

NPPF Policy Comparison

Policy Area	2024 NPPF	2025 Consultation	2026 NPPF Final
Document structure	Traditional narrative paragraphs (numbered 1–17 chapters, para-based, e.g. “para 11” for the tilted balance).	Proposed shift to a structured, plan-document-style format with lettered/numbered policy codes.	Confirmed: fully restructured into coded policies (e.g. S3–S6, HC6, GB8, N4/N5), split explicitly into plan-making policies and national decision-making policies (NDMPs); document now over twice the length of the original 2012 version.
Presumption in favour of sustainable development	“Tilted balance” under para 11 — presumption applied situationally, weighted by plan status and harm.	Proposed a “more explicit presumption in favour of development in sustainable locations,” including within settlements.	Confirmed as a standalone, permanent presumption (Policies S3–S5), replacing the tilted balance outright; circumstances for disapplying it (e.g. conflict with design/density policy) were narrowed compared to the draft.
Development outside settlement boundaries	No general policy support; relied on unmet-need/land-supply triggers only.	Proposed extending support to redevelopment of previously developed land, limited infilling, and evidenced unmet-need cases.	Confirmed - new policy support where a council can't show a 5-year land supply or scores below 75% on the Housing Delivery Test.
Housing near stations	No specific station-area density/support policy.	Proposed density thresholds of 40/50 dwellings per hectare (dph) for well-connected stations; “reasonable walking distance” undefined.	Density threshold reduced to 35/40 dph with exemptions for smaller sites; “reasonable walking distance” now formally defined — a genuine post-consultation change.
Green Belt / Grey Belt	Green Belt release possible via “exceptional circumstances”; grey belt concept newly introduced in Dec 2024 round.	Consultation set out the Annex E process for identifying grey belt, sequencing grey belt before other Green Belt release.	Confirmed and formalised - full Annex E methodology, “Golden Rules” (Policy GB8) setting mandatory contributions for Green Belt release, largely as consulted; RTPI concerns on the Golden Rules were reportedly listened to.

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Renewable energy in the Green Belt	Ambiguous / silent on treatment.	Not clearly resolved at consultation stage.	Clarified as inappropriate development in the Green Belt - very special circumstances now required, a tightening not previously explicit.
Spatial Development Strategies (SDS)	Did not exist as a national policy tier.	Proposed as a new strategic 25-year tier, following the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025.	Confirmed - development plan documents must now be consistent with SDSs.
Key community facilities (incl. pubs)	General "community facilities" language, no named list, no marketing-evidence test.	Proposed strengthening protection, naming pubs specifically.	Confirmed as Policy HC6 - shops, pubs, health facilities, places of worship, community halls named; requires 12 months' evidenced marketing before loss is permitted; protection only applies where the facility would be the "last of its type" in the area.
Medium development	No such category - only minor/major.	Proposed new "medium development" category: 10-49 homes, up to 2.5 ha, with lighter-touch information requirements; floated affordable housing cash-in-lieu option.	Defined in the glossary as a sub-set of major development; major-housing policies apply by default to medium development, while medium-specific (lighter-touch) policies do not scale up to larger schemes; exception carved out for Policies N4/N5. No confirmation found that the cash-in-lieu affordable housing option was carried forward.
Strategic sites	No formal definition.	Not clearly defined.	New formal definition of "strategic sites" introduced.
Telecommunications / rail corridors	Limited / general support.	Proposed support for telecoms development.	Strengthened beyond the draft, particularly for improvements along rail corridors.

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Statutory consultees	Existing (wider) list of statutory consultees.	Proposed narrowing referral criteria for bodies like Sport England, Gardens Trust, Theatres Trust.	Landed more modestly than trailed - Sport England remains a consultee on significant cases; Gardens Trust and Theatres Trust drawn in for only a small fraction of applications.
Plan-making timetable	Average local plan preparation ~7 years; no binding timetable.	Proposed target of 2.5 years, with staged milestones.	Confirmed 30-month structured process; notices to commence due by end of 2026; Gateway 1 sign-off required by April 2027.
Housing target	370,000 homes/year (raised from 300,000 in the Dec 2024 revision), within the 1.5m homes-this-Parliament ambition.	Standard Method revised - stock-based formula retained with affordability-uplift tweaks.	370,000/year national target confirmed unchanged; standard method finalised broadly as consulted.
Effective date	N/A	N/A	Applies to decisions immediately from 17 August 2026; all paragraph numbers replaced by the new policy-code format.

Note: entries marked “not clearly resolved” or similar reflect gaps in publicly available consultation-stage detail rather than confirmed absence of a proposal.