this would, for example, help support the delivery of longer-term infrastructure or strategic development. (Policy PM2: Local Plans)
- Clearer direction to **not** include policies which duplicate, substantively restate or are inconsistent with NDMPs. (Policy PM6: General Principles for Plan-Making)
- Specific reference added to use of relevant online tools, methods, and templates; and use of other digital planning software and resources. (Policy PM6: General Principles for Plan-Making)



12 headline making policy changes

1. A permanent presumption in favour of suitably located development
2. Building homes around stations
3. Driving urban and suburban densification
4. Securing a diverse mix of homes
5. Supporting small and medium sites
6. Streamlining local standards
7. Boosting local and regional economies
8. Introducing Spatial Development Strategies
9. Embedding a vision-led approach to transport
10. Better addressing climate change
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
12. Taking a more positive approach to use of heritage assets



Implications for the Local Plan

Increased pressure on local plan

The strongest strategic implication is that councils without a fully up-to-date local plan face greater risk of national policy driving decisions

- Maintaining momentum on the emerging North Northamptonshire Local Plan becomes even more important
- Delays could increase the risk of speculative applications succeeding
- The council's ability to shape growth proactively becomes more important than attempting to manage growth reactively



Key implications for North Northants

More housing growth pressure

- Greater pressure to identify deliverable housing sites
- Stronger support for applications on sustainable edge-of-settlement locations
- Increased scrutiny of five-year land supply and housing delivery performance
- More appeals succeeding where housing delivery falls short
- Given the area's historic role as a growth location with significant planned expansion around Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden, there is a continued expectation from Government that North Northamptonshire maintain its level of substantial housing growth



Key implications for North Northants

More medium-sized housing sites

The creation of the new "medium development" category (10-49 dwellings) could be particularly relevant across North Northamptonshire's market towns and villages. Many settlements across the area have site opportunities that fall into precisely this range.

Potential implications include:

- Increased developer interest in village-edge sites.
- More SME builder activity.
- Faster delivery of housing supply.
- Pressure to streamline planning processes for these schemes.



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Key implications for North Northants

Economic growth and logistics become easier to justify

The revised framework places greater emphasis on growth, productivity, infrastructure and investment. It specifically strengthens support for business development, digital infrastructure, data centres and employment-generating projects

This aligns closely with the North Northamptonshire economy, which already has strengths in:

- Logistics and warehousing
- Strategic road connectivity via the A14 and A45
- Advanced manufacturing
- Energy and environmental technologies



The practical consequence is that planning arguments based on economic growth, jobs and investment 'Market signals' are likely to carry **greater** weight than before. (NPPF Policy E2)



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Five year housing land supply

- All authorities are required to identify and update annually a minimum 5 years worth of housing
- Latest indications are North Northamptonshire can defend 4.36 years

NPPF Policy S3 – applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development, this means:

- Policy S4 applied when considering proposals **within settlements**
- Policy S5 applied **outside settlements**

Policy S4 – proposals should be approved unless the benefits would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects...

- adverse effects include safeguarding of land or buildings and policies protecting recreational land and facilities, Local Green Space, land of particular importance for biodiversity



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Five year housing land supply

In the case of S5 (outside settlements)

Policy S5 says

Consequences of a lack of a five year land supply trigger NPPF Policy S5:

- Certain listed forms of development outside of settlements...should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies:
 - j. Development which would address an evidenced unmet need (inc. the local plan authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, and where the development would:
 - i. Be physically well-related to an existing settlement and of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure



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Local Plan Programme for North Northants

Key step	Timetable	Month
• Scoping consultation	May-Jul 2026	0
• Gateway 1 - self assessment of readiness	Oct 2026	1
• Plan content and evidence consultation	Jan-Feb 2027	4-5
• Gateway 2 – advice from Planning Inspectorate	July 2027	10
• Proposed Local Plan consultation	Oct-Dec 2027	13-15
• Gateway 3 – testing Plan can proceed to examination	June 2028	21
• Submission for Examination	Sept 2028 – Feb 2029	24-29
• Adoption – Publication and adoption statement	March 2029	30



Strategy for engagement

NNC recognise the importance of engaging with communities:

- Seeking to provide accessible digital information and methods of communication
- Will hold events to inform and support parish councils (face to face / Teams)
- Proportionate approach reflecting resources of the team against the size of the area and number of communities
- Considering how to make next consultation more accessible for all, potential for summary document (other ideas?!)
- Will also seek to communicate through keeping the website up-to-date



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Neighbourhood Planning

- Will continue to support and advise communities preparing neighbourhood plans
- Would advise that neighbourhood plans encourage growth and allocate sites
- Allocate Local Green Space policies where appropriate
- Seek to implement our Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Will be housing requirements in the Local Plan, for now we can give figures based on existing Local Plan, or you can source your own local evidence
- Alternatively, the Local Plan will make allocations through the Local Plan



Next Steps

- Undertaking NPPF compliance review of emerging plan and its evidence base
- Identify current development plan policies potentially inconsistent with new NDMP
- Publish Gateway 1, launching the 30 month timetable
- Update Planning Committee and Member training, plus make available to Town & Parish Councils
- Monitor appeal decisions and emerging case law
- News on recruitment
 - 32 new officers within Development Management & Enforcement
 - 6 officers working with an enforcement capacity
 - Policy & Placemaking recruitment underway
 - Also reviewing procedures to improve the service and communication



Thank you

Happy to take questions now or after close of event



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