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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

MONDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2024

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), B. Kumar (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, S. M. Evans, D. J. A. Forsythe, E. M. S. Gray, C.A. Hotham, D. Hopkins, R. J. Hunter, H. J. Jones, R. E. Lambert, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P. M. McDonald, B. McEldowney, S. T. Nock, D. J. Nicholl, S. R. Peters, J. Robinson, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, J. D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and one vacant seat on the date of agenda publication.

AGENDA

WELCOME

- 1. To receive apologies for absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17th July 2024 (Pages 5 - 14)**
4. **Response to the Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system (Pages 15 - 46)**
5. **To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**

Sue Hanley
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

13th September 2024

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jess Bayley-Hill or Jo Gresham

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- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- The Council's Constitution

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

17TH JULY 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), B. Kumar (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, S. M. Evans, D. J. A. Forsythe, E. M. S. Gray, C.A. Hotham, D. Hopkins, R. J. Hunter, H. J. Jones, R. E. Lambert, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P. M. McDonald, B. McEldowney, S. T. Nock, S. R. Peters, J. Robinson, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, J. D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker.

Officers: Mrs S. Hanley, Mrs C. Felton, Mr G. Revans, Ms D. Goodall, Mrs C. Green, Mrs B. Talbot, Mrs J. Bayley-Hill and Ms J. Gresham.

16\24 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.J. Nicholl and D.G. Stewart.

17\24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

18\24 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 15TH MAY 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15th May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

19\24 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

Chairman

The Chairman announced that the Council had been informed that former Chairman of the Council, Craig Lanham, sadly passed away in May 2024. As a mark of respect, the Council observed a minute's silence in his memory.

The Chairman and Council congratulated Councillor Sam Evans who had recently qualified as a solicitor.

Councillor Evans studied A Level law whilst at Sixth Form at South Bromsgrove High School and graduated from the University of Worcester with a first class LLB Law Degree in 2019. He then worked at a high street law firm and studied a LLM with the Legal Practice Course

at BPP in Birmingham, graduating in late 2021. He qualified as a solicitor on 1st March this year.

Head of Paid Service

The Head of Paid Service announced that item 13 on the agenda for the meeting, Council Productivity Plan, would not be considered by the Council as it was a matter decided by Cabinet.

20\24

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to former Councillor Lanham, who represented Norton and Stoke Heath and was Chairman 2006-07.

The Leader reported that further to an approach by a Councillor, she had contacted Worcestershire County Council to ask that the District Council was informed in advance of any major works planned to take place in the District. The Assistant Director of Highways at the County Council had agreed to inform Councillors and the Council of any extensive works planned for the District.

The Leader was delighted to report that Lickey End Recreation Ground and Sanders Park had both been awarded the Green Flag award. The award was run by Keep Britain Tidy and was internationally acclaimed. She commended the work of Council employees and supported the observation of a Councillor about the work undertaken by local residents in Lickey End which contributed to maintenance of the park and local environment.

21\24

TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Dr Ian Pogson asked the Council what the plans were for the old Fire Station and the old Library in the centre of town.

Councillor S. Baxter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration, replied that

“The site was originally owned by the Fire Service (56%) and Worcestershire County Council (44%). It was extensively marketed over a number of years post the library relocating in 2015. A number of interested parties came forward, but none of them were able to present a business case that stacked up financially. All potential partners only looked at the demolition of the site as it was not commercially viable to refurbish. A full environmental survey has been undertaken and has identified the need for full remediation works involving the Environment Agency.

Bromsgrove District Council took the decision to apply for LUP (Levelling Up Fund) money and as a result of the successful bid we have procured the site.

This site is being demolished using LUP monies from central government. These funds were made available to move forward vacant sites in centres such as Bromsgrove which were not financially viable for redevelopment without further support. Planning consent for demolition has been secured and a demolition company that can manage land contamination procured. The approval of the contractor is set out in a report that was discussed at Cabinet this evening and was reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11th July. All timescales to date accord with funding conditions, which require the site to be cleared.

Following the clearance of the site this land will form part of the Strategic Development Plan for Bromsgrove town centre.”

22\24

URGENT DECISIONS

Members were informed that there had been no urgent decisions since the previous meeting of the Council.

23\24

POLITICAL BALANCE

The Council considered a report setting out proposals for changes to the political balance of the Council following changes in the membership of political groups.

RESOLVED that

- 1) for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 of the report be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council on those Committees be as set out in that table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever is the earlier.
- 2) Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders.

24\24

ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE INCLUDING TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council considered a report setting out governance proposals for the appointment of Statutory Officers, including the establishment of a Joint Appointments Committee with Redditch Borough Council. It was suggested that the joint committee was the most effective approach to the administration of the recruitment process.

In proposing the report, Councillor K. May referred to the recommendations relating to the pay for the Chief Executive role. It was noted that there was an error at paragraph 4.1 in the report, where the current starting salary for the Chief Executive role should be £142,251 (not £142,663). The Council had received advice from West Midlands Employers that the top increment of the salary for the role should be increased by 1.31% in order to remain competitive. Councillor S. Baxter seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED that

- 1) A Joint Appointments Committee (JAC) be established, to replace the current Appointments Committee, for Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) with Redditch Borough Council (RBC) of 10 Councillors (5 from each authority, which must include both Leaders) with terms of reference as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2) The Joint Appointments Committee is directed to appoint a subcommittee of 6 members (3 from each authority), which will form the final interview panel for the appointment of the Head of Paid Service and S151 Officer and make recommendations to the JAC.
- 3) To appoint 5 members from Bromsgrove District Council to the JAC in accordance with para 2.2 of the report.
- 4) To authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution, including any consequential amendments required as a result of the above.
- 5) To approve a 1.31% increase to the top increment of the Head of Paid Service grade.
- 6) To approve a revised Pay Policy to include changes to Head of Paid Service grade and the introduction of a new grade between top of NJC Grade and Hay Grades.

25\24

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

Councillor P.M. McDonald, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, presented the Board's Annual Report for 2023-24.

During consideration of the report Members referred to the positive impact of the work of the Board and thanked the members and officers who supported it. Arising from a question, it was noted that the review of the implementation of the new Governance arrangements of the Council was planned for November 2024.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.

26\24

AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

As the former Chairman of the Committee was not at the meeting, this item was deferred.

27\24

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

A recommendation from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th July 2024 was presented for the Council's consideration.

The Council Plan

Councillor K. May proposed the approval of the Council Plan and this was seconded by Councillor S. Baxter. The Plan would set the strategic direction of the Council for the next four years and inform the business planning process for services in order to meet the priorities set out. Councillor May outlined the process of compiling the Plan and referred to consideration of it by Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 11th July. Arrangements for monitoring implementation and progress of the Plan were also explained.

RESOLVED that the Council Plan 2024-2027 be approved.

28\24

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (TO FOLLOW)

The Chairman advised that one question on notice had been received for this meeting.

Question submitted by Councillor S. Robinson

"Is the Council looking for a better long term solution to managing 30 mins free parking than having to print off and display a ticket each time?"

Councillor S. Baxter, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration responded:

"The new system has only just been introduced and with our current parking machines and technology it is currently the only sensible way of achieving the 30 minutes free parking. This will be kept under review and as and when technology allows, we will review the situation. It is worth noting that with the current pay and display system users get a ticket to be displayed which confirms when the 30 minutes runs out."

Councillor Robinson commented that residents had referred to the complexity of adding extra time to their parking beyond the 30 minutes. However, she appreciated that this would be kept under review. Councillor Baxter reiterated that currently the Council was constrained by the technology available.

29\24

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman advised that three Notices of Motion had been submitted for this meeting.

Young People and Democracy

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor R. Hunter:

“Council notes with concern the growing levels of despondency with democracy amongst young people.

Council commits to take reasonable steps within our community to promote the benefits of local democracy to young people, and where practicable engage them in democratic processes, as appropriate to the Council’s remit as a district local authority.

Council resolves to investigate options by the end of the calendar year, in partnership with local schools and youth groups, to involve local young people in the democratic process. This will include exploring the possibility of inviting young people to give a ‘thought for the day’ presentation at the beginning of Council meetings.”

In proposing the motion, Councillor Hunter referred to the connections between young people and the Council and Councillors which already took place and explained that the motion sought to build on this. He considered that the Council should seek to renew its relationships with young people to encourage the continuation of democracy.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor S. Robinson. She referred to the work already being carried out and suggested that more could be done to stimulate interest in democracy in children and young people, in a politically neutral way.

During consideration of the Motion the following were the main points raised:

- The Policy Team already had links to various youth groups in the District and it was suggested they could meet with Group Leaders to consider how the desire to increase participation by young people could be developed.
- Involving young people and children in Council meetings might have safeguarding and resource implications which would need to be explored.
- A member reported on a youth council which had been set up during the covid pandemic and had been supported by various parts of the Council.
- The view was expressed that engaging young people should include understanding their environment and what they were

capable of delivering, in partnership with the Council and Councillors.

- It was important to involve young people in democracy, but attending formal Council meetings was unlikely to be attractive to them.
- A member reported on work being carried out by parish Councils including visiting schools to engage with young people and setting up youth councils. It was acknowledged that not all areas of the District were parished.
- A member outlined a proposal to involve young people in the review of play areas in the District and suggested that a formalised process for engaging with young people might help the Council with future consultation work.
- The view was expressed that engaging with young people should aim to enable them to tell the Council what was important to them. This could be achieved in a number of ways and the Council should be innovative in its approach.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Council notes with concern the growing levels of despondency with democracy amongst young people.
- 2) Council commits to take reasonable steps within our community to promote the benefits of local democracy to young people, and where practicable engage them in democratic processes, as appropriate to the Council's remit as a district local authority, and
- 3) Council resolves to investigate options by the end of the calendar year, in partnership with local schools and youth groups, to involve local young people in the democratic process. This will include exploring the possibility of inviting young people to give a 'thought for the day' presentation at the beginning of Council meetings

Additional Police for Bromsgrove District

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor P. McDonald:

"After regular meetings with the police, it is has become apparent that the police are under resourced in the district of Bromsgrove. The lack of capacity is leading to an increase in anti-social behaviour and crime in general. This demonstrates the urgent need for more police patrolling the area. Research by the police shows the obvious, that if you increase numbers then you reduce crime in general.

Therefore, Council calls upon the Leader to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner requesting more police for the District of Bromsgrove."

In proposing the Motion, Councillor McDonald reported that residents had expressed concern to him that the Police did not respond effectively to calls. He suggested that the Police did not have sufficient capacity to investigate all the incidents reported to them in the way they might wish to. Increasing the number of Police officers on the streets would increase their visibility, ability to investigate incidents and thus increase visibility and residents' peace of mind.

Councillor Rone-Clark seconded the Motion and suggested that there was an opportunity to influence the development of the Police service following a change in national government.

Arising from the debate on this item, Councillor McDonald withdrew the Motion on the basis that he would write to the new Home Secretary to seek confirmation of funding for additional Police Officers in West Mercia. The Leader offered, once confirmation had been received, to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia to press for additional officers in Bromsgrove.

Developing a Tree Planting Target

Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor J Robinson:

“Council notes the climate emergency and the commitments it has made to play its part in tackling climate change.

Council also notes the powerful role tree-planting can play in mitigating global warming. Trees not only absorb and lock up carbon, according to the Woodland Trust they also help prevent flooding, reduce urban temperatures, reduce pollution and keep soil nutrient rich.

Council resolves to explore the possibility, through a report to Cabinet within six months, of implementing a Bromsgrove tree-planting target to include both council owned land and co-ordinating efforts across the community.”

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Robinson referred to discussions about tree planting in previous Council meetings and suggested that this Motion would enable costed proposals to be considered.

Councillor S. M. Evans seconded the motion.

Councillor H. Rone-Clark proposed, Councillor J. Elledge seconded an amendment, to add at the end of the Motion “, and to request that the Council’s Tree Officer advise members regarding the Council’s policy in respect of mature trees.”

Councillor J. Robinson accepted the amendment and the amended motion became the substantive motion.

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During debate of the motion the following were the main points made:

- There was a limited amount of land in Council ownership, for example in parks, where additional trees could be planted. However, the view was expressed that reference in the Motion to “both council-owned land and co-ordinating efforts across the District” broadened out the scope of investigating a potential tree planting target.
- Increased tree planting and biodiversity net gain within new housing developments would be managed in the preparation of the next local plan, and the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager had noted the aspiration in this regard.
- The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Climate Change undertook to write to Worcestershire County Council to explore potential opportunities for tree planting on County owned land, most likely on adopted highway verges, although if achieved this would increase the costs of maintenance and inspection and consequential financial impacts.
- A member reported experience of difficulty in finding appropriate sites for tree planting in the District.
- The view was expressed that the opportunity should be taken in the new Local Plan to maximise the requirement to plant trees.
- Whilst members supported planting trees, the view was expressed that the requirement in the Motion for officers to produce a tree planting target was difficult to achieve and potentially disproportionate.
- Residents could be encouraged to plant trees in their own gardens which could support biodiversity.
- Worcestershire County Council had a programme for planting trees across the District and local members had been involved in discussions about sites for these; the view was expressed that the Motion would be a duplication of effort and would stretch officer resources.
- The Council would consider its Biodiversity Action Plan later in the year and all Councillors could contribute to this. The Environment Act would also require Councils to achieve certain targets.
- The Motion would assist in confirming details of Council land ownership.
- The view was expressed that the terms of the Motion lacked sufficient detail as to what was proposed to understand the potential impacts. However, it was argued that the Motion required a report to be produced for Cabinet in order to understand the possibilities and implications.
- It was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Board might wish to consider the issue in detail and report to Cabinet.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 18.3, Councillor J. Robinson requested a recorded name vote.

Agenda Item 3

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Members voting FOR the motion:

Councillors A. Bailes, R. Bailes, J. Elledge, S.M. Evans, E.M.S. Gray, D. Hopkins, R. Hunter, M. Marshall, P.M. McDonald, J. Robinson, S. Robinson and H. Rone-Clarke (12)

Members voting AGAINST the motion:

Councillors S. Baxter, S. Colella, D. Forsythe, H. Jones, B. Kumar. R.E. Lambert, K. May, S. T. Nock, S. Peters, J. Stanley, K. Taylor, S. Webb and P. Whittaker (13)

Abstentions

Councillors S. Ammar, A. Dale, C. Hotham and B. McEldowney (4)

The motion was lost.

30\24

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 7.54 p.m.

Chairman

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Bromsgrove District Council response to: ‘Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system’.

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Report Author Mike Dunphy	Job Title: Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager email: m.dunphy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881325
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes via Strategic Planning Steering Group
Relevant Council Priorities	Housing and Environment
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The response to the ‘Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system’ at Appendix A is submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 30th July the Government published a consultation titled ‘*Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system*’. This public consultation is wide-ranging and aimed at all elements of the planning sector as well as other stakeholders including the general public. The consultation began on the 30th July and closes on the 24th September at 11:45pm.
- 2.2 The consultation contains 106 questions, the proposed response at Appendix A responds to the vast majority of those questions. The response has been informed by discussions and comments from elected members via the Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG).

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2.3 In summary the content of the consultation focusses on the following areas:

- Planning for the homes we need
- A new Standard Method for assessing housing needs
- Brownfield, grey belt and the Green Belt
- Delivering affordable, well-designed homes and places
- Building infrastructure to grow the economy
- Delivering community needs
- Supporting green energy and the environment
- Changes to local plan intervention criteria
- Changes to planning application fees and cost recovery for local authorities related to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects
- The future of planning policy and plan making

2.4 Significant issues to note are as follows:

- The introduction of a mandatory housing target.
- A new way of calculating the housing target which increased Bromsgrove District's requirement to 704 dwellings per annum from 386 per annum.
- The reinstatement of strategic / regional planning.
- The introduction of new 'grey belt' policy.
- A stronger focus on the delivery of social rented housing.
- New planning application fees.
- New intervention criteria on local plans.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be a key document which sets out how plan making and development management decisions will be made. Whilst there are no legal implications at this stage, the revised NPPF will be a significant material consideration once adopted.

5. COUNCIL PRIORITIES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Council Priorities

The changes that are being proposed will have an impact on both Development Management decisions and the content of the

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Bromsgrove District Local Plan, and as such will have potential implications on all of the Council's Priorities.

Climate Change Implications

5.2 It is not considered that the proposed response will have any climate change implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 There are not considered to be any customer/equality or diversity implications.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 There are no associated risks with this report.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Bromsgrove District Council response to: 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system'.

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Kit Taylor	13/09/24
Lead Director / Head of Service	Guy Revans / Ruth Bamford	12/09/24
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter	5/09/24
Legal Services	Claire Felton	5/09/24

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	APPENDIX A BDC RESPONSE
Chapter 3 – Planning for the homes we need	
Importance of planning to meet housing needs Advisory starting point and alternative approaches	
Question 1: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made to paragraph 61?	<p>A clear and consistent position would be welcomed. The ambiguity around 'advisory starting points' and 'exceptional circumstances' often leads to extended and lengthy debate at EiP, where every interested party has a different opinion on calculating an appropriate level of housing need.</p> <p>The changes to paragraph 61, retain the phrase 'minimum number of homes needed'. It should be made clear that if LPAs are proposing to meet this minimum requirement in full through plan-making, then this should not be open to challenge at EiP by those who may wish an even higher number.</p>
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?	<p>As above a clear and consistent approach is welcomed, if there is any scope for alternative approaches clarity should be provided as to what constitutes an appropriate 'specific circumstance' and clear guidance should be provided as to how justification for use of an alternative approach to calculating housing need should be set out by an LPA. for instance an alternative approach should be allowable in commuter districts where the district average income far exceeds local wage levels.</p> <p>Agreeing an alternative approach early in the plan-making process with PINs would reduce the likely lengthy debate at EiP.</p>
Urban uplift	

<p>Question 3: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on the urban uplift by deleting paragraph 62?</p>	<p>The application of an urban uplift is irrelevant if major urban centres have insufficient capacity to meet their own housing needs in the first instance, which was very often the case. Clear guidance is required across housing market areas and functional economic areas in terms of how redistribution of unmet needs should be accommodated across these areas and appropriate mechanisms should be put in place to ensure delivery within a reasonable timeframe.</p> <p>However, it should be made clear that major urban centres should be achieving higher density levels in the first instance to minimise the need to export housing cross boundary where higher density levels would be inappropriate.</p>
<p>Character and density</p>	
<p>Question 4: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on character and density and delete paragraph 130?</p>	<p>Density standards should be embedded in Local Plan policy. There is no 'one size fits all' across settlements and there may be other contributing factors that would require more sympathetic levels of growth in some locations. Paragraph 129 allows for this flexibility.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>The production of design codes is supported where appropriate. Design codes can be used at different scales, local planning authorities needs to have the flexibility to use the most appropriate tools to ensure that all new development is developed to a high quality which responds to local character successfully.</p>
<p>Strengthening and reforming the presumption in favour of sustainable development ('the presumption')</p>	
<p>Question 6: Do you agree that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be amended as proposed?</p>	<p>Yes, the proposed changes add much needed clarity to how the presumption is supposed to work.</p>
<p>Restoring the 5-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS)</p>	

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?	Yes, ensuring a pipeline of housing supply is a key part of the planning system. part of this approach is having a consistent, continuous process for demonstrating a 5YHLS position which provides certainty for decision makers. We would urge MHCLG to decide on the approach and stick with it
Question 8: Do you agree with our proposal to remove wording on national planning guidance in paragraph 77 of the current NPPF?	Yes, it is considered that reference to under/over supply is largely redundant given that affordability ratios take account of this when calculating local housing need. Over supply should result in an improvement to an LPAs affordability ratio.
Restoring the 5% buffer	
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?	<p>The application of a buffer (of any percentage) to the 5YHLS calculation is of no benefit and should be deleted. Its purpose is to ensure choice and competition in the market. However, if a 5YHLS is in place, then additional development over and above that identified supply shouldn't be stymied as housing requirements are no longer maximum targets. In instances where a 5YHLS cannot be demonstrated, then the Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development and the Tilted Balance come into play.</p> <p>In relation to the 20% buffer to be applied when an LPA significantly under delivers against the housing requirement is an unnecessary penalty. In particular, local authority areas heavily constrained by Green Belt may have no option than to drop below a 5YHLS during Local Plan preparation, where the opportunity for appropriate windfall applications is extremely limited.</p> <p>Furthermore, Bromsgrove District Council has ongoing and significant concerns regarding the Housing Delivery Test, how it is calculated and subsequently applied thus affecting the 5YHLS calculation. The Council, along with its neighbours at Redditch Borough Council has been challenging the appropriateness of the HDT since its inception without due consideration from the Planning Policy Team at MHCLG. Both Councils maintain a stance to ignore the HDT outcomes until this matter is addressed fully and measures put in place to provide certainty regarding cross boundary allocation and delivery that don't have a significant impact on the HDT outcomes. As local planning authorities who embraced the duty to cooperate and have managed what many other areas have failed to achieve, we should not be penalised by ill thought out mathematics.</p>

	<p>By way of explanation, a copy of the correspondence to date will be sent once again to the Planning Policy Team and relevant Ministers copied in.</p>
<p>Question 10: If yes, do you agree that 5% is an appropriate buffer, or should it be a different figure?</p>	<p>See response to Q9</p>
<p>Question 11: Do you agree with the removal of policy on Annual Position Statements?</p>	<p>We have had no need for an annual position statement and have no objection to their removal.</p>
<p>Maintaining effective co-operation and the move to strategic planning</p>	

<p>Question 12: Do you agree that the NPPF should be amended to further support effective co-operation on cross boundary and strategic planning matters?</p>	<p>We welcome the return of strategic planning as the duty to cooperate has, in the main, failed.</p> <p>As an authority which is part of a housing market area, and functional economic market area dominated by large urban authorities, with a combined authority and an elected Mayor we do have concerns about the governance of a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) focused on a mayoral region. As it stands BDC has no say in the decisions taken by the WMCA and the Mayor. For the planning issues of the West Midlands to be tackled the geography of one or more SDS needs to be very carefully considered. The previous regional planning undertaken across the whole of the West Midlands under the Regional Spatial Strategy did provide authorities the certainty on those regional issues which allowed plans to be brought forward. The requirement for public consultation and an independent examination as part of the strategic plan making function is key. Decisions on strategic matters including housing and employment distributions need to be arrived and enforced, rather than avoided as is all too often happening at the moment.</p> <p>In relation to the specific changes being proposed to paras 24-27 of the NPPF. Whilst the duty to cooperate remains in force these changes will make little or no difference as they just reiterate what is supposed to be happening at the moment. The return to a legislated regime of strategic planning should be a priority. Local authorities where strategic cross boundary issues are present should not be allowed to rush a plan through for the sake of having a plan where a longer-term view is needed. Plans which have significant strategic issues should only come forward when the mechanisms of how that plan will feed into or be informed by a SDS are clear.</p> <p>Taking into account neighbouring authority need is often difficult if plan timetables are not aligned. Measures should be in place to avoid lengthy and unnecessary challenges to LPA led housing requirement assessments where the challenge seeks to increase the assessment outside of the Plan making process.</p>
<p>Question 13: Should the tests of soundness be amended to better assess the soundness of strategic scale plans or proposals?</p>	<p>Yes – a plan should only be allowed to be found sound if it has met its strategic obligations or has a clear plan in place of how they will be met.</p>
<p>Question 14: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?</p>	<p>NPPF Para 27. We welcome the requirement for partnership authorities to provide investment plans for infrastructure outside the LPA's control.</p> <p>27a. we welcome a tightening of this requirement from partnership authorities.</p>

Chapter 4 – A new Standard Method for assessing housing needs	
Step 1 – Setting the baseline – providing stability and certainty through housing stock	
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?	<p>It is imperative to set a baseline that is robust and that can be measured, whether that be housing stock or household projections datasets. What is needed most is a clear position to work from.</p> <p>The current method is based on the 2011 Census and the 2014 projections dataset. The existing method could be rebased to the 2021 Census stock position/MidYear Estimates and run with up to date projection forecasting.</p> <p>Before a new method is adopted, work should be undertaken to compare any differences/inconsistences that the two methods might expose and further consultation undertaken.</p>
Step 2 – Adjusting for affordability	
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?	<p>The ratio being suggested will show the relationship between local house prices and jobs available in that locality. However, this does not accurately reflect the reality of districts such as Bromsgrove, where many people commute into major cities and elsewhere where there are higher paying jobs. Such a reality is more aligned to the median resident-based earnings.</p> <p>Whilst we agree that a standard method needs to be fixed to ensure clarity, we would ask that you reconsider the datasets used when arriving at the final affordability ratio chosen.</p> <p>Whatever measure is chosen, the method needs to be given sufficient time to work and should be monitored by MHCLG to ensure its appropriateness. If circumstances arise when LPAs advise that 'methods/measures' don't work or are unreflective of their administrative area, this should prompt a review of such measures, in much the same way as highlighted with the Housing Delivery Test outcomes at Q9 of this response.</p>

<p>Question 17: Do you agree that affordability is given an appropriate weighting within the proposed standard method?</p>	<p>Addressing affordability is key, any efforts to addressing rising affordability issues is supported. but only if affordability is a true measure of an LPA's average income, not only those locally employed.</p> <p><u>However Bromsgrove District Council is opposed to increasing the affordability multiplier from 0.25% to 0.6%. Our assessment shows that this will directly result in 1000s more homes being built in high quality green belt in our District. The effect of this change will in fact be to accelerate development in the very places that the Green Belt was established to protect.</u></p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>The standard method needs to, as far as possible, reflect the needs of the housing market as rental properties are paying an increasingly important role. Efforts should be made to include this affordability issue into the method although we have no suggestions on how it can be achieved.</p>
<p>Result of the revised standard method</p>	
<p>Question 19: Do you have any additional comments on the proposed method for assessing housing needs?</p>	<p>Whilst not in a position to comment with any great authority on the mechanisms used to calculate LHN, it appears that the formula used serves the purpose of aligning the mathematical outputs with the Government's aspirations for the housing market as quoted in the consultation material.</p> <p>Whether these numbers are achievable will be a significant challenge as they are considerably higher than any previous annual delivery requirements. They also do not take into account constraints such as green belt and possible other challenges such as infrastructure delivery. The sharp rise in numbers could change the character of the District. This will only become possible to assess once the local plan had progressed to its latter stages, when it is maybe too late to decide if the change in character is a positive situation.</p> <p>Whilst Local Plans can identify land for development needs, they cannot always force through delivery. Continued efforts need to be made to require developers to build out the permission they have.</p> <p>The NPPG Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 2a-008-20190220 which specifically relates to the period upon which an LPA can rely on the housing need figure generated by using the standard method once a plan has been submitted to PINs should remain in place to give certainty to plan-makers during their examination period.</p>

Chapter 5 – Brownfield, grey belt and the Green Belt	
Being clear that brownfield development is acceptable in principle	
Question 20: Do you agree that we should make the proposed change set out in paragraph 124c, as a first step towards brownfield passports?	We consider that the brownfield first principle is already enshrined in the existing NPPF and is a well established principle for planning professionals when undertaking assessments of land availability. Including the phrase 'acceptable in principle' in this paragraph potentially undermines the status of the local planning authority as a decision-taker. It also fails to acknowledge the fundamental issue that brownfield land should still be in sustainable locations to be considered a sustainable option for growth, and not just acceptable in principle regardless of location.
Making it easier to develop Previously Developed Land	
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?	No. It's too much of a jump from 'no greater impact' to 'not cause substantial harm'. The bar should be lowered to 'not causing harm'. Not all PDL is 'harmful' to the GB and therefore and therefore re-developing could be harmful to the Green Belt but easily fall under 'substantial'.
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?	The PDL definition should not be changed. Car parks are devoid of structures so any development here would likely challenge green belt purposes and cause visual harm. Agricultural buildings are excluded from PDL currently, and don't see why glass house should be treated differently. Recent inspectorate findings suggest that hardstanding, being two-dimensional, does not inherently harm Green Belt openness. Consequently, the introduction of built form on hardstanding would inevitably cause substantial harm to the Green Belt. Including agriculture and glasshouses would undermine self-sufficient food production and sustainability and associated employment. The protection of agriculture land and glasshouses/poly tunnel cultivation and horticulture is essential to protect and enhance food supply chains, Climate Change challenges and to move away from the reliance of globalised food and energy supplies.

	<p>Along with Bromsgrove’s greenbelt comes much needed employment, as well as tourism and heritage.</p> <p>Economic growth comes in all forms and loss of employment within Bromsgrove district only creates for more outward commutes and widens the affordability gap still further. Bromsgrove sits between MUAs where employment is historically centred. Any aspirations that Bromsgrove might have to increase its own employment and increase its settled working wage will be further lost if prime, high quality agriculture land continues to be lost.</p>
<p>Defining the grey belt</p>	
<p>Question 23: Do you agree with our proposed definition of grey belt land? If not, what changes would you recommend?</p>	<p>The definition of grey belt would appear to only be relevant to decision-making and not plan-making. In terms of the preparation or updating of plans, if Green Belt land is deemed to be suitable for development after consideration of a wide range of potential constraints to development, including by virtue of it making a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes, then current policy allows for the demonstration of exceptional circumstances in order to alter Green Belt boundaries and release the land from the Green Belt. In this context, grey belt designation would appear unnecessary.</p> <p>There is also a concern that a new focus from the development sector on acquiring planning consent for residential development on ‘grey belt’ land could lead to a more piecemeal distribution and scale of development across a local authority area, which would hinder the ability to deliver comprehensive, larger scale infrastructure provision to support new development.</p> <p>From a decision-making point of view, the definition is not clear. Development on PDL land in the green belt is already permitted by paragraph 151g (to be paragraph 151) so why is this expressly needed to be said here? Also, where the definition says ‘make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes’ is this a test against all five, or the majority, or is one purpose more important and thus carries more weight?</p> <p>Assessing every site against the five purposes would require a Green Belt review for every planning application.</p> <p>A definition of <i>substantial built development</i> should be provided.</p>

<p>Question 24: Are any additional measures needed to ensure that high performing Green Belt land is not degraded to meet grey belt criteria?</p>	<p>Yes, safeguards should be listed in policy that prevent landowners and site promoters from purposefully allowing high performing Green Belt land to degrade, for instance via a lack of maintenance and/or investment on the quality of the land.</p> <p>Similarly, a firm line would need to be taken regarding unauthorised development, where the landowners intention was <i>to create PDL</i> land to thus enable development at a future time.</p> <p>The question essentially accepts that 'lower performing' Green Belt will be degraded to meet Grey Belt criteria. Surely this should apply to 'all' Green Belt. 'High performing' as a term is problematic in this context. The LPA through a Green Belt Reivew will have a document outlining high performing areas, developers will have a contrary view and the public in Green Belt areas will largely consider all Green Belt is high performing.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, in terms of greater clarity for key definitions used within the five purposes of the Green Belt and also for interpretation of Green Belt 'scoring' when it comes to the assessment of these purposes within a Green Belt review. A need for more detailed guidance would suggest that the planning practice guidance would be the best place for this.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>The approach of setting out more guidance on what constitutes a limited contribution is welcomed, however it is considered that more detailed definition is needed, particularly within paragraph 10b) of the NPPF consultation document.</p> <p>The proposed glossary definition of 'limited contribution to Green Belt purposes' at para 10a) enables assessment against all 5 purposes. There seems no need to repeat the assessment of <i>land which makes no or very little contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another</i> at 10bii) or <i>Land which contributes little to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns</i> 10biv).</p> <p>It should be recognised that prevention of settlements merging should include all settlements and not just Towns. These should include between villages and village envelopes.</p> <p>Policy safeguarding and maintaining strong settlement demarcations and stopping developed sprawl is strongly supported.</p>

<p>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?</p>	<p>There needs to be a joined-up approach to LNRS and plan making to avoid inconsistency in designation and objectives.</p> <p>LNRS work has reviewed typologies of land, including geology, which would indicate and influence land use designations.</p> <p>Our land is a finite resource and utilising the work already undertaken by LNRS would be an effective approach to aid plan making.</p> <p>Nature and the environment have an important role to play in the social dimension of sustainable development, including healthy and happy communities.</p> <p>Under investment and poor land management has resulted in a significant loss of wildlife and natural areas of flora and fauna. Experience from the Pandemic lockdown was that the encouraged walks was a life saver for many and massively helped with health and wellbeing, including mental health. Since the pandemic open space, peace and tranquillity has been widely recognised.</p>
<p>Land release through plan-making</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<p>The sequential approach and emphasis on sustainable locations within revised paragraph 147 (new paragraph 144) is supported, albeit the rationale for designating grey belt in this context is not understood (as per our answer to Q23 of this consultation), when land can already be released from its Green Belt designation in order to meet development needs through the current plan-making process.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, it is important to consider that Green Belt as a policy tool operates at a 'larger than local' (sub-regional) scale and is part of the wider issue of strategic planning to meet development needs across local authority boundaries. Whilst land may need to be released in the Green Belt to meet development needs, this should not undermine the importance of the five purposes of the Green Belt operating across an entire authority area or along an entire (urban-rural) boundary and not merely on a site-by-site basis.</p>
<p>Allowing Development on the Green Belt through Decision Making</p>	

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?	It is unclear how this can be done outside the plan-making process, when in order to meet the requirements of being on grey belt land and not undermining the function of the Green Belt across the area as a whole, local planning authorities will need to have completed a Green Belt review as a crucial part of the evidence base for plan-making.
Supporting release of Green Belt land for commercial and other 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?	The 'golden rules' as proposed currently are clearly geared towards residential development, therefore if proposed changes to Green Belt policy in respect of both decision-making and plan-making for the delivery of commercial development needs are to be implemented, then we consider local planning authorities will need far more clarity on what the requirements for commercial development would be where loss of Green Belt land is concerned.
Planning Policy for Traveller Sites	
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?	Whenever possible the approach to the release of Green Belt for travellers sites should be the same as the release of Green Belt for any other type of development.
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 need for traveller sites should be assessed as part of the wider housing assessment and help to inform whether or not a green belt review is needed.
Golden rules to ensure public benefit	
Question 34: Do you agree with our proposed approach to the affordable housing tenure mix?	Yes, it is agreed that the appropriate tenure mix should be for local evidence to assess and therefore for local authorities to decide through local plan policies.
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	Whilst the aim is to be supported, the flexibility to set targets at the local authority level would be more appropriate. Local evidence will still be important in assessing the viability of individual sites, especially where land values and viability may substantially differ within different parts of the same authority area.

planning authorities be able to set lower targets in low land value areas?	Applying same target in low land values could lead to unintended consequences. In low land value areas, developers may prioritise Green Belt land over more suitable non-Green Belt sites due to lower costs.
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?	Yes, this would clearly be essential infrastructure provision to ensure good place-making. Policy should stress that green space should be genuinely accessible and useable for the public and also that quality as well as quantity standards for provision are met and, where necessary, maintained in perpetuity for residents of new development.
Green Belt land and Benchmark Land Values	
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 maybe a good way forward, more information through planning practice guidance is needed as to how it might work.
Question 38: How and at what level should Government set benchmark land values?	No response
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?	Developer investment will be essential to support infrastructure investment. It is not acceptable for a developer not to mitigate the impact of the development due to overpaying, based on a benchmark land value, for the price of land.
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?	If the development is compliant then there should be no need for any additional contributions to be sought.

<p>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?</p>	<p>Yes, vitality should be assessed wherever possible though the lifetime of a development proposal.</p> <p>Clear guidance on how the viability should be assessed at all stages would help Local Planning Authorities.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Golden rules should apply to all Green Belt releases, therefore additional golden rules will need to be drawn up for different development types.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>with clear evidence no suitable alternative exists outside the Green Belt. Golden rules should apply to all Green Belt releases as soon as possible to ensure that any changes to Green belt boundaries are justified, minimal and in line with the broader planning objectives.</p>
<p>Question 44: Do you have any comments on the proposed wording for the NPPF (Annex 4)?</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Question 45: Do you have any comments on the proposed approach set out in paragraphs 31 and 32?</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Question 46: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Chapter 6 – Delivering affordable, well-designed homes and places</p>	
<p>Delivering affordable housing</p>	

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, we are fully supportive of the proposals to recognise the need for Social Rent housing within housing needs assessments and planning policies. This will enable the sector to fully understand requirements pre application stage and viability assessments will take this into account from the outset.
Question 48: Do you agree with removing the requirement to deliver 10% of housing on major sites as affordable home ownership?	Yes, we fully support the removal of the requirement for 10% being affordable home ownership. Affordable home ownership options are important, but the requirement should be a matter of local discretion and decision making in line with needs assessments and local intelligence of the affordable home ownership market.
Question 49: Do you agree with removing the minimum 25% First Homes requirement?	Yes, the arbitrary percentage requirement should be removed. First Homes should still be an option for affordable home ownership but at local need levels not national targets.
Question 50: Do you have any other comments on retaining the option to deliver First Homes, including through exception sites?	First homes should be retained as an option provided the local connection criteria is maintained.
Promoting mixed tenure development	
Question 51: Do you agree with introducing a policy to promote developments that have a mix of tenures and types?	Yes, we support the development of mixed tenure sites. Mixed-tenure sites have clear benefits and it is appropriate for national planning policy to provide stronger support in this respect.
Supporting majority affordable housing developments	
Question 52: What would be the most appropriate way to promote high percentage Social Rent/affordable housing developments?	This ideally should be promoted through local plan making based on identified needs and requirements. The delivery of high levels of social rent/affordable housing on sites will primarily be delivery through Registered Providers and levels of grant delivery these higher numbers should be reviewed and increased to meet the higher costs involved.
Question 53: What safeguards would be required to ensure that there are not	A limit on numbers for single tenure schemes could be considered, although there might be unintended consequences in setting a number in national policy. A local lettings policy should be

unintended consequences? For example, is there a maximum site size where development of this nature is appropriate?	a requirement on developments with high proportion of affordable housing with the ability to allocate developments to achieve as much of a mixed community for the initial letting of the properties.
Question 54: What measures should we consider to better support and increase rural affordable housing?	The wording regarding the proportion of open market homes on rural exception sites could be amended so that it is clearer that they should be subsidiary to the provision of new affordable homes and accompanied with a full viability assessment showing the need for the cross subsidy. Fully fund rural housing enablers to work within Shire Counties
Meeting the needs of looked after children	
Question 55: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 63 of the existing NPPF?	Yes, we agree with the specific mention of Social Rent and looked-after children.
Delivering a diverse range of homes and high-quality places	
Question 56: Do you agree with these changes?	Yes, we agree with these changes that amend the definition of community-led housing and allow alternative size limits for community-led exception sites to be established through local plans. There should be safeguards in place to ensure these changes are not used as a device to get around policy.
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?	Amending the definition of 'affordable housing for rent' to include Community led and almshouses would be of benefit with the provision they are not for profit organisations. A definition of 'affordable' should also be included within the Framework linked to LPA area's median income. A number of affordable products utilise an arbitrary 20% lower than open market values. These were introduced a number of years ago and the disparity between social rent levels and open market levels has grown so significantly that a 20% lower figure is not

	affordable. This creates the need for more social rent housing as more residents are unable to afford other tenures of affordable housing.
Making the small site allocation mandatory	
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?	Many of the sites being presented for development as part of a plan reviews are of a larger scale, particularly in the Green Belt, therefore it is not always possible to bring forward significant numbers of smaller site. In addition, these smaller sites are not favoured by infrastructure providers as they are harder to plan for. It's difficult to quantify the infrastructure needs from lots of smaller sites as opposed to smaller number of larger sites which are much easier to assess.
Requiring “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, we support the removal of the references to beauty and beautiful.
Supporting upward extensions	
Question 60: Do you agree with proposed changes to policy for upwards extensions?	<p>Yes The authority is not characterised by mansard roofs and where they may be most appropriate in the Town Centres, may then conflict with designations such as Conservation Areas.</p> <p>This approach is unlikely to yield the number of homes needed, outside the major cities, but is likely to adversely impact the character of our towns.</p> <p>Class AA of Permitted Development already enables upward extensions. These should be carefully controlled to preserve our historic centres and townscapes.</p>
Question 61: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?	No response
Chapter 7 – Building infrastructure to grow the economy	
Building a modern economy	

<p>Question 62: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraphs 86 b) and 87 of the existing NPPF?</p>	<p>The proposed changes are broadly supported. However, further detail is required in some areas given changing the text to be more specific has several implications. The relationship between housing and employment requires clarification. If housing numbers are increased, should employment numbers be revised up through updated HEDNAs and under what methodology? Naming these specific facilities may assist decision making in Development Management by giving such centres additional weight. The process for local plans requires further detail. For example, employment allocations may name specific use classes but don't currently specify types of facility, so would this change? E.g. an employment allocation for B8 uses and the approach to data centres. In this example, logistics operators may compete for the same land so would land within an employment allocation be safeguarded as a data centre or safeguarded subject to a marketing period to test demand?</p> <p>Text on gigafactories is welcome. However, it is questionable if planning for gigafactories should be a general requirement because their required scale can only be met in limited locations and the market demand for them will be limited to a handful of locations. Separate text may be required linking the NPPF to the national industrial strategy requirement for gigafactories in pre-identified locations.</p>
<p>Question 63: Are there other sectors you think need particular support via these changes? What are they and why?</p>	<p>The West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites study (a collaboration with LPAs across the West Midlands) identifies that manufacturers are being priced out of employment land sales by the logistics industry. Developers are building speculative units for logistics but not manufacturing. National policy should identify a requirement to both meet logistics and manufacturing demand to enable manufacturers- especially high-tech manufacturers- to grow. The NPPF focuses on locational requirements and this is also considered applicable to manufacturing e.g. co-locating manufacturing units close to storage facilities, road junctions to enable access to ports as with logistics or a need for a non-residential location due to noise etc.</p>
<p>Directing data centres, gigafactories, and laboratories into the NSIP consenting regime process</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<p>Gigafactories are of a scale that is nationally significant so it is agreed that they should be directed to the NSIP consenting regime. Data centres and laboratories are not considered to be of a scale to require NSIP.</p>

<p>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?</p>	<p>Limiting the direction power by scale is considered a proportionate approach. Only the largest data centres and laboratories should be subject to NSIP assessment or the NSIP process would become burdened by a high number of applications. There are hundreds of data centres in the UK, thousands of labs but only one small gigafactory currently.</p>
<p>Question 66: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?</p>	<p>The NPPF should be aligned with the new industrial strategy to provide a national level approach to logistics. Regions such as the West Midlands and East Midlands have commissioned studies on employment (logistics) arguably due to the absence of regional planning. This work would be more joined up if it was subject to national oversight. This is considered necessary due to the scale of the sites involved and the cross-country infrastructure they require e.g. railway line improvements for rail freight from Felixstowe, through the West Midlands and to Manchester. Evidence such as HEDNAs consistently indicate a shortage of smaller employment units. These units are less profitable for developers so it is considered justified that larger employment sites above a certain threshold have to provide a set percentage of smaller units, with land safeguarded for a certain period. This can already happen on a local level but inclusion in the NPPF would give this greater weight.</p> <p>If employment numbers are increased, it is acknowledged that land availability may necessitate allocation of less sustainable sites. It would be welcomed if the NPPF specified a requirement for developers to make sites remote from urban settlements more sustainable to support decarbonisation. E.g. through active travel, improved bus routes etc.</p>
<p>Chapter 8 – Delivering community needs</p>	
<p>Public infrastructure Question 67: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 100 of the existing NPPF?</p>	<p>Yes – securing new and improved public service infrastructure is a key function of the planning system.</p>
<p>Question 68: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 99 of the existing NPPF?</p>	<p>Yes – increased providing of both early years and post 16 facilities is supported.</p>
<p>A ‘vision-led’ approach to transport planning</p>	
<p>Question 69: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraphs 114 and 115 of the existing NPPF?</p>	<p>Yes a move away from “predict and provide” to “Vision and Validate” approach is supported. Over reliance on mitigating the impacts of current transport trends rather than looking to the future and shaping the places we create around sustainable modes is something BDC has been</p>

	<p>attempting with its plan review. For this approach to work Highway Authorities have to also buy into the approach and also need additional resources to move away from traditional approaches.</p> <p>Updated guidance on the type and levels of assessment needed for both plan making and decision taking is welcomed.</p> <p>We would welcome further clarity about what is meant in “all tested scenarios” as this statement is ambiguous and lead to confusion when testing severity.</p>
Promoting healthy communities	
Question 70: How could national planning policy better support local authorities in (a) promoting healthy communities and (b) tackling childhood obesity?	Without comment and commitment from Highways, health and education bodies LPAs cannot confidently be expected to deliver the governments planning changes.
Question 71: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?	No response
Chapter 9 – Supporting green energy and the environment	
Supporting onshore wind	
Question 72: Do you agree that large onshore wind projects should be reintegrated into the NSIP regime?	<p>Short answer – Yes</p> <p>Longer answer – Yes these should be reintegrated in the NSIP regime, but with the consideration given to the proposals put forward for the NPPF on green belt land and the use of the grey belt for developments. Additionally the suitability of sites for ensuring the most efficient use of onshore wind needs to be considered, and also integrated with local area energy planning policy for joined up strategic thinking.</p> <p>New development sites should be energy, water and waste neutral paid for by Energy and water and sewerage companies through connection charges.</p>
Supporting renewable deployment	
Question 73: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the NPPF to give greater support to renewable and low carbon energy?	Yes but also to be considered as part of regional local area energy planning, and to ensure that the deployment of renewable technologies fit in with the wider regional strategic energy plans and have the capacity to meet current and projected demand in the transition to net zero over the coming decades.

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 additional protections should be put in place to exclude them from renewable development. Need to understand the compensatory mechanisms that are being considered by government. These would need to be such that a developer doesn't see the compensatory mechanism as commercially worth while to then still go ahead and install renewable technologies on such lands. We would like to ensure that we protect habitats containing peat soils. We will ensure that the Local Planning Policies and Local Development Plans include specific measures to protect and restore peatlands.
Setting the NSIP threshold for solar generating stations and onshore wind	
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?	Yes – However there should be mechanism in place to register smaller scale installations that don't meet the new threshold so these can be counted towards local area energy planning, ensuring regions are able to strategically account for proposed larger scale energy production plans and accurately assess the need in their area.
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?	Yes – See answer to Q75.
Question 77: If you think that alternative thresholds should apply to onshore wind and/or solar, what would these be?	Not Applicable.
Tackling climate change	
Question 78: In what specific, deliverable ways could national planning policy do more to address climate change mitigation and adaptation?	The policy already alludes to an ambition to encourage active travel from a health and wellbeing perspective, there is inevitably a positive in promoting active travel through the framework for helping all areas address the various climate change challenges, and meeting Net Zero. Furthermore having the framework reference other initiatives like the future homes standard and ensuring the framework allows for these initiatives to flourish and develop. There should also be a key link in the framework in how these link to transport planning and ensuring homes and commercial sites are able to encourage greener travel and help with the modal shift needed to meet the challenges climate change presents.

	Public transport needs to be encouraged and financed. There should be a recognition that in large parts of the UK the use of public transport is inadequate and as such is unsustainable for large investments. There should be no investment on wasteful infrastructure projects that do not deliver widespread benefits.
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? Question 80: Are any changes needed to policy for managing flood risk to improve its effectiveness?	No Response
Question 81: Do you have any other comments on actions that can be taken through planning to address climate change?	No Response
Availability of agricultural land for food production	
Question 82: Do you agree with removal of this text from the footnote?	No Response
Question 83: Are there other ways in which we can ensure that development supports and does not compromise food production?	No Response
Supporting water resilience	
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. Tap into extensive work that the Water Industry is currently undertaking, and reference stakeholder Regulated business and policy. Engage with Water and Sewer companies through the Industries Water Resource Management Plans and Business Plans.
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?	Water and wastewater neutrality. Grey water/water reusing should be on-site. Investing in 'grey water' systems for non-potable water use i.e. toilet flushing/clothes washing etc.

Question 86: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?	No Response
Chapter 10 – Changes to local plan intervention criteria	
Question 87: Do you agree that we should we replace the existing intervention policy criteria with the revised criteria set out in this consultation?	Yes – the revised criteria provide a clear basis on which Local Planning Authorities plan making progress can be judged taking into account a range of factors. For authorities which are facing substantial challenges the support being offered by MHCLG to help break down any barriers to progress is welcomed.
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 – the criteria above should be sufficient
Chapter 11 – Changes to planning application fees and cost recovery for local authorities related to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects	
Question 89: Do you agree with the proposal to increase householder application fees to meet cost recovery?	Yes. Processing householder applications in a Green Belt authority takes additional resources and time due to the need to consider the scale of previous extensions. The expansion on permitted development rights has resulted in the increasing complexity of household applications being submitted.
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.	No response
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?	Yes

<p>Yes No – it should be higher than £528 No – it should be lower than £528 No - there should be no fee increase Don't know If No, please explain in the text box below and provide evidence to demonstrate what you consider the correct fee should be.</p>	
<p>Proposed fee increase for other planning applications</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>Lawful Development Certificate – should be 75% of normal fee, not 50% as PD is an increasingly complex area. Also, as a green belt authority, LDC's are frequently used to justify future development proposals, so is a regular application type for us.</p> <p>All prior approvals require fee uplift. The current £120 does not cover Officer time for processing and as permitted development is an increasingly complex, this is no longer a 'light touch' application type that can be considered by more junior staff members. (Class Q for example (Agriculture to residential)). Support a doubling of this fee category to reflect time taken and skill set required.</p> <p>Discharge conditions where they relate to major developments these are insufficiently funded. Complex matters such as drainage require technical input and numerous iterations of reports, the existing fee doesn't cover this. Suggest a doubling of current fee.</p> <p>S73 applications for major development, the current fee of £293 is insufficient. Material amendments regarding varying or removal of conditions associated with a major permission can be complex, while provisions relating to statutory consultation and publicity do not apply and there is LPA discretion regarding consultation, this does not negate that consultation will take place and that these applications are not straightforward. The fee should be doubled and should apply for each condition seeking variation or removal.</p>
<p>Fees for applications where there is currently no charge</p>	
<p>Question 93: Are there any application types for which fees are not currently charged but which should require a fee?</p>	<p>No response</p>

Please explain your reasons and provide evidence on what you consider the correct fee should be.	
Localisation of planning application fees	
Question 94: Do you consider that each local planning authority should be able to set its own (non-profit making) planning application fee?	<p>No. Need for consistent fees is very important for public, and as a shared service working across two Councils, for our Officers.</p> <p>Can see fees have increased/proposed to increase and consider if this is adopted the situation will improve.</p> <p>Also, resource required to adequately demonstrate fees across all categories would be considerable.</p>
Question 95: What would be your preferred model for localisation of planning fees? Full Localisation – Placing a mandatory duty on all local planning authorities to set their own fee. Local Variation – Maintain a nationally-set default fee and giving local planning authorities the option to set all or some fees locally. Neither Don't Know	Neither
Question 96: Do you consider that planning fees should be increased, beyond cost recovery, for planning applications services, to fund wider planning services?	No, should remain as cost recovery only. Wider improvements represent a public service that should be paid for by other council budgets, funded by the taxpayer, not by individual applicants.
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?	The assistance provided by planning officers to applicants once an initial application has already been determined often constitutes a considerable resource for the local planning authority. Whilst acknowledging the need to be 'positive and proactive' in dealing with applicants, national policy could refer to this being 'in a timely manner' to reduce the burden and cost on the planning function of a local authority otherwise additional fees may be necessary. Another option is for Post application advice and guidance to be charged for.
Cost recovery for local authorities related 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?	No response
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.	No response
Question 100: What limitations, if any, should be set in regulations or through guidance in relation to local authorities' ability to recover costs?	No response
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.	No response
Question 102: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?	The ongoing costs to LPA of compulsory newspaper advertisement as part of the statutory Development Management process can be disproportionately high and doesn't always generate comment or feedback from the public. Removing this requirement and proposing an alternative online only mechanism should be an approach considered when Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) are reviewed and updated. Alternatively The cost of the adverts should be covered by the applicant.
Chapter 12 – The future of planning policy and plan making	

Question 103: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements? Are there any alternatives you think we should consider?	The arrangements seem appropriate, although we would hope that authorities don't rush to reg 19 stage over the coming months to avoid implementing these reforms.
Further plan-making reforms	
Question 104: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements?	Yes, although clarity needs to be provided on what the new system entails in detail so LPAs can make an informed choice about which one will provide the best planning solution for them.
Future changes to the NPPF	
Question 105: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?	No Response
Chapter 13 – Public Sector Equality Duty	
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?	No Response

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