



# Implications of Proposed Planning Reforms and Transitional Arrangements on Local Plan Progress

Marko Kalik

Head of Planning Policy & Conservation

# New Local Plan Progress to Date

- 2017 – Reg 18 Issues & Options Consultation and Call for Sites
- 2018 – Additional Call for sites
- 2018 – Potential sites consultation
- 2021 – Reg 18 Preferred Policy Options and Sites for Potential Allocation consultation
- 2023 – Reg 18 Additional Sites for Potential Allocation consultation
- 2023 – Reg 18 Low Housing Growth consultation

# Housing Need (dwellings per annum)

	Core Strategy (2011)	NPPF 2012 (OAN – SHMA)	NPPF 2023 (Standard Methodology)	Draft NPPF (2024)	Green Belt constraint (low growth)
Annual Target	180	517	640	739	270
18 year Plan Period	3,240	9,306	11,520	13,302	4,852

# Current NPPF (2023) - Housing Need

- Local Plan must be based on evidence and comply with national planning policy
- Emphasises that the standard method for calculating housing need is not mandatory, only advisory starting point
- Need to meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible
- LPAs are not required to review Green Belt however they can through the plan making process where exceptional circumstances exist
- There will need to be a balance between meeting housing need and protecting the Green Belt
- Gove has since stated that changes sent wrong message that LPAs do not need to meet local housing need

# Housing Growth Options

- High Growth (640 dpa)
  - Meeting Standard Method in full, or even going beyond this figure
  - Requires substantial Green Belt release
- Moderate Growth (450 dpa)
  - Avoids areas of highest harm to the Green Belt
  - Unless potential sites' performance in terms of sustainability and potential benefits outweigh this harm
- Low Growth (270 dpa)
  - Only includes sites in areas of low to moderate harm to the Green Belt

# Green Belt as a constraint

- No guidance on what specifically constitutes exceptional circumstances for Green Belt removal
  - Affordable housing?
  - Accommodation for the elderly?
  - The most sustainable locations?
- Realistically some Green Belt release required
- Focus development in lowest areas of harm to the Green Belt
- Site specific factors such as number of dwellings provided, sustainability and infrastructure benefits may outweigh harm

# Low Housing Growth Consultation

- Focused development on brownfield land and low to moderate Green Belt Harm areas – 270 dpa
- 17,036 responses received from 957 respondents
  - Residents, statutory consultees and other stakeholders
- Over half of respondents born prior to 1970 with only 21 respondents born since 1990
  - Failed to engage younger residents who may have had differing views
- Over 90% of residents that responded supported the low growth approach, and over 91% were against complying with the standard method

# Local Housing Needs Assessment Update

- Key piece of Local Plan evidence updated in 2024
- No exceptional circumstances to justify a housing need below (or above) standard method of 640 dpa
- Annual Affordable Housing need: 364 dpa (rented) and 163dpa (ownership)
- Housing with support: 693 - 827 dwellings across the plan period to 2041
- Housing with care: 582 – 850 dwellings across the plan period to 2041
- Care/Nursing home Bedspaces: 75 – 678 beds across the plan period to 2041



# NPPF Consultation (Summer 2024)

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government consulted on proposed changes to the NPPF
- Significant proposed changes to NPPF include:
  - a) Removal to reference of Standard Method being an “advisory starting point”
  - b) Changes to how Standard Method is calculated (TRDC has increase of approximately 15%)
  - c) Green Belt (Plan Making) – alter GB boundaries to meet housing need in full (caveated)
  - d) Green Belt (Decision Making) – More PDL development acceptable and increasing planning gain
  - e) Introduction of Grey Belt

# Draft Transitional Arrangements

1. Those **plans at examination** will continue to be examined under the version of the NPPF they were submitted under. However, if the revised **LHN figure is more than 200 dwellings per annum higher** than the annual housing requirement set out in the adopted version of the plan, upon introduction of the new plan-making system, the local planning authority will be required to begin preparation of a plan under the new system as soon as possible, or in line with any subsequent arrangements set out to manage the roll-out of the new system.
  2. Those plans that have **reached Regulation 19 publication stage** but not yet been submitted for examination one month after the revised framework is published, **with a gap of no more than 200 dwellings per annum** between the local planning authority's revised LHN figure and its proposed housing requirement (as set out in the Publication version of the plan), should also progress to examination under the version of the NPPF it has used when preparing the plan thus far
  3. However, those with a **more significant gap of over 200 dwellings per annum** between the local planning authority's revised LHN figure and the emerging housing requirement will need to **revise its plan in line with the revised NPPF** before submitting the plan for examination **no more than 18 months after the publication of the revised NPPF**. – Government will provide funding support (although no details have been provided)
  4. All **plans at earlier stages of preparation - (i.e. plans that have not yet reached Regulation 19 stage one month after the revised NPPF is published)** - should be prepared against the **revised version of the NPPF** and **progressed as quickly as possible**
- Our new standard method figure is **739** dwellings per annum figure. Our low growth approach would supply approximately **270** dwellings per annum (across an 18 year plan period) according to the Regulation 18 consultation document.

# Possible Implications of Continuing to Regulation 19 - Scenario 1 new NPPF by end of December

- We would still be at Regulation 19 stage when new NPPF published
- Therefore required to submit new NPPF compliant plan in 18 months
- No flexibility to timescale
- Government support to meet timeline – more scrutiny
- Less opportunity to explore further evidence supporting Council's case for lower numbers

# Possible Implications of Continuing to Regulation 19 - Scenario 2 new NPPF delayed until next year

- Considered unlikely the NPPF will be delayed
- Very likely that the Plan will be found **unsound** at examination even under 2023 NPPF
- Failing to meet our development needs – need to balance Green Belt vs development needs
- Minister’s letter to planning inspectorate stating that local plans are not to be fixed at examination
- Increase in number of speculative applications being successful at appeal if the plan fails at examination
- Financial implications – examinations cost hundreds of thousands of pounds
- Intervention – we could lose our planning powers
- We would most likely be in the same place we are in now, only in a year to 18 months’ time

# Inspector's and Ministerial reports and announcements

- Minister warned he will intervene in plans 'way below' their need
- Minister written to Inspectorate not to fix local plans at examination
- At Solihull examination Inspector recommended Council withdraw plan as not willing to release green belt sites, and referred to Minister's letter to Inspectorate
- Elmbridge examination – Inspector found the Council's position that there were no exceptional circumstances for GB release unsound

# Further considerations

- SANG requirements on sites in zone of influence for Chiltern Beechwoods SAC
  - Could result in removal of two sites (nearly 200 dwellings)
  - Alternatively need to allocate new SANG site
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
  - Initial data indicates unmet need
  - Will need to do further work to address this need
- 270 dpa from Reg 18 consultation will be closer to 200 dpa
  - Reduced developable areas for example for onsite BNG
  - Sites removed
  - Maple Cross strategic site with reduced capacity and limited on-site infrastructure

# Regulation 19 and Submission Requirements

- Reg 19 is version of the plan that LPA plans to submit for examination
- We must consider the plan sound and that it meets the legal requirements
- Any changes following Reg 19 would require an updated SA and HRA and then be consulted on prior to submission
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that LPA must not submit the plan unless they think it is ready for examination
- LPA should only submit a plan if they consider it to be sound and there will not be delays of over 6 months during examination due to significant changes or further evidence work are required

# Green Belt Evidence

Draft NPPF sets out that the standard method target will be mandatory, and we will have to release Green Belt land to meet those needs in full.

This is caveated with the following:

*“...unless the review provides clear evidence that such alterations would fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the plan area as a whole”*

- Our Green Belt review does not look at this specifically
- Further evidence work required to make this case



# Further Evidence Work

In addition to further Green belt evidence there are other studies we would need to complete:

- SANG work
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)
- Call for sites
- Whole Plan Viability Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study Update
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update
- Urban Capacity Study Update

# Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)

We would also need to update the SHELAA in other words our site assessments.

- Will need to look at previously considered sites
- Call for sites
- Focus is still on brownfield first
- Gypsy and Traveller Site Consideration

# Proposed New Timeline

Officers propose to bring an update Local Development Scheme to P&R setting out the following key milestones in Local Plan preparation:

February / March 2026 – Regulation 19 consultation

June / July 2026 – Submission of Local Plan for examination

November / December 2026 - Adoption

# Any questions?

