

Oldham Council’s response to MHCLG’s consultation on ‘Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system’

A summary of the key points is provided in italics at the start of each chapter / sub-chapter. This is then followed by the proposed response under each question. This is a GM response unless otherwise stated – there are instances where additional Oldham comments are provided, or where districts are responding individually (i.e. in relation to planning fees).

Chapter 3 – Planning for the homes we need

Advisory starting point and alternative approaches

Make use of the standard method for calculating housing need mandatory and remove reference to the exceptional circumstances in which the use of alternative approaches to assess housing need may be appropriate. Going forward local planning authorities (LPAs) will be expected to make all efforts to allocate land in line with their housing need as per the standard method. Authorities would be able to justify a lower housing requirement than that set by the standard method on the basis of local constraints on land and delivery, such as protected habitats and flood risk areas, but would (as they do now) have to evidence and justify their approach through local plan consultation and examination. In doing so, all LPA’s will need to demonstrate they have taken all possible steps, including optimising density, sharing need with neighbouring authorities, and reviewing Green Belt boundaries, before a lower housing requirement will be considered.

Question 1: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made to paragraph 61?

Yes. The previous changes added uncertainty and increased the likelihood of delays to plan-making that the standard method was designed to address. The revisions remove the ambiguity created.

Question 2: Do you agree that we should remove reference to the use of alternative approaches to assessing housing need in paragraph 61 and the glossary of the NPPF?

Yes, to remove the ambiguity mentioned in response to Q1. However, it is essential that the revised standard method credibly informs local housing needs.

Urban uplift

Paragraph 62 of the current NPPF provides policy on the application of the standard method urban uplift, stating that this should normally be accommodated within the cities and urban centres where the uplift applies except in certain specific circumstances. The revisions to NPPF propose to delete this paragraph, supporting the direction of housing growth to our

larger urban areas through other policy approaches, such as the new standard method and strengthening cross boundary co-operation.

Question 3: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on the urban uplift by deleting paragraph 62?

Yes. The urban uplift always appeared arbitrary and there was a lack of robust evidence to justify it. It would therefore seem sensible to remove arbitrary uplifts. However, it will be important that the agreed future method for calculating need does not result in unintended consequences for levels of growth in core growth areas and is founded on clear evidence.

Additional Oldham response

It should be recognised that urban areas (such as our main cities), have the capacity, townscape and market for high-density housing. It can be very difficult to replicate high levels of housebuilding in local areas and as such cities should have a higher housing need, albeit based on future growth evidence specific to urban areas.

Character and Density

Paragraph 130 of the current NPPF was added to explain that local character can be taken into account when local planning authorities consider their ability to meet their housing needs. The revisions to NPPF propose to delete this paragraph. LPA's should continue to identify opportunities for maximising the efficient use of land, especially in areas well served by transport and other infrastructure. However, by restricting density it is considered the existing policy is likely to have longer term negative impacts on achieving sustainable patterns of development and on meeting expectations on future housing supply. The focus is therefore on ensuring development plans support the efficient use of land at appropriate densities, including through the preparation of localised design codes, masterplans and guides for areas of most change and potential.

Question 4: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on character and density and delete paragraph 130?

Yes. A blanket approach that can be applied anywhere to avoid meeting housing needs is not appropriate. It is important to use land efficiently and effectively, which helps create more sustainable development and reduces the need to develop Green Belt. If there are particular local circumstances such as listed buildings, a Conservation Area or another area with a very strong design code, then very local circumstances could prevail but strong justification would be needed.

Question 5: Do you agree that the focus of design codes should move towards supporting spatial visions in local plans and areas that provide the greatest opportunities for change such as greater density, in particular the development of large new communities?

Yes, we agree with this approach in principle, as it does not prevent district-wide design codes being produced but removes the need for it to be done as part of new Local Plans. It is, though, highly appropriate for key priority development sites.

Strengthening and reforming the presumption in favour of sustainable development ('the presumption')

The consultation document published alongside the proposed NPPF revisions acknowledges that introducing more demanding targets and reinstating the requirement to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply at all times is likely to bring more LPA's into the scope of the presumption in the short-term. This is considered necessary to address the issue of chronic undersupply of land that has underpinned the housing crisis and support the government's drive to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years.

The revised NPPF retains paragraph 11 and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, it has been amended to make it clear that in terms of the policies that may be 'out-of-date' this relates to those for the supply of land. Footnote 8 of revised NPPF defines these as being those 'which set an overall requirement and/or make allocations and allowances for windfall sites for the areas and type of development concerned'.

Question 6: Do you agree that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be amended as proposed?

Yes, it provides greater clarity and the emphasis on design and affordable housing is welcome. There is a pressing need to ensure that developers deliver high quality developments to safeguard the long-term sustainability and liveability of communities. Local planning authorities need to be able to effectively challenge and reject sub-standard proposals to ensure that development aligns with visions for high quality sustainable communities.

Additional Oldham response

The presumption in favour of sustainable development is a somewhat crude tool that can punish local authorities and communities who have tried to enable housing development, but where the development industry has not brought forward sufficient housing. As a result, the presumption can result in very unsustainable development coming forward in an unplanned way.

Restoring the five-year housing land supply

Propose to re-establish the requirement for all LPA's, regardless of local plan status, to continually demonstrate 5 years of specific, deliverable sites for housing. The revisions also propose to remove the wording on past oversupply (in paragraph 77), which was introduced to set out that previous over-supply could be set against upcoming supply.

Question 7: Do you agree that all local planning authorities should be required to continually demonstrate 5 years of specific, deliverable sites for decision making purposes, regardless of plan status?

No, if the five-year supply can be challenged continually, regardless of plan status, it risks undermining the plan-making process and the principle of decisions being made in accordance with the plan. The NPPF should ensure that incentives remain for Local Plan preparation, which is rightly a government priority. It should be noted that at plan-making

stage the five-year supply for the first five years will largely be made up of existing sites with planning permission because there may not be sufficient evidence to justify the inclusion of allocated sites without permission. Even if evidence exists, there may be a significant development lead-in time, with delivery typically starting in the latter years of the five-year period and continuing thereafter.

Additional Oldham response

Concerns that the failure of an LPA with a recently adopted Local Plan to demonstrate a 5-year supply, leading to presumption in favour of sustainable development, could undermine the Local Plan approach/ spatial strategy and newly adopted Local Plan policies. This weakens future application of the Local Plan, even in years where a five-year supply can be demonstrated and leads to inconsistent decision-making. A set period should be introduced where newly adopted plans do not have to continually demonstrate a 5-year supply in the early stages of the plan, on the basis that it has been through a robust examination.

Question 8: Do you agree with our proposal to remove wording on national planning guidance in paragraph 77 of the current NPPF?

No, Local Plans should provide a level of certainty to local communities in terms of the location and quantum of development, with the aim being to address identified local needs. Local authorities should not be forced to release more greenfield or Green Belt land because developers have built out sites more quickly than anticipated resulting in an over-supply against annual targets. Furthermore, over-supply of housing should be taken into account at both plan-making and decision-making stage as it contributes to addressing identified housing need. The proposed new standard methodology disadvantages districts that exceed their targets, as the amount of housing stock will then be greater than anticipated, which means that more land for new homes will be required in the future. Meanwhile authorities that do not meet their targets will have a lower amount of housing stock than anticipated, which will be reflected in a lower future need figure.

Restoring the 5% buffer

The revisions to NPPF propose to reintroduce the 5% buffer to be added to all 5-year housing land supply calculations in decision making and plan making, and provide a buffer of sites, ensuring choice and competition in the market. Propose to remove the option for LPA's to 'fix' their 5-year housing land supply through Annual Position Statements.

Question 9: Do you agree that all local planning authorities should be required to add a 5% buffer to their 5-year housing land supply calculations?

Yes, but greater clarity is required in terms of the use of this buffer at plan-making and decision-making stages.

Question 10: If yes, do you agree that 5% is an appropriate buffer, or should it be a different figure?

Yes, 5% is an appropriate figure for the five-year supply in relation to decision making.

Question 11: Do you agree with the removal of policy on Annual Position Statements?

Yes, few authorities submit annual position statements, but most update their five-year supply annually through mechanisms such as SHLAA updates.

Maintaining effective co-operation and the move to strategic planning

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 will revoke the Duty to Cooperate in relation to the reformed plan making system. However, the Duty remains a legal requirement under the current local plan system and will continue to apply to local plans progressed within said system.

Government is seeking the universal coverage of strategic planning within this Parliament, which will be formalised in legislation through the preparation of Spatial Development Strategies.

In the short-term the ‘maintaining effective co-operation’ section of the NPPF is to be amended to ensure that appropriate engagement is occurring on the sharing of unmet housing need and other strategic issues where plans are being progressed.

Question 12: Do you agree that the NPPF should be amended to further support effective co-operation on cross boundary and strategic planning matters?

Maintaining effective co-operation is vital to ensure that the right engagement is occurring on the sharing of unmet housing (and employment) need. There could be scope to improve the mechanisms currently in place to do this, but more crucially it will be important that clear policy and guidance exists to secure meaningful and timely engagement from statutory bodies. Currently the engagement with some such bodies can cause significant delay and cost to the development plan making process. In addition to appropriate policy and guidance on this matter, statutory bodies must have sufficient resources and knowledge of plan making requirements to ensure their engagement is appropriate, effective and meaningful. The most effective co-operation is through strategic planning at the right spatial level, the establishment of strategic planning would enable duty to co-operate to be delivered across joint plan making authorities without the need to set up separate governance arrangements. Duty to Co-operate would still exist outside this body but would not require recording as part of logging various activities. In addition, preparation of joint studies and evidence-base enables effective strategic planning and policy development. This delivers good planning. The understanding what this means by various duty to co-operate bodies can sometimes highlight a divergence of organisations objectives. It would work better if there was a clearer understanding from key bodies of what “effective co-operation” means and that there are shared objectives all organisations should be seeking to facilitate. This can be in terms of understanding the need for economic growth and housing delivery and what this means for quantum of development and impact. This ultimately means compromise between interested bodies (duty to co-operate bodies). The key to making this effective is clearer guidance setting out how this process of “effective co-operation” sits alongside the plan making process in terms of duty to co-operate and statements of common ground. It is important that duty to co-operate bodies understand their role and

responsibility when engaging in the process. The current process can be overly resource intensive in terms of the collection of signatures to confirm duty to co-operate and also statements of common ground but there is nearly always an added value to plan development in effective co-operation.

Question 13: Should the tests of soundness be amended to better assess the soundness of strategic scale plans or proposals?

The tests of soundness as set out in the existing NPPF provide an appropriate framework to examine a development plan document against. The reference to "proportionate evidence" enables evidence to be produced, appropriate to the scope of the plan. It is inevitable that where very long-term, large-scale proposals are being proposed, that evidence levels would be at a different scale to small-scale, short-term development. PINS Inspectors are very capable of judging what is appropriate "proportionate evidence" for these different scenarios.

Question 14: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No comments.

Chapter 4 – A new Standard Method for assessing housing needs

Approach for the standard method supports the Government's ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years who consider the approach to achieve a more balanced distribution of homes across the country, by directing homes to where they are most needed and least affordable.

The new standard method proposes to:

- *use a baseline set at a percentage of existing housing stock levels – 0.8% (step 1);*
- *top up this baseline by focusing on those areas that are facing the greatest affordability pressures, using a stronger affordability multiplier to increase this baseline in proportion to price pressures (step 2); and*
- *remove arbitrary caps and additions so that the approach is driven by an objective assessment of need.*

The proposed method does not propose the application of a cap to limit the level of increase. Under the current method, numbers are capped at 40% above either the previous local plan figure or the projection-derived baseline. However, government consider that an artificial cap of the levels of housing need does not align with these ambitions. In no longer applying a cap, the resultant housing need is the level of need that authorities should be planning to release land for, according to their specific circumstances.

The use of the standard method is mandatory, providing the basis for plan making. LPA's must use the output of the new standard method as their starting point for determining their housing requirement and must make all efforts to allocate land in line with it. However, it is acknowledged that there will be some places where it is not possible to meet that need, despite taking all possible steps, including optimising density, sharing need with neighbouring authorities, and reviewing Green Belt boundaries.

Question 15: Do you agree that Planning Practice Guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is housing stock rather than the latest household projections?

We understand the desire to move away from the 2014 projections and we appreciate there are concerns with more recent ONS projections. Although it is recognised that using housing stock as the baseline provides a more static dataset, the approach loses any connection with future demographic change and is divorced from need. Given this, it will be difficult to justify / explain the release of land for housing (which could include Green Belt if the new method results in unmet need) to local communities. Any new method should be based on robust data and be logical and should not result in directing high levels of growth to places that are not supported by sufficient infrastructure and/or where there is limited need, simply on the basis of their level of existing housing stock. The proposed method could disadvantage districts that exceed their targets, as the amount of housing stock in future years will be greater than anticipated, which means that more land for new homes will be required going forward. Meanwhile authorities that do not meet their targets will have a lower baseline than anticipated, which will be reflected in a lower future housing target. Consideration should also be given to how the proposed method would operate in areas with high (or low) levels of communal establishments, such as student accommodation.

Question 16: Do you agree that using the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio, averaged over the most recent 3 year period for which data is available to adjust the standard method's baseline, is appropriate?

Affordability is clearly a critical and widespread issue which needs addressing and resolving. Using a three-year average to determine the affordability ratio seems to be a reasonable approach. However, as with the use of housing stock as the baseline, any unintended consequences of the change to the affordability multiplier should be carefully considered and mitigated against.

Question 17: Do you agree that affordability is given an appropriate weighting within the proposed standard method?

Clearly some factor of affordability is important in any calculation of LHN to reflect demand for either "moving up" and having access to the housing ladder. The proposed approach is a considerable increase on the weighting currently given to affordability. However, it is not possible to reach a view on whether the proposed approach is reasonable. Government has provided no explanation for the change in the weighting for affordability in the proposed methodology nor how this directly reflects affordability issues through new housing supply. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate the approach in response to this consultation or explain it to communities if the methodology is adopted without further guidance.

As it is only one step of a two-step process it could be argued that affordability is given too big a weighting in the methodology as houses can be unaffordable for a number of reasons other than that of supply. This is compounded by the fact that the weighting has increased from the current methodology of 0.25% to 0.6% in the proposed methodology per every ratio above 4.

Additional Oldham response

It is important that the approach taken is backed up in policy to ensure that an appropriate portion of the homes delivered are for affordable tenure. A minimum affordable housing requirement (as a percentage of the overall site capacity) is a useful basis for plan making and should be introduced. This could be used in decision-making in the interim before local plans set out evidence-based requirements.

Question 18: Do you consider the standard method should factor in evidence on rental affordability? If so, do you have any suggestions for how this could be incorporated into the model?

As with previous methods for assessing housing need, the methodology states that an adjustment should be made to consider market signals, specifically the affordability of housing. The current methodology does not consider rental levels and as in the new proposal uses median house prices to calculate this ratio and therefore any uplift.

Often areas of high or low house prices generally also have the same pattern of rental prices, however this is not always the case, for example where new housing markets are being established at the core of conurbations such as Greater Manchester, rental levels can be higher, relative to house prices.

Although there could be benefits in incorporating rental figures in the affordability factor, data on rental levels is not as robust and readily available as that for house prices. It will be important that any new methodology uses readily and freely available reliable and robust data.

Question 19: Do you have any additional comments on the proposed method for assessing housing needs?

It is noted that paragraph 9, of chapter 4 of the accompanying consultation document, states that the proposed LHN method will boost the overall target "to a level which provides resilience" because the Government appears to be accepting some areas will not be able to meet their needs, despite taking all steps available to them. Paragraph 9 further states that the revised LHN methodology builds in "room into the formula to account for the fact that we will not see a one to one relationship between targets and allocations". The calculation is very opaque as it is not clear what factor has been applied to the methodology to give this "room", however it appears that the uplift is almost 25% for each LPA as the Government is committed to delivering 1.5million new homes over the parliamentary period, equating to 300,000 per annum, yet the calculation equates to 370,000 pa. To inflate the target in the way suggested, penalises all LPAs, including those meeting their identified need. It also implies that LPAs will be required to identify sufficient land to meet their target plus, in effect, an additional land supply "buffer". It is also unclear how the proposed formula would take account of / calculate the LHN in the proposed new towns programme.

Additional Oldham response

A higher requirement does not necessarily mean higher levels of delivery can be achieved. The housing targets are always seen as a minimum – we encourage and support housing over and above our existing requirement. The target is not the issue – wider housing delivery, economic market and viability issues are the primary reasons for under delivery. Funding and appropriate mechanisms to address these issues and support the delivery of brownfield land within the urban area is what is needed, rather than putting in place housing requirements that will be extremely challenging to meet.

The timeline given is not long enough for the level of change proposed. A stepped approach would be more achievable allowing the impact of the suite of amended NPPF policies to begin to take effect. This would also allow for LPAs to implement change needed to make additional land available e.g. optimisation studies, CPOs, GB release etc.

Chapter 5 – Brownfield, grey belt and the Green Belt

Priority continues to be the development of previously developed land wherever possible. However, MHCLG's consultation document recognises that brownfield development alone will not be enough to meet our housing need. As such, they propose the targeted release of 'grey belt' land.

Where a LPA is unable to meet housing, commercial or other needs after fully considering all opportunities to make effective and efficient use of brownfield and wider opportunities, it should undertake a Green Belt review. This review should look to release poor quality 'grey belt' land from the Green Belt subject to sustainable development principles and the 'golden rules' set out in MHCLG's consultation document. Any development on land released from the Green Belt must bring benefits, via not only mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, but also through new rules that will secure improved access to good quality greenspace.

Being clear that brownfield development is acceptable in principle

Principle of development should not be in question on brownfield land, therefore MHCLG's consultation document proposes to reinforce the expectation that development proposals on previously developed land are viewed positively through an amendment to paragraph 124c of the current NPPF.

Question 20: Do you agree that we should make the proposed change set out in paragraph 124c, as a first step towards brownfield passports?

More clarity would need to be known about what is meant by 'brownfield passports'. The change set out in paragraph 124c reinforces the use of brownfield sites to deliver development but the relationship between this and paragraph 123 (including footnote 50) needs better explanation. At present paragraph 123 relates more to strategic policies whereas the intro in paragraph 124 references planning policies and decisions. In considering the change to paragraph 124c, it may be appropriate to widen the scope of footnote 50, for example, to also reference relevant Local Plan policies. It is also noted that some brownfield sites have a high biodiversity value so may not be the most suitable for development.

Making it easier to develop Previously Developed Land

Propose to relax the restrictions that are currently applied to previously developed land (PDL) and limited infilling in the Green Belt in paragraph 154g of the current NPPF, to make clear that development is 'not inappropriate' where it would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Question 21: Do you agree with the proposed change to paragraph 154g of the current NPPF to better support the development of PDL in the Green Belt?

In responding to this question, it is assumed that it relates to decision-making rather than plan making. In terms of decision-making the proposed change would appear to simplify the consideration of proposals relating to the development of previously developed land within the Green Belt. This now relates more specifically to 'substantial harm' to openness rather than 'greater impact'. In order to assist with the application of this guidance, further clarity in terms of the defining 'substantial harm' would be helpful.

Additional Oldham response

However, regard should still be had to the fact that just because a site is PDL, it does not mean it is in a sustainable location. Given how isolated parts of the Green Belt can be, paragraph 154 would be improved if it took account of this.

Question 22: Do you have any views on expanding the definition of PDL, while ensuring that the development and maintenance of glasshouses for horticultural production is maintained?

It is assumed from the question that the proposed expansion of the PDL definition would relate solely to the addition of these uses. It may be beneficial to expand the definition of PDL but this would need to take account of any potential mis-use of Green Belt exceptions that could create artificially large areas of PDL within the Green Belt. This may be addressed through making reference to only allowing such redevelopments in sustainable locations.

Additional Oldham response

The current definition of PDL already applies to circumstances where there is an area of hardstanding in the Green Belt which has not blended into the landscape over time – on the basis it is fixed surface infrastructure. The need to introduce specific reference to hardstanding in the definition is therefore unclear. There would be very few circumstances where formalised hardstanding would have blended into the landscape over time and therefore this proposed change is of little benefit.

Defining the grey belt

To support a consistent and transparent approach to identifying land, the following definition of grey belt land is proposed:

'Grey belt: *For the purposes of Plan-making and decision-making, grey belt is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising Previously Developed Land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the five Green*

Belt purposes (as defined in para 140 of this Framework) but excluding those areas or assets of particular importance listed in footnote 7 of this Framework (other than land designated as Green Belt).'

To provide further support in judging whether land makes a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes it is proposed to incorporate the following into the NPPF glossary:

'Land which makes a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes will:

- a) Not strongly perform against any Green Belt purpose; and*
- b) Have at least one of the following features:*
 - i. Land containing substantial built development or which is fully enclosed by built form*
 - ii. Land which makes no or very little contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another*
 - iii. Land which is dominated by urban land uses, including physical developments*
 - iv. Land which contributes little to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns'.*

Question 23: Do you agree with our proposed definition of grey belt land? If not, what changes would you recommend?

No. It is noted that the definition of Grey Belt land does not refer to the land being in sustainable locations, such inclusion in the definition would avoid any ambiguity. The definition, alongside PDL land, appears to refer to any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes. This appears to list two routes by which land could be considered grey belt, clarification should be provided in respect of this.

By definition and reference to other parcels or areas of Green Belt land, it is possible that this will result in land being identified as such in unsustainable locations and which is unlikely to amount to a "belt".

The definition must make it clear that it should relate to clearly defined parcels to be consistent with new paragraph 145 f), as opposed to broad areas, and that the land should make only limited contributions to all five purposes, it is not sufficient to make limited contributions to less than five of the purposes.

Often Green Belt parcels on the edges or urban areas, which are seen to be in sustainable locations, are likely to perform strongly against at least one purpose, such as preventing sprawl. Conversely it is more likely that parcels away from the urban edge are less likely to score strongly.

It is noted however, and welcomed that in new para 152 of NPPF, it is clear that development of such land would need to be in sustainable locations, it is very important for this requirement to be retained, should the definition of Grey Belt land be retained in the

revised NPPF. However, for the reasons above, the definition, as currently drafted, is likely to identify land which could not be developed, as it will fail the criteria proposed in NPPF 152.

Local Wildlife Sites should also be included within footnote 7. Within Greater Manchester these are known as Sites of Biological Importance and make a significant contribution toward the ecological resilience of the city region, halting biodiversity decline and delivery of the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Additionally, whatever definition is finally adopted, it should be noted that it will only apply to a relatively small proportion of land in England, as relatively little land is designated as Green Belt, and by definition only land within Green Belt can be designated as “Grey Belt”. It therefore ignores any similar land in open countryside and given the comments above, it is unclear why Green Belt land is being identified for development in this way.

Additional Oldham response

In addition, in relation to this point proposed paragraph 152 needs to be careful that it refers to area or strategic area rather than plan area as a grey belt site could be adjoining / close to adjacent LPAs.

As ‘grey belt’ is giving an ‘in principle’ agreement for development it is essentially a development designation and as such should be assessed against other constraints similar to how housing and employment designations would be during the plan making stage. Reference to footnote 7 is helpful in completing this exercise but a wider set of constraints should be considered such as landscape sensitivity and presence of dark skies.

Question 24: Are any additional measures needed to ensure that high performing Green Belt land is not degraded to meet grey belt criteria?

The definition would appear to be sufficiently worded to not allow landowners the ability to purposely degrade their land to meet the definition, particularly given it is based on the five purposes. However as set out in response to question 23 it should be made clear that the definition relates to land which makes a limited contribution to all five purposes. Notwithstanding this, the framework should specifically state that land should not be actively managed in a way to degrade its contribution toward Green Belt purposes.

Additional Oldham response

This highlights that LPAs will be required to have up to date evidence regarding the Green Belt and how land within the Green Belt serves the five purposes (as set out in answer to Question 23 above).

Question 25: Do you agree that additional guidance to assist in identifying land which makes a limited contribution of Green Belt purposes would be helpful? If so, is this best contained in the NPPF itself or in planning practice guidance?

Planning practice guidance would indeed be useful to ensure that there is clarity over who should make assessments of ‘grey belt’ and a consistent process clarified for the review of Green Belt and identification of ‘grey belt’ as part of the Local Plan making process. This

would support a clearer definition of 'grey belt' itself and should clarify/ set out what "limited contribution" to Green Belt purposes means in the context that Green Belt is currently assessed. It is unclear if Councils would actually designate 'grey belt' as part of plan review, or more likely that this would occur through the application process. Through any plan making process sites necessary to meet need would be removed from Green Belt and by definition would then no longer be able to be Grey Belt.

With specific reference to the suggested wording provided in Chapter 5 of the consultation document, paragraph 10(b) appears to conflate/duplicate "purposes" and "features"; both 10(b) ii and iv are in effect Green Belt purposes, they are not "features".

Additional Oldham response

As well as assessing whether individual development opportunities / parcels of land make a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes, a further assessment (stage two) should be carried out to assess the cumulative impact of potential grey belt areas on the remaining Green Belt. Potentially grey belt could create large housing estates / villages (or other development) within the Green Belt and the impact of this on the wider Green Belt needs to be considered. Such development would contribute a level of harm on the openness of the remaining Green Belt and landscapes which have varying degrees of sensitivity, and this should be assessed – not just the parcels themselves. Such cumulative impacts are not currently considered through the NPPF revisions.

The PAS NPPF roadshow (Manchester) provided an opportunity to discuss this with officers, who explained that proposed paragraph 152 (a) refers to development not fundamentally undermining the function of the Green Belt. However, this clearly comes into play under 'Proposals affecting the Green Belt' at planning application stage. It would be hard once Grey Belt is designated to then refuse an application on the basis that it undermines the wider function (purposes) of the Green Belt across the area as a whole once. It would be better that this assessment was done as part of plan making stage. This would not be too onerous to do. It is felt that the glossary for Grey Belt should be amended, in relation to this point, to say:

Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the green belt comprising Previously Developed Land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes (as defined in para 140 of this Framework) and where development would not fundamentally undermine the function / purposes of the Green Belt across the area as a whole , but excluding those areas or assets of particular importance listed in footnote 7 of this Framework (other than land designated as Green Belt).

Sustainability factors (as referenced in paragraph 15 of the consultation document) and landscape sensitivity would form better considerations for determining whether land meets the definition of 'grey belt'. This should be in addition to the contribution that land makes to the Green Belt purposes.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that councils will have the resources to carry out the assessments internally and keep them under review. As such and given how critical they are to the application of the proposed NPPF revision / 'grey belt' definition, government should consider ring fenced funding to support LPA in commissioning this evidence.

Question 26: Do you have any views on whether our proposed guidance sets out appropriate considerations for determining whether land makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes?

The wording as set out in paragraph 10 on page 26 of the consultation document further explains what "limited contribution" to Green Belt means with reference to the Green Belt purposes and would be helpful as part of the definition of 'grey belt' in the Glossary of NPPF. The definition already makes reference to paragraph 11 (footnote 7); if national guidance could highlight that this excludes these designated areas of environmental importance. As it stands there is little in the way of guidance on the definition of 'limited contribution' (and methodologies for assessing this including recognising cumulative role of parcels) which will leave this too open to interpretation and lead to poor plan and decision-making.

Additional Oldham response

The additional guidance proposed at paragraph 10 of Chapter 5 will be needed to support the interpretation of 'grey belt'. However, further clarification is needed on:

- how 'strongly perform' against any Green Belt purpose will be defined, for example the Green Belt assessment carried for the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan presented assessment ratings as strong, moderate-strong, moderate, weak-moderate, weak or no contribution.
- how consideration should be given to Green Belt purpose 5 (e). This is concerned with assisting urban regeneration and the recycling of urban land. It can be argued that any Green Belt release would conflict with this purpose regardless of the quality of the Green Belt, as such the impact can be difficult to quantify from a performance perspective. It may therefore need to be made clear that 'grey belt' is land which makes a limited contribution to any of purposes a to d in NPPF (so excluding purpose e)).
- point a) states land which makes a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes will 'not strongly perform against any Green Belt purpose'. Why then are the two Green Belt purposes of 'to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another' and 'to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns' specifically referred to under b ii) and iv)? This is confusing and repetitive. As currently worded it effectively prioritises certain Green Belt purposes above others (which are being ignored). It would be of greater use to provide further guidance on sustainability factors (as referenced in paragraph 15) and landscape sensitivity.
- what constitutes 'substantial built development' - this will be needed to provide certainty to local communities, developers and LPAs as to what form of development is applicable.

Question 27: Do you have any views on the role that Local Nature Recovery Strategies could play in identifying areas of Green Belt which can be enhanced?

A Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is currently being developed within Greater Manchester and this will identify a related local nature recovery network. Whilst some of these sites already have high value in terms of biodiversity, significant opportunities will exist within the network to enhance these areas. The role of LNRSs is not to allocate or designate sites like a local plan, but to identify areas where measures could benefit nature which may well include land already in the Green Belt but also non-Green Belt land. However, further guidance is needed from government on the broader question (of which this issue is just one) of how local plans should take account of LNRS.

Land release through plan-making (release of Green Belt and sequential approach)

Under the existing NPPF, there is no requirement for LPAs to review Green Belt where they fall short of housing need. Through the revisions to national policy MHCLG propose to require LPAs to undertake a review where an authority cannot meet its identified housing, commercial or other need without altering Green Belt boundaries.

Development on brownfield land remains the priority. As such, a sequential test is proposed to guide the release Green Belt land as follows:

- 1. Previously developed land within in the Green Belt;*
- 2. Other 'grey belt' sites;*
- 3. Higher performing Green Belt sites where these can be made sustainable.*

Land that is safeguarded by existing environmental designations, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) will maintain their protection.

Whilst the consultation document clearly sets out the expectation that LPAs should seek to meet their development needs in full, MHCLG are also clear that the release of land should not be supported where doing so would fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole.

Question 28: Do you agree that our proposals support the release of land in the right places, with previously developed and grey belt land identified first, while allowing local planning authorities to prioritise the most sustainable development locations?

Yes, the approach set out is broadly supported. However, there are some concerns that the approach outlined in the supporting consultation material could, in some instances, lead to less sustainable patterns of development. It would be helpful if the sequential approach was based on whether sites were or could be made sustainable rather than by using specific categories of land beginning with PDL, through grey belt and moving to higher performing Green Belt parcels. There is potential for the approach to lead to identification of PDL that performs well as Green Belt and this should be taken into account. Furthermore, the approach does not take into account that land release in the Green Belt through the plan-making process should adhere to a site selection approach that delivers the proposed spatial strategy across an area.

Additional Oldham response

The 'presumption in favour', and footnote 7, contradicts the proposed sequential approach to the release of land. Further clarification is needed as to how a sequential approach would work in the context of 'presumption in favour' and footnote 7 where it references Green Belt, in terms of decision making and plan making.

At the PAS NPPF roadshow officers expressed that each stage did not need to be exhausted before moving onto the next stage (for example before moving from grey belt to Green Belt release). If this is the case this needs to be made clear in NPPF or guidance.

Question 29: Do you agree with our proposal to make clear that the release of land should not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole?

Agree with the proposal to make clear that the release of land should not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole. The Green Belt serves critical purposes, including preventing urban sprawl and safeguarding the countryside. Therefore, ensuring that any land release does not compromise these functions is essential for maintaining the integrity and sustainability of this part of the planning framework.

Therefore, it is important to provide clear criteria and guidelines for assessing whether the release of land would undermine the Green Belt's function. It is currently unclear how this test would operate when undertaken at either an individual district level or at a joint plan/SDS level. Clarification on this process will help local authorities make informed decisions and ensure consistency in the application of the policy.

In summary, while the proposal is supported, the inclusion of detailed guidance to aid in its implementation and to protect the vital functions of the Green Belt is recommended.

Allowing development on the Green Belt through decision making

To support delivery of housing need in the short term and in advance of LPA's getting updated Local Plans in place and Green Belt reviews underway, MHCLG propose changes that support the release of Green Belt land outside the plan making process. The inclusion of a new paragraph (152) in NPPF is proposed as follows:

'In addition to the above, housing, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land in sustainable locations, the contributions set out in paragraph 155 below are provided, and the development would not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole; and*
- b. The local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with a buffer, if applicable, as set out in paragraph 76) or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was below 75% of the housing requirement over*

the previous three years; or there is a demonstrable need for land to be released for development of local, regional or national importance.

c. Development is able to meet the planning policy requirements set out in paragraph 155.'

Question 30: Do you agree with our approach to allowing development on Green Belt land through decision making? If not, what changes would you recommend?

Although the introduction of paragraph 152 is broadly supported there are a number of questions that need to be considered in order to make the policy effective. The clear intention from the consultation Chapter five, paragraphs 19 and 20, is that the policy approach set out in the revised NPPF paragraph 152 should only apply to grey belt land. However the policy wording does not explicitly state that the approach only applies to grey belt land, therefore it is suggested that this point is reinforced by the addition of the word 'only' so that policy 152 (a) would read "...would utilise only grey belt land". This would provide clarity to the decision maker.

Clarification is also required on how unmet commercial or other need is to be calculated. Unlike housing need there is no standard methodology for calculating these other types of need.

There are potential implications extending from the application of proposed paragraph 152 (b) and the interrelationship with the proposed new standard methodology for calculating housing need. This potentially poses significant issues for districts without a five-year housing land supply and could lead to significant grey and Green Belt release which could significantly undermine the delivery of development on brownfield sites. Therefore, consideration should be given to how this proposed policy approach plays out when considered against the purposes of Green Belt and specifically paragraph 140 (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 152 could also benefit from the removal of the duplication of reference to paragraph 155. It would seem logical to delete part (c) of the proposed policy wording, but also to retain the word 'and' between paragraph 152 parts (a) and (b).

Additional Oldham response

It is not clear whether draft paragraph 155 is intended for the contribution(s) to be provided for on-site or off-site and whether they are required to compensate the remaining Green Belt or if they could apply to nearby / adjacent areas which are not in the Green Belt. This needs to be clearer. It is assumed that 155a (relating to the provision of at least 50% affordable housing) would be on-site, on the land to be released from the Green Belt, however this and what points b) and c) would relate to is not clear.

To support preparation of Places for Everyone a Stage 2 Green Belt Study – Identification of Opportunities to Enhance the Beneficial use of the Green Belt (01.1.12)¹ was carried which

¹ GM Green Belt study .7.1.12 available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/pfe-previous-stages/places-for-everyone-2021-regulation-19/supporting-documents-2021/?folder=\07%20Greener%20Places#fList>

provides opportunities for enhancing the surrounding Green Belt which includes recreational and access improvements, as well as biodiversity and wildlife and landscape and visual amenity. This is broader than what is suggested by draft paragraph 155. It may be better to let the decision-making process determine the most suitable compensatory measures.

Finally, allowing Green Belt development triggered by under delivery of housing through decision-making contradicts the commitment to a 'plan-led system'. It does not allow for the loss of Green Belt to be considered through an evidence-based approach and includes no provisions for the appropriateness of proposals to be considered in line with local evidence (i.e. Green Belt assessments) which consider the wider and cumulative impact of development on the Green Belt.

Supporting release of Green Belt land for commercial and other development

The consultation document sets out Government's support for the release of Green Belt land to meet commercial and other development needs, as well as residential. In particular, MHCLG is seeking views on how to secure public benefits from non-housing development.

Question 31: Do you have any comments on our proposals to allow the release of grey belt land to meet commercial and other development needs through plan-making and decision-making, including the triggers for release?

We support the need for jobs growth and welcome the consideration of commercial and other development alongside that of housing as important factors for supporting growth in the local economy and identifying sufficient land based on locally identified need. We support allowing consideration of changes to the Green Belt, especially through plan-making, but also through a decision-making process that is sufficiently flexible to new and emerging opportunities.

The wording in new paragraph 142 states LPAs should review Green Belt boundaries to meet commercial and other development need in full where they cannot meet their identified need. Whilst there is no harm in explicitly stating this, LPAs were already able to release Green Belt land for non-residential uses citing unmet need as an exceptional circumstance prior to these changes.

It is important for local authorities to understand their economic markets locally, sub-regionally and nationally, where necessary, and that this is supported by an up-to-date assessment of their land supply. It would be the responsibility of local authorities to determine 'need' given the lack of guidance for non-residential development on this matter.

The proposed approach to releasing grey-belt land through decision-making is included within paragraph 152 which sets out circumstances where development would not be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, and which requires compliance with paragraph 155. The wording in paragraph 155 implies only major applications can meet the criteria so the implications for non-major applications are unclear. The requirement in paragraph 152(c) appears to be duplication of the requirement in 152(a) for development to comply with paragraph 155.

It is essential that major new development proposals have key infrastructure including power supply, water, full fibre broadband (or better) immediately available upon commencement. Access to the primary road and motorway network, as is the case for major logistics developments, are key locational considerations for such development and in turn the provision of bus services, walking, wheeling and cycling for local access are addressed by the development process.

Additional Oldham Comment:

If this is to relate to commercial and other types of development, it would be clearer of worded as follows:

'In addition to the above, housing, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where:

a. The development would utilise grey belt land in sustainable locations, the contributions set out in paragraph 155 below are provided, and the development would not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole; and, in relation to residential development,

b. The local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with a buffer, if applicable, as set out in paragraph 76) or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years; or there is a demonstrable need for land to be released for development of local, regional or national importance.'

Paragraph 152 c) could then be deleted.

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites

The consultation document sets out Government's intention to support the release of Green Belt land to address unmet needs for traveller sites. Seeking views on how the proposals under the NPPF would apply to traveller sites, particularly concerning the sequential test to guide release, the definition of grey belt and PDL, and proposals that are considered not to be inappropriate development.

Question 32: Do you have views on whether the approach to the release of Green Belt through plan and decision-making should apply to traveller sites, including the sequential test for land release and the definition of PDL?

Yes, it should apply to traveller sites. There is no clear evidence/justification to differentiate the need for traveller sites from any other housing need.

Additional Oldham response

Any approach needs to be within the context of paragraph 13 in Planning Policy for Travellers and the need to ensure that traveller sites are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally is most important.

Question 33: Do you have views on how the assessment of need for traveller sites should be approached, in order to determine whether a local planning authority should undertake a Green Belt review?

The same requirement should apply to undertaking a Green Belt review for traveller sites as for other development needs. There is no justification/evidence to support differentiation.

Golden rules to ensure public benefit

The consultation document sets out the Government's 'golden rules' which are proposed to ensure that major development on land released from the Green Belt benefits both communities and nature.

The 'golden rules' propose that the following are required where land is released from the Green Belt through plans or individual planning decisions:

- a). in the case of schemes involving the provision of housing, at least 50% affordable housing, with an appropriate proportion being Social Rent, subject to viability. The exact tenure split across affordable housing will be for LPA's to determine;*
- b). necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure, including delivery of new schools, GP surgeries, transport links, care homes and nursery places, to deliver well-designed, connected places, recognising that local leaders are best placed to identify the infrastructure that their communities need; and*
- c). the provision of new, or improvements to existing, local green spaces that are accessible to the public – where residential development is involved, new residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their homes, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite facilities.*

Question 34: Do you agree with our proposed approach to the affordable housing tenure mix?

The ability for Local Authorities to determine the appropriate affordable housing tenure mix, based on local circumstances and evidence of need, is supported.

Additional Oldham response

Whilst we want to encourage the development of affordable housing, Green Belt land is not always the most sustainable location for such provision.

In relation to paragraph 152a which states 'a. in the case of schemes involving the provision of housing, at least 50% affordable housing, with an appropriate proportion being Social Rent, subject to viability' – Annex 4 sets out that '(2) When determining planning applications, if land released from Green Belt is transacted above the benchmark land value and cannot deliver policy-compliant development, then planning permission should not be granted, **subject to other material considerations**.'. Clarification is needed as to what 'other material considerations' would make development acceptable in this situation. The focus for Green Belt development should be affordable housing, with a small amount of market housing where necessary for viability reasons.

The implications of paragraph 152b and 152c also need to be fully considered. It can be very difficult in more rural areas to provide and maintain infrastructure and services such as healthcare and schools, with current funding arrangements. Also, in relation to individual applications, gathering the amount of developer contributions needed to secure necessary infrastructure in rural areas could be very difficult and will likely mean infrastructure cannot be delivered to support the new homes.

Currently NPPF (paragraph 154f) allows for 'limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites)'. This is to be retained as part of the revised NPPF - what are the implications of the proposed changes to existing paragraph 154 f)?

Question 35: Should the 50 per cent target apply to all Green Belt areas (including previously developed land in the Green Belt), or should the Government or local planning authorities be able to set lower targets in low land value areas?

The 50% target for affordable housing on sites released from the Green Belt and major development in the Green Belt and permitted through Development Management provides a strong message in terms of delivering high levels of affordable housing. As NPPF 155a says, this is subject to viability, so Local Plans will need the ability to set lower targets if the viability evidence demonstrates the site would be unviable and undevelopable with 50% affordable housing. This ability to respond to viability issues is also important for Development Management, particularly to avoid previously developed Green Belt sites being unutilised / undeliverable and resulting in increased pressure to approve or release other sites due to lack of five-year supply or housing delivery test failure. If high levels of affordable housing are to be delivered on Green Belt sites, it is essential to ensure that these are in sustainable locations and residents are able to access job opportunities and local services via public transport and active travel.

Question 36: Do you agree with the proposed approach to securing benefits for nature and public access to green space where Green Belt release occurs?

Whilst the principle of securing benefits for nature and public access to green space is supported, this is something that should apply to all relevant development, irrespective of whether Green Belt release has occurred. The proposed approach may have unintended consequences. A link should be made to the Green Infrastructure Framework, which provides a clear set of green space requirements to inform delivery of benefits for nature and public access to green space. The Accessible Greenspace Standards, including Quality Standards and the Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide are of particular relevance to this question.

Additional Oldham response

Further guidance will be required on what constitutes a 'short walk'.

Question 37: Do you agree that Government should set indicative benchmark land values for land released from or developed in the Green Belt, to inform local planning authority policy development?

This appears helpful and would remove the need for land values to be determined on a case by case basis. However, without the correct transitional arrangements in place, the implementation / application of this new approach may take some time as legal agreements may already be in place on this type of land. Consideration may also need to be given as to how brownfield sites within Green Belt or Grey Belt sites should be treated. These sorts of sites may have an existing use value which is different to agricultural land. It is requested that a mechanism should be provided to enable such situations to be considered as specific variations, rather than resulting in all sites (the vast majority of which will be in agricultural land use) being treated on a site by site basis.

Question 38: How and at what level should Government set benchmark land values?

It is important that reasonable land values are set for development sites, however, these should be set at a level which do ensure that developments are fully policy compliant. From experiences in Greater Manchester, if NPPF were to set a BLV at 3 times agricultural value (approx £75,000 per hectare), it is likely that this would increase the "head room" for developments and, in turn, would result in developments being more viable and potentially capable of delivering all necessary planning obligations. Therefore, the value should be set lower than prevailing rates to improve the viability of developments.

Question 39: To support the delivery of the golden rules, the Government is exploring a reduction in the scope of viability negotiation by setting out that such negotiation should not occur when land will transact above the benchmark land value. Do you have any views on this approach?

Support this approach. The landowner and developer would both know what the benchmark land value is and the approach sets out realistic expectations on land value. This would speed up the determination of planning applications by removing endless viability debates and negotiation. This would also result in more certainty in infrastructure delivery for the public good. However, it should be noted that this proposal could have a detrimental effect on housing delivery in the short to medium term by rendering existing options significantly more difficult or impossible to trigger. The knock-on impact of this on land values (i.e. generally a reduction) would take some time to transmit through the system.

Question 40: It is proposed that where development is policy compliant, additional contributions for affordable housing should not be sought. Do you have any views on this approach?

Agree. LPAs should not impose developer contributions on affordable housing or other matters above policy requirements on applicants.

Question 41: Do you agree that where viability negotiations do occur, and contributions below the level set in policy are agreed, development should be subject to late-stage viability reviews, to assess whether further contributions are required? What support would local planning authorities require to use these effectively?

Agree. The use of "overage" clauses is now common place and important to enable LPAs and local communities to secure appropriate contributions to infrastructure, affordable housing

etc. Introducing these as standard practice in NPPF would formalise this process and be welcomed. In a similar way to LPAs needing expertise to "check" an applicant's viability appraisal, LPAs will need to have sufficient resources and expertise to check the final financial position, in an "open book" scenario. NPPF / PPG should make it clear that all such matters will be independently checked by or on behalf of the council, in an "open book" scenario, at the expense of the developer.

Question 42: Do you have a view on how golden rules might apply to non-residential development, including commercial development, travellers sites and types of development already considered 'not inappropriate' in the Green Belt?

Unlike housing (50% affordable) it is not clear what benefits the golden rules will deliver in relation to commercial or other non-residential development. The requirements appear to go no further than what would already be required for Green Belt release, for example, existing NPPF para 144 requires compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. Requirements could include:

- Greenspace requirements over and above what is already required provided on a strategic basis for residents of a wider surrounding area.
- Contributions to community infrastructure for communities that are accommodating the development.
- A requirement for affordable business space for start-up businesses.

Each or all of these could be off-site contributions.

Question 43: Do you have a view on whether the golden rules should apply only to 'new' Green Belt release, which occurs following these changes to the NPPF? Are there other transitional arrangements we should consider, including, for example, draft plans at the regulation 19 stage?

The golden rules should only apply to 'new' Green Belt release. Green Belt release being proposed through emerging plans will have been justified and evidenced as required under the current version of NPPF including viability assessment. The imposition of these new golden rules to advanced plans could result in delays and require additional resources including the need to update evidence. It may result in some allocations becoming unviable and plans failing at examination. Plans which have reached Reg 19 should be exempt.

Question 44: Do you have any comments on the proposed wording for the NPPF (Annex 4)?

The approach set out in Annex 4 is welcomed. The landowner and developer would both know what the benchmark land value is and the approach sets out realistic expectations on land value. This would speed up the determination of planning applications by removing endless viability debates and negotiation. This would also result in more certainty in infrastructure delivery for the public good. However, without the correct transitional arrangements in place, the implementation / application of this new approach may take some time as legal agreements may already be in place on this type of land. Clarity should also be provided in relation to whether all land released from the Green Belt (regardless of

the date it was released) would automatically trigger the provisions in proposed paragraph 2 of Annex 4. Additional clarification would be helpful as to what types of things could amount to "other material considerations" in Annex 4 (2).

Question 45: Do you have any comments on the proposed approach set out in paragraphs 31 and 32?

The GM Mayor (and LPAs in GM) are committed to working in a positive and constructive manner to resolve these types of issues, however they recognise the value of using CPO powers, if necessary, as a last resort. However, paragraphs 31 and 32 in chapter 5 relate only to developments on land within (or removed from) the Green Belt. The CPO process is an arduous process, which is usually time consuming and costly. A significant element of this being negotiations with regard to compensation. Therefore, whilst the approach set out in paras 31 and 32 is welcomed, it is essential that a similar approach is applied to CPOs within the urban area given the difficulties faced in delivering in these areas. Doing so would significantly reduce time and resources spent securing a CPO and would, in turn, increase delivery rates for development.

Question 46: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No comment

Chapter 6 – Delivering affordable, well-designed homes and places

Sets out Government's change to planning policy to support delivery of affordable housing. Proposing to strengthen planning obligations to ensure new developments provide more affordable homes and increase capacity for local authority's and housing association to build.

Views are also sought on proposals to further reform NPPF in relation to the promotion of mixed tenure development, community development, small sites, and design in a bid to support a more diverse housing market.

Delivering affordable housing

*The consultation document sets out the Government's intention to improve the existing system of developer contributions and to **not** implement the Infrastructure Levy as introduced in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.*

LPAs are considered best place to decide the right mix of affordable housing for their communities. Government proposes to:

- *set an expectation that housing needs assessments explicitly consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent and that authorities specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies.*
- *remove the requirement to deliver at least 10% of the total number of homes on major sites as affordable home ownership, as set out in paragraph 66 of the current NPPF.*

- *remove the requirement that a minimum of 25% of affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes, as set out in the 'Affordable Homes Update' Written Ministerial Statement of 24 May 2021. First homes would however remain a type of affordable housing that could be delivered where appropriate to meet local needs.*

Question 47: Do you agree with setting the expectation that local planning authorities should consider the particular needs of those who require Social Rent when undertaking needs assessments and setting policies on affordable housing requirements?

Yes. The addition of an explicit reference to Social Rent in paragraph 63 is welcomed as it specifically highlights the importance of the tenure and sets out a clear national expectation relating to how it should be considered through the planning system.

Social rent is truly affordable housing for those who are unable to access other tenures due to issues such as high house prices, and the increasing gap between rents and wages. There is a scarcity of social rent dwellings to meet the need of households on housing registers, a situation that has been exacerbated by the Right to Buy scheme. It is also clear that affordable rented dwellings are unaffordable to many households, particularly those on Universal Credit, with the increase in LHA caps compounding this problem. Any measure that has the potential to increase delivery of social rented dwellings as part of the addressing the housing crisis is supported.

Looking wider, the government needs to provide grant funding to significantly increase the delivery of social rented dwellings and look at devolved funding programmes as part of this.

Additional Oldham response

Oldham Council has announced a commitment to supporting the delivery of 600 social homes over the next five years.

Question 48: Do you agree with removing the requirement to deliver 10% of housing on major sites as affordable home ownership?

Yes. Whilst shared ownership and other home ownership models can clearly meet the needs of some households, it is considered that where social rent and affordable rent are most needed, LPAs should be able to set affordable housing requirements to reflect this. Given this, the removal of prescriptive / arbitrary requirements relating to prioritising the delivery of home ownership products, over affordable homes for rent, is welcomed. Removing the requirement has the potential to increase the delivery of affordable homes of a rented tenure, subject to considerations of viability.

Additional Oldham response

Nevertheless, we do feel that it would be useful to set a minimum requirement in national planning policy specifying a minimum proportion of affordable housing to be provided in development. This policy previously provided a useful baseline for discussions with developers and a basis from which local plan policies could build upon. Instead of reference to 'ownership' products, it is suggested that the policy should require 'XX% of the site, as a

minimum, to be for affordable homes, with tenure split as per local requirements (including social homes)'. It is felt that this would be useful for decision-making in the interim before local plans are introduced which, in line with evidence, could further increase the % and define a tenure split as may be appropriate.

Question 49: Do you agree with removing the minimum 25% First Homes requirement?

Yes. Removing the 25% First Homes requirement is supported. As per our response to question 48, it should be for the LPA to determine the tenure of affordable housing that will be sought as part of new developments having regard to evidence of local need rather than being stipulated nationally by government.

Question 50: Do you have any other comments on retaining the option to deliver First Homes, including through exception sites?

Retaining the option to deliver affordable housing in the form of First Homes is noted. However, the definition in the glossary needs to be expanded upon to provide greater clarity, including clarity in relation to the WMS from May 2021.

There are concerns over the First Homes model, particularly in terms of qualifying and eligibility criteria, and the administrative burdens it places on LPAs.

Should government be minded to retain First Homes as an option, it should be up to the LPA to determine if it is appropriate to require this as part of setting planning policies, consistent with our response to question 49.

Promoting mixed tenure development

Reflecting that the delivery of sites with a mix of tenures can provide a range of benefits the consultation document proposed to introduce a new policy that expects LPAs to take a positive approach in their delivery through plans and decisions.

Question 51: Do you agree with introducing a policy to promote developments that have a mix of tenures and types?

Yes. The benefits of mixed tenure sites are recognised and can clearly contribute to the creation of mixed communities. The introduction of specific policy requirements related to this have potential to assist in their deliverability, although it must be recognised that there may be viability issues and may not be compatible with some developer / Registered Provider models of delivery.

Additional Oldham response

The mix should be informed by local evidence and set out in local plans. The consultation document at paragraphs 6 and 7 of Chapter 6 is however confusing in that references interchange between 'delivering sites with a mix of tenures...' and the 'delivery of mixed-use sites....'. These are very different things and clarification is needed.

Supporting majority affordable housing developments

Consultation acknowledges that there may be circumstances in which single tenure development may be appropriate and, in particular, those seeking a high percentage of Social Rent should be supported. Views on the best way to promote such sites are sought alongside how best to support delivery of affordable housing in rural areas.

Question 52: What would be the most appropriate way to promote high percentage Social Rent/affordable housing developments?

Agree with the consultation document that there will be circumstances where predominantly (or exclusively) single tenure developments will be appropriate, for example where a development delivers a high percentage of social rent dwellings. Given this, paragraph 69 of the new NPPF should be amended to provide flexibility around the requirement for mixed tenure sites. This could include a recognition that single tenure sites could make a better contribution to meeting local needs than a mixed tenure site / it would better align with specific delivery models. Viability also needs to be a consideration in relation to this issue.

Ultimately, it should be a matter of planning judgement having regard to evidence of local needs as to whether a mixed tenure site, or single tenure site, is preferable. As part of this, it will be important to ensure that majority affordable housing developments are appropriately incorporated into the surrounding community to prevent social exclusion and ensure mixed communities.

Question 53: What safeguards would be required to ensure that there are not unintended consequences? For example, is there a maximum site size where development of this nature is appropriate?

Provision of flexibility as per our response to question 52 would ensure that there are not unintended consequences. There may be a size beyond which single tenure affordable housing development is unhelpful. If Government is minded to include something relating to this, the threshold should be quite high (250 dwellings). This threshold should be applied in a way which gives local discretion primacy where an evidenced case is made, including the consideration of need and the local context.

Question 54: What measures should we consider to better support and increase rural affordable housing?

Oldham response

By virtue of other proposed changes to Green Belt policy, it would follow that there would be an increase in rural affordable housing, given the location of Green Belt in the main.

Meeting the needs of looked after children

Paragraph 63 of the current NPPF lists the different groups that need to be considered when establishing local housing need. The consultation proposes to amend this paragraph to include an explicit reference to looked after children to ensure that an appropriate amount and type of accommodation, in the right locations, is planned for and provided.

Question 55: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 63 of the existing NPPF?

Yes. The proposed changes to paragraph 63 to refer to considering the need for looked after children is fully welcomed. As per the introduction to question 55, it is agreed that every child should have a loving, secure home close to their communities. However, it is critical that providers / developers work with the Local Authority and in particular the services with responsibility for looked after children, with any decisions made around proposed developments being based on local need and be clearly aligned to the sufficiency strategy. Additionally, account must be taken of local planning policy and impact on local services.

It is important that a change to a home in support of looked after children is seen as a material change, and therefore a planning application for planning permission should be sought. This would ensure a full consultation process can take place, understand each application on its merit and how it aligns to local plans and strategies, and give further opportunity to strengthen the connection to the local communities.

Delivering a diverse range of homes and high-quality places

Through the 2023 review of the NPPF, several amendments were made to enable planning authorities to support community-led housing. The changes to NPPF propose to strengthen those provisions by:

- a. including within the definition of ‘community-led development’ housing that is developed by a group originally set up for a purpose other than housebuilding; and*
- b. removing the size limit for community-led exception sites, where an alternative limit is established through the development plan.*

Question 56: Do you agree with these changes?

The changes referred seek to strengthen provisions relating to community-led housing. The change to the definition of Community-led development in Annex 2 is supported. The addition of text to footnote 39 to allow community-led exception sites of more than 1 hectare or to exceed more than 5% of the existing settlement, unless provision is made to exceed these limits is set in the development plan is noted. This will allow an LPA to have regard to specific needs within their district through the plan making process.

Question 57: Do you have views on whether the definition of ‘affordable housing for rent’ in the Framework glossary should be amended? If so, what changes would you recommend?

The definition of ‘affordable housing for rent’ should be amended to make it easier for organisations that are not Registered Providers to develop new affordable homes. Such organisations should include private limited companies where a local authority has significant control of that company. The definition should be further amended to explicitly allow affordable rent to be capped to LHA rates in order to support dealing with affordability

issues related to this tenure. As part of any changes, it will be important that there are assurances in regard to management of properties.

Outside of the scope of the NPPF, there needs to be a wider reform of policy relating to social rent setting, not least because LHA itself is overdue for reform.

Making the small site allocation mandatory

The consultation document sets out that most authorities preparing plans have been unable to identify the current NPPF requirement (set out in paragraph XX) for 10% of local plan allocations to be made up of small sites. Government express concern that SME housebuilders are not able to access the small sites that they need, and that LPAs are not bringing forward small sites in their plans to the level set out in the NPPF. Views are sought on why this is the case and how this could be improved. In particular:

- a. whether the 10% small site allocation should be required in all cases (removing the current caveat that there may be some places where strong reasons exist which mean this cannot be achieved);*
- b. what would be required to implement this more stringent approach, if pursued;*
- c. whether a definition distinguishing between small and medium sites would improve clarity; and*
- d. whether requiring authority-specific small-site strategies would help implement the 10% allocation.*

Question 58: Do you have views on why insufficient small sites are being allocated, and on ways in which the small site policy in the NPPF should be strengthened?

‘Small sites’ need to be defined. 0-9 homes is not a major application, but for some LPAs could be a large site, whereas in other areas this could be very small.

The need for an allocation is the critical question here. Small sites are often in locations where development is acceptable in principle and come forward naturally through the development management process. They are identified in Brownfield Registers and in Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. Allocating a site in a Local Plan is a long term process and is not necessary for most small sites; hence allocating them could actually slow delivery down.

A better approach may be to have a generic policy in Local Plans which sets out the local circumstances in which small sites (according to the appropriate local context/ definition) would be acceptable in principle. This would provide a level of certainty without adding to the depth of Local Plan preparation or directly affecting land values on particular parcels of land, increasing issues with viability and decreasing the positive impacts such developments could have/ provide.

Para 71 sets out how we can help to bring forward smaller sites but all put pressure on existing capacity and resources.

Additional Oldham response

Oldham Council is seeking to identify a programme of council-owned small sites available for development and will always support prospective SME developers in finding small sites for development should they seek assistance. However, as housing requirement increases, meeting the 10% requirement will be more difficult within available land supply. It should also be noted that in terms of delivery, evidence shows that in Oldham small sites are often slow to start and permissions for small site development are more likely to lapse, meaning they are not the most secure source of housing delivery.

Requiring 'well-designed' development

The importance of beauty in the built environment is recognised. However, the Government consider that the term is subjective and difficult to define. As such, they propose to remove references in NPPF to beauty and beautiful in relation to well-designed development.

Question 59: Do you agree with the proposals to retain references to well-designed buildings and places, but remove references to 'beauty' and 'beautiful' and to amend paragraph 138 of the existing Framework?

Yes. Determining something as beautiful and what is considered to be "beauty" can be subjective and it cannot be monitored or measured. Referencing something as well-designed can be critically assessed in terms of all contributing factors, ensuring that all areas of the NPPF policy requirements are addressed in the most appropriate way for the site or location in question.

For these reasons other references to 'beauty' and 'beautiful' should also be removed where they are in reference to aesthetics/ design.

Supporting upward extensions

Paragraph 124(e) of the Framework was updated in 2023 to include detailed wording to encourage the development of mansard roofs as an appropriate form of upward extension. The consultation document sets out the Government are in favour of schemes but considers it places a disproportionate emphasis on this form of development. The detail at paragraph 124 e) of the current NPPF is therefore proposed for deletion with a reference to 'mansard roofs' being included as an example.

Question 60: Do you agree with proposed changes to policy for upwards extensions?

No. While the removal of much of the wording around upward extensions is welcomed, the changes should go further and remove the upward extensions policy entirely from the NPPF.

This runs contrary to well-designed places and upward extensions should be dealt with by individual LPAs. They could also be covered through local design codes.

Question 61: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

Clarity is needed on the preparation, status and application of design codes. They should only be prepared where the LPA considers they add value and should not be a mandatory requirement for every LPA to prepare one.

Chapter 7 – Building infrastructure to grow the economy

This chapter outlines how the proposed NPPF changes aim to help support investment and construction of key modernised industries to support economic growth.

Building a stronger economy

The consultation document sets out how the changes to NPPF will provide particular support for the key industries of laboratories, gigafactories, digital infrastructure and freight and logistics. Changes are proposed to:

- *paragraph 86 b), to create a positive expectation that suitable sites for these types of modern economy uses are identified in local plan.*
- *paragraph 87, to ensure that the locational requirements identified reflect those of the key industries identified above.*

Question 62: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraphs 86 b) and 87 of the existing NPPF?

The changes are welcomed, in principle. Uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics have land use as well as infrastructure (transport, water and power) requirements and need to be planned for.

However, there is no consideration given to the scale of development that may be needed by these new industries, many of which may require significant internal and/or external areas for research and development and testing. This will be debated at length during plan-preparation.

Para 86b only requires policies to plan for ‘commercial development’, this is different to some of the industries and infrastructure types listed in para 87. The range of potential uses that would need to be planned for/ explored is extensive and open ended, allowing for any type of modern commercial or industrial development to be considered acceptable. Coupled with the ‘grey belt’ this has the potential to encourage purely speculative applications.

Question 63: Are there other sectors you think need particular support via these changes? What are they and why?

Yes – in addition to those sectors set out in the NPPF consultation, specific reference should be made to infrastructure as identified by the 2nd National Infrastructure Assessment. Overall investment in infrastructure needs to increase from an average of around £55 billion per year over the last decade to around £70 to 80 billion per year in the 2030s and £60 to £70 billion per year in the 2040s. This is a significant increase and will be challenging to deliver, but it is what is required to achieve low carbon and resilient infrastructure that supports economic growth and protects the environment, supporting growth of the green

economy, innovation and advanced manufacturing, which are key priorities for Greater Manchester.

Question 64: Would you support the prescription of data centres, gigafactories, and/or laboratories as types of business and commercial development which could be capable (on request) of being directed into the NSIP consenting regime?

Further detail is required. The NSIP process would still require engagement with the DNO, future RESP/NESO and local areas to understand other developments being planned (phasing and sequencing) and the impact on infrastructure capacity (e.g. water sector and transport) and would benefit from alignment with local growth plans (skills/investment zones/innovation/) to add value from and leverage businesses development opportunities.

The principle that local communities which host infrastructure in the national interest should capture a share of the benefits from these schemes is not always applied and needs to be addressed.

In addition, to be effective it will need to be supported by an increase in resources to the local planning authorities, the Planning Inspectorate and statutory consultees to ensure they are able to deal with the likely increase in the number of NSIP applications.

Question 65: If the direction power is extended to these developments, should it be limited by scale, and what would be an appropriate scale if so?

Limiting the power by scale would be logical and would ensure that only the most strategic schemes are dealt through the NSIP regime. This would also help to manage the resources required to support the NSIP regime.

Question 66: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

There is an existing and growing need for cremation and burial facilities, many of which due to other legislation such as the Cremation Act 1902 limit the areas they can otherwise be lawfully located in. Given the operations and processes required by these essential facilities, they too need to be supported by appropriate infrastructure and be planned for.

Currently only cemeteries and burial grounds are referenced in national policy, and only in relation to Green Belt. Crematoria and other types of resting place/ facility are not recognised at all. In all circumstances, there is no requirement for provision of such facilities to be considered at either the plan-making or decision taking stage, leaving it instead to the market and standalone planning applications.

There is a strong emphasis on new industries in the consultation document, however existing industry and employment sites also need protecting and play a vital role in supporting the economy.

Chapter 8 – Delivering community needs

Within this chapter views are sought on changes to the NPPF to support the provision of public infrastructure and to create sustainable, healthy communities.

Public infrastructure

Propose to:

- *amend paragraph 100 of the current NPPF to make clear that significant weight should be placed on the importance of facilitating new, expanded, or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development.*
- *Amend paragraph 99 of the current NPPF to reference early year and post-16 education places.*

Question 67: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 100 of the existing NPPF?

It is accepted that new development should contribute towards the provision of key public services infrastructure where the development generates the demand for these services. However, in emphasising that such provision should be given significant weight, there is a danger that this could be seen to outweigh the provision of other important requirements, such as the provision of open space or affordable housing.

Additional Oldham response

In addition, such wording may be used by applicants when applying a titled balance argument to inappropriate proposals within the Green Belt (not within Grey Belt land), whereas the onus is on the applicant to set out any exceptional circumstances currently.

Question 68: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 99 of the existing NPPF?

It is recognised that, in addition to school places, the provision of early years and post-16 places can play an important role in encouraging parents to rejoin the workforce and in developing the necessary skills for the future workforce. Developers should contribute towards such provision where this is necessary to meet the needs generated by the development.

A 'vision-led' approach to transport planning

The existing NPPF sets out that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stage of plan-making and development proposals, to ensure that impacts are recognised and addressed.

The consultation document sets out that planning for travel too often follows a simplistic 'predict and provide' pattern, with insufficient consideration given to the quality of places being create. Places are often therefore planned on the assumption of automatic traffic

growth or a worst-case scenario. To drive better outcomes for residents and the environment, the Government proposes that greater emphasis is given to setting a vision for how we want places to be and then designing transport and behavioural intervention to help achieve that vision. To achieve this, changes are proposed to paragraphs 114 and 115 to make reference to 'a vision led approach'.

Question 69: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraphs 114 and 115 of the existing NPPF?

We support the references to a 'vision led' approach in existing paragraph 114 which aligns with DfT Circular 01/2022 and the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040. Adopting a vision led approach offers the opportunity for more positive and integrated transport and land use planning with more meaningful application of the modal hierarchy, making sustainable modes central to achieving the vision for development rather than a residual consideration.

However, our experience of dealing with the Circular over the past 18 months has illustrated that there is considerable uncertainty within the industry of how vision led planning should work towards more positive transport outcomes.

A vision-led approach is fundamentally incompatible with the existing description of significant impacts based on highway capacity and congestion (paragraph 114d). The reference to highway-based terms (in existing paragraphs 114d and 115) infers that mitigation should focus on 'highways' and the 'road network'. This undermines the need for mitigation to be focussed around ensuring non-car access, place making, and tackling wider transport aims such as equitable access to opportunities, health and environmental goals.

In our experience, it is extremely challenging to cost effectively mitigate significant impacts from development through a 'vision led' approach – particularly whilst the definition of 'significant impacts' remains focussed on highway capacity and congestion. Indeed, a truly 'vision-led' scenario, providing real alternatives to car use by reallocating road space to cyclists and public transport, is likely to cause rather than mitigate significant impacts under the current definition.

In addition, the proposed 'in all tested scenarios' wording in existing paragraph 115 is open to significant differences in interpretation. Clarity is needed as to the definition of the word 'scenario' and if this relates to background growth or site-based mitigation packages. We would question whether the words 'in all tested scenarios' are beneficial to the update, given this uncertainty in interpretation.

Without clearer guidance, at local plan stage, the significant cost, time and complexity involved in undertaking multiple scenarios for traffic growth is likely to be prohibitive for many local authorities. At the planning application stage, agreement of scenarios between multiple stakeholders is also likely to be time consuming.

We would suggest that existing paragraphs 114 d) and 115 are reworded as follows:

114 d). “Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (~~in terms of capacity and congestion~~), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree, and measures to ensure non-car access (to a range of key facilities) can be provided to an acceptable degree through a vision led approach.”

115. “Development should only be prevented or refused on ~~highways~~ transport grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on ~~highway~~ the safety of the transport network, or the residual cumulative impacts on the ~~road~~ transport network would be severe, or non-car access cannot be provided to an acceptable degree in all tested scenarios.”

Supporting guidance will be needed to define how a ‘vision led’ approach and ‘scenarios’ should be implemented to avoid slowing down the planning process and to support positive transport outcomes. We would also welcome consideration of updated metrics (not just ratio of flow to capacity and queue lengths on the road network) for how significant and severe impacts are defined.

Promoting healthy communities

The consultation document seeks views on the ways in which the planning system can support the creation of healthy communities, including for example tackling obesity, encouraging active travel and supporting a healthy childhood, such as through more consistent approaches to controlling hot food takeaways near schools. Views are sought on whether, and how, national policy could provide greater direction and clarity on the promotion of health through local plans and planning decisions.

Question 70: How could national planning policy better support local authorities in (a) promoting healthy communities and (b) tackling childhood obesity?

(a) The importance of health in the overall planning balance of decision-making under the presumption in favour of sustainable development is low in ranking alongside other factors in the NPPF. There are several subject areas that are given specified ‘weight’ of various degrees in the consultation draft NPPF including the need to support economic growth and productivity, the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements, harm to the Green Belt, the need to support energy efficiency, impact on a designated heritage asset and the benefits of mineral extraction. Health does not currently enjoy such a reference to give it the necessary planning weight. It is therefore suggested that a more assertive statement about the weight given to health considerations (e.g. public health, community health, determinants of health, life choices) would assist decision-makers where it is clear that a scheme such as a hot food takeaway or drive thru restaurant would have unacceptable impacts on the health of the local population.

With respect to providing greater clarity on the promotion of health through local plans and planning decisions, it would be helpful if the term ‘healthy communities’ could be defined in the glossary and/or in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The section ‘What is a healthy place?’ is currently within the PPG but it is not clear whether this is the same as a healthy community. It is suggested that a healthy community should, as a minimum, support individuals to make decisions that allow them to have a healthy lifestyle such as maintaining

a good diet, drinking responsibly, and providing opportunities for physical activity through active travel and sport and recreation.

Finally, in an extension of efforts made in 2020 to increase the ability of local planning authorities to manage uses that have a detrimental impact on health e.g. hot food takeaways was moved from use class A5 to sui generis, the Use Classes Order could be amended to move other harmful uses into the sui generis classification including vape shops and establishments that sell tobacco, for which no policy levers currently exist.

(b) The PPG includes guidance on how planning can create a healthier food environment and this notes that the limit of the proliferation of particular uses may be appropriate and such policies and proposals may have regard to a list of issues including proximity to locations where children and young people congregate, evidence of deprivation/health inequalities, over-concentration of uses, odours, noise, traffic impact and litter.

Some local authorities including Gateshead MBC and Newcastle City Council have rolled this advice into SPDs and these have been very successful in resisting applications for hot food takeaways. An increasing proportion of local authorities have prepared policies in Local Plans and SPDs on this subject although there is an inconsistency of approach, as noted in the consultation paper, and some have suffered the threat of legal challenge as global fast food operators are able to easily mount a case against them. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 contains provision for National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) which would focus on 'issues that apply in most areas', and it is suggested that the control of hot food takeaways informed by the advice in Paragraph 004 of the Healthy and safe communities' section of the PPG form part of the NDMPs. This would elevate the importance of the issue and provide greater direction for decision makers, thereby weakening the position of power currently occupied by commercial operators. The NDMP could also cover the restriction of opening hours within close proximity to schools to limit the opportunity for pupils to access takeaway food as part of the school day.

A change to the Use Classes Order to close a loophole for some fast-food operators where they are currently exempt from being treated as a hot food takeaway would also be a welcome change in tackling childhood obesity. Under the present Use Classes Order, Greggs (for example) have been able to agree with local authorities that proposals for drive-thru restaurants can be considered as Class E and not sui-generis on account of the sale of food and drink being consumed mostly on the premises and because food is delivered to the site prepared and kept warm prior to sale. The presence of a drive-thru lane does still however give rise to the potential for consumption off-premises. Moreover, the Class E status means that other uses within that class can change to this use without planning permission, and there is no opportunity for a local authority to manage the impacts of such when in close proximity to schools. Whilst it is accepted that planning decisions need to be made with the use and development of land in mind, in areas with high and increasing rates of obesity in particular, the emphasis needs to be on the quality of the produce the operators are selling and how this can detrimentally impact the chances of a healthy lifestyle for children and young people.

Question 71: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

With respect to providing greater clarity on the promotion of health through local plans and planning decisions, it would be helpful if the term 'healthy communities' could be defined in the glossary and/or in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The section 'What is a healthy place?' is currently within the PPG but it is not clear whether this is the same as a healthy community. It is suggested that a healthy community should as a minimum support individuals to make decisions that allow them to have a healthy lifestyle such as maintaining a good diet, drinking responsibly, and providing opportunities for physical activity through active travel and sport and recreation.

Chapter 9 – Supporting green energy and the environment

This chapter seeks views on revisions to the NPPF to increase support for renewable energy schemes, tackle climate change and safeguard environmental resources.

It also considers what changes should be made to the NSIP regime to meet our ambitions to deliver green energy, supplementing those that will be brought forward through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. As part of this the consultation document seeks views on whether technological advancements mean a change to the thresholds at which projects can be considered nationally significant. Beyond the changes to NPPF Government proposed to make legislative changes to accelerate existing processes, to speed up delivery of critical infrastructure.

Supporting onshore wind

The Government has committed to radically increasing onshore wind energy by 2030. On 8 July, the Chancellor announced that footnotes 57 and 58 to paragraph 163 of the existing NPPF, which placed additional tests on onshore wind schemes would no longer apply to decisions. These tests meant proposals for onshore wind projects could only be considered acceptable if:

- a. they were in areas allocated in a local or development plan or through Local Development Orders Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders; and*
- b. the proposal had proven community support.*

These tests created a very high bar for consent to be granted and are considered to have led to very significant under-delivery of onshore wind schemes. The changes announced by the Chancellor seek to promote the delivery of onshore wind projects to meet the target set to double generation from onshore wind by 2030. To fulfil this commitment the consultation document proposed that onshore wind is re-integrated into the NSIP regime.

Question 72: Do you agree that large onshore wind projects should be reintegrated into the NSIP regime?

It is considered a positive move to remove barriers to onshore wind consenting. Onshore wind forms an important component of the UK becoming self-sufficient in energy and meeting the Government's goal of decarbonizing the country's electricity system by 2030 to become net zero. Integrating large onshore wind projects into the NSIP regime will provide a consistent, fairer and faster way of dealing with proposals put forward by the wind energy industry. Capacity and resources within the National Infrastructure Planning (NIP) Team at the Planning Inspectorate should be sufficiently resourced to support the timely consideration of applications made under this regime in order to support the delivery of these goals.

Supporting renewable deployment

Amendments are proposed to paragraph 163 in the existing NPPF to direct decision makers to give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation, and proposals' contribution to meeting a net zero future.

There is also a stronger expectation that authorities proactively identify sites for renewable and low carbon development when producing plans, where it is likely that in allocating a site, it would help secure development.

The consultation document recognises that development of renewables may be proposed in sensitive areas which may include valuable habitats that provide carbon sequestration, including peatlands which are critical for mitigation and adaptation, and provide key habitats for biodiversity. As such, proposals would still be subject to the policy requirements set out in the framework alongside other environmental safeguards.

Question 73: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the NPPF to give greater support to renewable and low carbon energy?

In general, the amendments to the NPPF could go much further to support the transition to net zero, however the proposed amendments are supported. The government has not yet published how it intends to achieve the overall carbon reduction target that has been adopted, and more ambitious policies in the NPPF could form an important tool to deliver these national targets.

The changes to paragraph 160 (now 161) would benefit from further guidance and support so that there is a clear methodology to carry out the process of identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources. Providing national guidance on this topic will help plan-makers to prepare consistent and robust evidence to streamline this process and maximise the impact of the change.

For paragraph 163 there is potentially scope to expand on the weight given to energy efficiency/low carbon heating improvements in the context of the historic environment (whilst still acknowledging statutory protections) to give greater clarity to decision-makers.

Guidance and policy levers should be enhanced to encourage greater use of bio-solar installations on roofs and in fields (where appropriate), to promote the wider delivery and co-benefits of protecting and enhancing biodiversity with the generation of renewable electricity.

Additional Oldham response

Regarding proposed paragraph 161 this places a greater emphasis on LPAs identifying areas of search for wind energy and paragraph 165 still remains (paragraph number repeated) relating to suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy. Therefore, this still suggests that evidence for areas of search for acceptable wind energy proposals are required to give certainty which may slow decisions on such proposals (where they are not incorporated into the NSIP regime).

LPAs could assess an application for wind turbines without areas being identified. Chapter 9 of the consultation document highlights that proposals would still be required to meet other

policy requirements therefore the NPPF should encourage LPAs to identify suitable areas for developments such as wind energy but remove paragraph 165, so that proposals can be assessed on their own merits.

Question 74: Some habitats, such as those containing peat soils, might be considered unsuitable for renewable energy development due to their role in carbon sequestration. Should there be additional protections for such habitats and/or compensatory mechanisms put in place?

Yes, the poor condition of peat landscapes in Greater Manchester is currently causing the emission of around 190,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year (upland and lowland peat combined). Greater clarity needs to be provided in relation to the status of peatland habitats within the NPPF definition of irreplaceable habitats. Active raised bog should be included within the definition of irreplaceable habitats. Greater clarity needs to be provided as to whether or not deep agricultural peat (which may once have been raised bog but is now severely degraded) counts as irreplaceable habitat or not, as the current lack of clarity causes difficulties for developers, local planning authorities and Inspectors and leads to costly debates and inconsistent decisions. Ensuring the opportunity from renewable energy deployment in upland peat areas is capitalised is important - there will be a need to identify the impact of the development on the peat and its restorability and the compensation required to mitigate this impact (either on-site, or off-site). In this regard, the impacts of solar are likely to be significantly less than wind in relation to the impact on peat soils; the NPPF should not conflate the two given this.

This should link to the work referenced in paragraph 160 (now 161) around identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources - assessment could also look at areas which play (or could play) an important carbon sequestration role to ensure this feeds into the analysis of suitable locations for renewable energy development.

Question 75: Do you agree that the threshold at which onshore wind projects are deemed to be Nationally Significant and therefore consented under the NSIP regime should be changed from 50 megawatts (MW) to 100MW?

With individual onshore turbines as large as 10-15MW, keeping a 50MW limit would see a significant proportion of onshore proposals forced into NSIP. However, the lift to 100 MW seems fairly arbitrary, it should be based on an assessment of the size of site/infrastructure previously deployed when the limit was first set and then converting this to the MW size based on technology development. Also, there is an argument to say that given this development, using MW for the threshold is not a good measure and could be done on size of site, or other metrics instead. Additionally, there may be a role for local planning authorities and/or statutory bodies in determining whether impact is considered to be significant enough to be considered an NSIP.

Question 76: Do you agree that the threshold at which solar projects are deemed to be Nationally Significant and therefore consented under the NSIP regime should be changed from 50MW to 150MW?

Generally supportive of efforts to increase local decision making on solar projects, however 150MW is a very sizeable solar array geographically. It would be useful to understand the decision around why 150MW is the new threshold - is there any evidence of the capacities of sites which have submitted <50MW to avoid NSIP which had capacity for significantly more generation? 50MW to 150MW is a substantial increase, is there capacity in planning teams to take on these applications? Will additional training be provided to give planning teams the knowledge/skills needed to assess a proposal of this scale in house? There could be caveats/ considerations as to where proposed PV generation is matched to - local need or a PPA to another part of the country.

Question 77: If you think that alternative thresholds should apply to onshore wind and/or solar, what would these be?

Thresholds should consider the relative energy density increases provided by modern turbines and PV panels.

Tackling climate change

Views are sought on the range of ways in which stronger action can be taken to tackle climate change through national planning policy.

Question 78: In what specific, deliverable ways could national planning policy do more to address climate change mitigation and adaptation?

On mitigation, this could potentially form part of the work referenced in paragraph 160 (now 161) around identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources - assessment could also look at areas which play an important carbon sequestration role to ensure this feeds into the analysis of suitable locations for renewable energy development.

On adaptation, the full implementation of Schedule 3 as currently proposed needs to happen. This would provide a stronger emphasis on sustainable drainage solutions in new development and provide an independent voice through SAB's to do this. By adhering to the 4 pillars of SuDS approach other climate change betterments can be delivered including carbon sequestration, as well as many other environmental and social benefits, supporting a placed based planning approach to ensuring all new development is climate resilient. SuDS solutions including planting of trees in new development and retrofit in high urbanised areas both mitigate and sequester carbon. Trees and other vegetation planted in the right places can help improve urban air quality on a local scale by forming a barrier between people and pollutants and also remove some particulate pollution from the air.

Question 79: What is your view of the current state of technological readiness and availability of tools for accurate carbon accounting in plan-making and planning decisions, and what are the challenges to increasing its use?

One challenge is likely to be the lack of existing technical skills/experience to utilise the tools (for applicants, plan-making teams and in development management when it comes to assessing applications). Could standardised training be provided to authorities to ensure a baseline level of knowledge to inform carbon accounting decision making, but this would also need to be supported by sufficient staff resources. It may also be that a standardised tool to help assess whole life carbon impacts of proposed development would be useful. Embedding any tool fully is likely to be a resource intensive process and would require suitable weight given to their outputs in the planning process to be effective.

Question 80: Are any changes needed to policy for managing flood risk to improve its effectiveness?

Schedule 3 must be implemented, as per our response to Q78.

Masterplanning should be required of larger sites in respect to climate change resilience measures that will provide multiple environmental benefits not just flooding. E.g. water quality etc. (hence stronger buy in of SuDS required). Some of this may be picked up through BNG but will fall down where BNG offsetting is being provided against other sites.

More guidance should be provided on how surface water flood risk should be considered when allocating sites. NPPF (or NPPG) could address each type of flood risk separately together with the approach that should be taken rather than combining them all together. NPPF could also be stronger regarding sustainable drainage systems in encouraging greenfield run off rates and a stronger stance on encouraging SUDS with multifunctional benefits.

Consideration should be given to implications resulting from minor applications where rules re SuDS may not apply in the same way due to the scale of the development. Where several minor sites are within the same location, cumulatively they can cause issues, where surface water is not dealt with on site. When master planning drainage solutions on large sites, with multiple developers, there needs to be a more holistic approach to the site as opposed to individual developers working within their own boundaries. Guidance should support this approach.

Currently fluvial flood risk is the main driver for flood risk assessments and any conditions put on development e.g. raising of flood levels. Next year new surface water flood risk data will be available and CDAs have been mapped. Stronger consideration should be given to surface water risk in any development. Policy could give stronger powers to the LLFA and SAB (if brought in) to ensure resilience is built into the design and built per the design.

Additional resource is needed to ensure enforcement, but the policy must be in place to secure good practice and enforcement if necessary.

The resource challenge must be addressed as the effective implementation of both existing and proposed policy is critical to managing flood risk.

Question 81: Do you have any other comments on actions that can be taken through planning to address climate change?

The chapter on climate change should be moved to an earlier section of the NPPF to highlight its importance in underpinning planning for the future. 'Net zero' is only mentioned once in the whole NPPF draft under paragraph 164. Net zero is such an important concept and target to deliver, that it should be embedded throughout the whole of national policy, and in particular the consideration of sustainable development.

More stringent build quality should be required for new builds to ensure buildings are more airtight and well insulated, reducing energy bills and carbon emissions, and making them easier to cool in the summer; this should be dealt with through enhanced building standards. In order to make them mandatory, net zero carbon for operational emissions for residential development should be introduced as quickly as possible through building regulations. Recognising that these standards are harder to develop for non-residential development, net zero standards should be introduced in as timely a manner as possible for these types of development. This will avoid the proliferation of different standards being sought across the country which are confusing and costly to evidence by councils, and confusing and costly to implement for developers. However, in the absence of net zero carbon being urgently introduced through building regulations, at the very least the WMS from December 2023 should be revoked, to allow local plans to set policies which go beyond the current building regulations, and thus enable boroughs to meet their climate emergency declaration targets.

National evidence should be prepared on the topic of the urban heat island effect, and this should be used to justify specific design interventions in planning policy that councils can then require for planning applications. This could include advice on the albedo effect of materials, the benefits of green infrastructure, green roofs and walls, and the importance of purge ventilation. Standards should be set for tree planting and cool communal zones in high density development, to allow people places to congregate and receive cooling respite during heat waves.

For heritage assets, a switch towards a more balanced flexible approach should be adopted for retrofit to improve energy efficiency of development and minimise carbon emissions. The climate emergency is causing numerous excess deaths, but in many instances the consideration of heritage take primacy due to a lack of understanding of the threat to human health of carbon emissions.

Availability of agricultural land for food production

In December 2023, a footnote was added to the existing NPPF that made the availability of agricultural land for food production an explicit consideration in determining if sites are appropriate for development. With the other safeguards in place MHCLG do not consider

that this is needed and are therefore proposing to the remove the following text from the footnote:

'The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside other policies in this Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development.'

Question 82: Do you agree with removal of this text from the footnote?

Agree text should be removed.

Question 83: Are there other ways in which we can ensure that development supports and does not compromise food production?

Policies elsewhere in NPPF provide sufficient safeguards and no further change is needed.

Supporting water resilience

Consultation document seeks views on how Government can provide water undertakers with greater certainty on the planning route for their new strategic water infrastructure, to support faster delivery, helping to address the issues we are increasingly seeing with water scarcity and quality. As part of this it is proposed to amend Planning Act 2008 Planning Act to bring into the definition of NSIP:

- a. water infrastructure projects that are designed to be used intermittently but provide significant peak water supplies during droughts;*
- b. the construction, maintenance or operation of water infrastructure by a third party on behalf of a water undertaker;*
- c. water recycling, which will be an important option for securing water supplies and one that is commonly used around the world; and*
- d. infrastructure which transfers treated drinking water.*

Question 84: Do you agree that we should improve the current water infrastructure provisions in the Planning Act 2008, and do you have specific suggestions for how best to do this?

Yes. A high-quality water infrastructure is essential in delivering sustainable growth, particularly having regard to the challenges associated with climate change. It would therefore seem appropriate to ensure that the water infrastructure elements of the 2008 Act reflect the most up to date views in terms of delivering the infrastructure improvements required. It is suggested current provisions should be improved, with a focus on green/blue nature-based solutions. The 2008 Act utilises the provisions in the 1991 water industry act and should be updated to government response to the NICs recommendations on surface water 2023, the Plan for water 2023, and NICs infrastructure planning recommendations 2023. Catchment plans, reform to local flood risk strategies and future water industry reform etc.

Question 85: Are there other areas of the water infrastructure provisions that could be improved? If so, can you explain what those are, including your proposed changes?

Yes - the current approach to water infrastructure is highly fragmented and there is a move towards integrated water management planning, with the example of Greater Manchester. New development should be part of the solution rather than contributing to a problem that tax and bill payers have to pay to resolve.

Question 86: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

There is a need to take an integrated approach to water management., and integrated catchments models are rarely used except in London. Therefore, unlike other planning forecasts - housing, jobs, LNRS etc there is no incentive to plan for the water environment to determine the outcomes that the SDS/Local Plan should be trying to achieve and the trade-offs required. The focus on water is limited to flood risk which is one component i.e. not supply/demand/water neutrality /catchments/approach to surface water/management of water on or off-site/integration with DWMPs (Drainage and Waste Water Management Plans) etc.

Additional Oldham response

NPPF or building regulations could require the optional standard on water efficiency, introduced in 2015.

Chapter 10 – Changes to local plan intervention criteria

This chapter seeks views on whether to update the local plan intervention policy criteria or to remove the criteria, to better align with the Government’s priorities for planning to be a key driver for growth.

If the policy criteria for intervention were removed Ministers would approach any future decisions on intervention on a case by case and LPAs would be given the opportunity to set out any exceptional circumstances that might be relevant.

Alternatively, the policy criteria could be revised. Under this scenario, the following proposed new policy criteria would apply in addition to the legal tests set out in the 2004 Act:

‘Local planning authorities that fail to do what is required to get their plan in place, or keep it up to date, would be at risk of government intervention. A range of intervention options exist, from the issuing of plan-making directions through to the removal of plan-making powers, where the Secretary of State would arrange for a plan to be prepared in consultation with local people, and then brought into force. Decisions on intervention should have regard to:

a. local development needs; b. sub regional, regional, and national development needs; or c. plan progress.

The Secretary of State will give planning authorities an opportunity to put forward any exceptional circumstances in relation to intervention action.’

Question 87: Do you agree that we should we replace the existing intervention policy criteria with the revised criteria set out in this consultation?

Incorporation of the local plan intervention criteria into NPPF is supported. The local plan intervention criteria are found in the 2017 Housing White Paper, and subsequently through a Written Statement in the House of Commons on 16 November 2017. The criteria have been used on several occasions in recent years. It is important that there is transparency and that local authorities know the basis on which decisions to intervene are taken. It does not seem reasonable to rely on wording in a White Paper when national policy is being updated.

Question 88: Alternatively, would you support us withdrawing the criteria and relying on the existing legal tests to underpin future use of intervention powers?

No. See response to Q87.

Chapter 11 – Changes to planning application fees and cost recovery for local authorities related to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

This chapter seeks views on whether to raise planning application fees, and whether to introduce statutory cost recovery for local planning authorities for their role in applications for development consent under the NSIP regime.

The consultation document recognises that the current planning fee levels do not generate enough income to cover the full costs of some planning applications. It is considered that reducing this shortfall will help to ensure that planning departments are better resourced and would support greater financial sustainability for local planning authorities by reducing the current pressure on wider council budgets, funded by the local taxpayer, that are relied upon by many authorities to cover funding shortfalls.

Proposed fee increase for householder applications

The current fee for householder applications is £258. The consultation document proposes that the fee for householder applications should be increased to £528 to meet cost recovery levels.

Question 89: Do you agree with the proposal to increase householder application fees to meet cost recovery?

Oldham response

Yes.

Question 90: If no, do you support increasing the fee by a smaller amount (at a level less than full cost recovery) and if so, what should the fee increase be? For example, a 50% increase to the householder fee would increase the application fee from £258 to £387.

Oldham response

N/A

If Yes, please explain in the text box what you consider an appropriate fee increase would be.

Oldham response

A minimum of £528.

Question 91: If we proceed to increase householder fees to meet cost recovery, we have estimated that to meet cost-recovery, the householder application fee should be increased to £528. Do you agree with this estimate?

Oldham response

Yes

If No, please explain in the text box below and provide evidence to demonstrate what you consider the correct fee should be.

Oldham response

N/A

Proposed fee increase for other planning applications

In addition to householder applications, it is considered that other applications where the estimated costs to local planning authorities are greater than the fee received are:

- *applications for prior approval before exercising certain permitted development rights;*
- *section 73 applications for the variation or removal of conditions to a planning permission; and*
- *applications for the approval of details reserved by condition.*

Views are sought on whether there are any other applications for which the current fee is inadequate.

Question 92: Are there any applications for which the current fee is inadequate? Please explain your reasons and provide evidence on what you consider the correct fee should be.

Oldham response

The fees paid to discharge conditions are unlikely to cover the costs associated with discharging these. Fee should be a proportion of the original planning application fee (for each application made) being a minimum of 10%.

An increase is needed for all Prior Approval Applications to meet costs of processing these applications given the number of subject matters that must be considered. As such, this should be raised to a minimum of £500 per application.

Fees for applications where there is currently no charge

There are some applications which are not currently subject to fees. These include listed building consents, consent to undertake relevant demolition in a conservation area, and works to trees that are protected because they are located in a conservation area or by a Tree Preservation Order. Fees are not charged for these applications as owners cannot opt out of these designations and such designations confer burdens with regard to preservation and maintenance that are in the public interest. However, the consultation document recognises that each of these applications incurs costs to local planning authorities.

Question 93: Are there any application types for which fees are not currently charged but which should require a fee? Please explain your reasons and provide evidence on what you consider the correct fee should be.

Oldham response

Applications for Listed Building Consent should have a minimum fee of £200.

Associated discharge of conditions attached to Listed Building Consents should be a minimum of £50 per submission.

Localisation of planning application fees

The consultation document recognises that nationally set fees do not always reflect the full costs for all LPAs. Allowing LPAs to set their own fees would enable authorities to cover the actual costs specific to that authority in determining planning applications. However, the localisation of planning fees could lead to greater variance between local planning authorities, as well as complexity for applicants and the development sector, who may pay different fees for the same category of development for different local planning authorities.

As part of the consultation views are sought on two possible models for the localisation of planning fees:

- *Model 1 – full localisation, which assumes that fees would no longer be set nationally. Instead, all LPAs would have to set their own planning fees.*
- *Model 2 – local variation, which would maintain a nationally set default fee but give local planning authorities the option to vary the fees within prescribed limits where they consider the nationally set fee does not meet their actual costs.*

Question 94: Do you consider that each local planning authority should be able to set its own (non-profit making) planning application fee?

Please give your reasons in the text box below.

Oldham response

No.

It is considered that introducing local fees, in any form, could lead to LPAs that charged lower fees being seen as more attractive by developers than ones that charged more, therefore creating a sense of competition between authorities. A national fee ensures it is a level playing field.

Question 95: What would be your preferred model for localisation of planning fees?

Oldham response

Neither – see response to question 94

Please give your reasons in the text box below.

Oldham response

N/A

Increasing fees to fund wider planning services

Currently planning fees can only be charged at a level which covers the cost to a local planning authority in determining planning applications. However, there are wider planning services, for example plan-making and enforcement, heritage and conservation and design services, for which no fees are charged.

Increasing planning fees, whether set centrally or through local fee setting, to a level above the costs of determining planning applications to fund wider planning services would require primary legislation.

Question 96: Do you consider that planning fees should be increased, beyond cost recovery, for planning applications services, to fund wider planning services?

Oldham response

Yes

If yes, please explain what you consider an appropriate increase would be and whether this should apply to all applications or, for example, just applications for major development?

Oldham response

Just major applications, with a minimum increase of 5% of the fee set out above.

Question 97: What wider planning services, if any, other than planning applications (development management) services, do you consider could be paid for by planning fees?

Planning fees should be used to fund services which support the delivery of a high-quality planning service both decision making and plan making. A definitive list should not be prescribed, however, they should for example be used to help fund local plans and the production of relevant planning documents which can provide more certainty in decision making and justification during plan making. They should also be used to fund the provision of expert advice, the work of essential consultees and to help support delivery of planning enforcement which underpins the value of the planning system.

Additional Oldham response

Planning Policy, which is not only there to ensure that new development is delivered in the public interest and that the needs of communities are met, but also to provide developers

with a clear framework for bringing forward development. It is the second of these functions which warrants some cost recovery from developers as they derive direct benefit from the work that has been done producing local policies. Planning Fees could therefore be used to support preparation of Local Plans, including evidence and production of relevant documents such as Design Codes and SPDs, to provide more certainty about how planning applications would be considered.

Planning enforcement is an essential component of a successful planning team. Without enforcement of policies, there is a significant risk of uncontrolled development taking place. Increased revenue from fees would help support delivery of planning enforcement which underpins the value of the planning system.

Cost recovering for local authorities relates to NSIP

Question 98: Do you consider that cost recovery for relevant services provided by local authorities in relation to applications for development consent orders under the Planning Act 2008, payable by applicants, should be introduced?

Oldham response

No comments

Question 99: If yes, please explain any particular issues that the Government may want to consider, in particular which local planning authorities should be able to recover costs and the relevant services which they should be able to recover costs for, and whether host authorities should be able to waive fees where planning performance agreements are made.

Oldham response

No comments

Question 100: What limitations, if any, should be set in regulations or through guidance in relation to local authorities' ability to recover costs?

Oldham response

No comments

Question 101: Please provide any further information on the impacts of full or partial cost recovery are likely to be for local planning authorities and applicants. We would particularly welcome evidence of the costs associated with work undertaken by local authorities in relation to applications for development consent.

Oldham response

No comments

Question 102: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

Oldham response

No

Chapter 12 – The future of planning policy and plan making

This chapter sets out how local planning authorities should prepare local plans in response to the revised framework.

Local planning authorities should continue to progress their plans to adoption under the existing system without delay. Transitional arrangements are proposed for emerging plans that are in preparation. How these are applied will differ depending on what stage of preparation the plan has reached and the extent to which it is meeting the Government’s housing growth aspirations.

It is Government’s intention to implement the new plan-making system as set out in the Levelling- up and Regeneration Act from summer or autumn 2025. As part of this it is anticipated that all current system plans that are not subject to the transitional arrangements set out above will need to be submitted for examination under the existing 2004 Act system no later than December 2026. This is opposed to June 2025 as was proposed previously.

Further details on plan-making reform will be published in due course.

Question 103: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements? Are there any alternatives you think we should consider?

Transitional arrangements are important to protect local authorities who have invested considerable time and effort in preparing plans, and to provide clarity and certainty to stakeholders who have been involved in the process. The transitional arrangements as set out in Annex 1 will be challenging for local authorities, particularly those who have made significant progress on their local plan but have not yet submitted for examination.

In the case of the Greater Manchester PfE local authorities, it is considered that PfE is what is described in paragraph 226 b of the draft NPPF as a “Local Plan Part 1” and that subsequent local plans brought forward by the individual local authorities, would constitute Part 2 plans, provided that they do not introduce new strategic policies setting the housing requirement within paragraph 226 b of the draft NPPF. As such, the part 2 plans would be based on taking forward the individual authority’s housing requirement as set out in PfE Table 7.2. (the “Local Plan Part 1”). If on the other hand an individual authority decided to set a new housing requirement different from that found in PfE Table 7.2 it could only do that by “introduce[ing] new strategic policies setting the housing requirement” and as such the local plan would have to be based on the new standard method (see paragraph 62 of the draft NPPF); also, any such plan would be subject to the full force of the draft NPPF including the new requirement to release Green Belt land to meet housing needs “in full” (paragraph 142 of the draft NPPF).

For the avoidance of doubt, it would be helpful if the reference to “the relevant previous version of the Framework” in paragraph 226 of the draft NPPF was clarified in the final version of the new NPPF, at least in relation to part 2 plans which follow on from a part 1

plan. In this specific case a new footnote should be introduced along the lines of “Where the Part 2 plan does not introduce new strategic policies setting the housing requirement “the relevant previous version of the Framework” is the version of the Framework which applied to the examination of the Part 1 plan.”

Question 104: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements?

On the basis that the new NPPF is published in December, or very early in the new year, the 18 month period to revise and submit a pre-Publication plan in line with the new NPPF would expire in mid-2026, ahead of the proposed revised date for 2004 Act-style Local Plans of no later than December 2026. This appears reasonable, however this would need to be reviewed if publication of the new NPPF is delayed substantially or, if indeed, if implementation of the new LURA plan-making system was itself delayed beyond Summer or Autumn 2025. On that latter matter further information on what is envisaged in around evidence-base and engagement would be welcome much sooner.

Future changes to the NPPF

The consultation sets out the government’s intention to explore the creation of a more accessible and interactive, web-based set of national policies. Consideration will also be given as to how matters relating to planning for waste and planning of travellers (which are currently set out in separate policy documents) are integrated into any future national development management policies.

Question 105: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No further comments

Chapter 13 – Public Sector Equality Duty

The consultation document seeks views on any potential impacts of any of the above proposed on businesses, or those with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Question 106: Do you have any views on the impacts of the above proposals for you, or the group or business you represent and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic? If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, or which businesses may be impacted and how. Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

It remains an issue that planning policy for Gypsy and Travellers continues to sit outside the NPPF and Government should address this anomaly.