3. Decision-making policies Full August NPPF

The objective of the policies in this chapter is to ensure that development proposals are informed by appropriate information and decided in a way which is proportionate, timely and effective. This chapter provides a set of general decision-making policies which should be read with the rest of the thematic policies in the other chapters.

Preparing planning proposals

DM1: Preparing development proposals.

1. Proposals for major development should:

   a. Be informed by early engagement with neighbours and the local community, as well as with the local planning authority, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers, registered providers of social housing and other relevant bodies where appropriate, to identify and seek to resolve key planning matters prior to the submission of a planning application. This pre-application engagement should be proportionate to the nature of the proposal and those likely to be affected by it; and

   b. Be accompanied by a concise planning statement setting out:

      i. How the development proposal is consistent with relevant development plan and national decision-making policies;

      ii. The outcome of pre-application engagement and the extent to which the proposal has changed in response to this engagement; and

      iii. The proposed use of any planning obligations to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms.

2. Proposals for other types of development should be supported by the minimum necessary information requirements to enable a decision. In certain circumstances, set out elsewhere in this Framework, this should include pre-application discussions (see policies CO2 and P4). Pre-application engagement may also be required where proposals raise complex planning matters, such as the potential effect on heritage assets.

DM2: Information requirements

1. To ensure a clear and consistent approach to the information required to determine development proposals, local validation lists setting out the information required in support of an application for development should include the information specified in the relevant national decision-making policies (summarised in Annex C).

2. Local validation lists should only include additional information requirements if there is a policy in the development plan requiring a specific further assessment. Any such additional information requirements should not be applied equally to all applications but should be proportionate to the scale of development and its potential impact. Where appropriate, the requirements should clearly distinguish between what is required for major, medium and other types of development proposal.

Determining development proposals

DM3: Determining development proposals.

1. When considering development proposals, local planning authorities should:

    a. Work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, where necessary seeking solutions to problems arising from initial proposals, to enable a timely decision;

    b. Take a proportionate approach to the consideration of the planning matters raised by the proposals, in a way that reflects their scale, complexity and potential impact;

    c. Take account of planning matters raised during any pre-application engagement, including any positive responses to this engagement, as well as representations on the proposals;

    d. Consult statutory or internal consultees only where it is necessary to do so. Decisions on development proposals should not be delayed in order to secure advice from a statutory or internal consultee beyond their statutory deadlines unless there is insufficient information to make the decision, there are public safety risks from proceeding without advice, or more detailed advice may enable an approval rather than a refusal;

    e. Consider whether otherwise unacceptable development proposals could be made acceptable through the use of planning conditions or planning obligations; and

    f. Not refuse applications for development which should clearly be approved, having regard to their accordance with the development plan, the policies in this Framework and any other material considerations.

DM4: Emerging development plan proposals

1. When preparing and considering development proposals, relevant policies in emerging development plans may be given weight according to:

    a. The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);

    b. The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

    c. The degree of compliance of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the policies for plan-making in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to them).

2. Development proposals should not be refused on the grounds of being premature, other than in the limited circumstances where both:

    a. The development proposal is so substantial, or its cumulative effect alongside other development proposals would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging plan; and

b. The emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area. An emerging plan is unlikely to be in an advanced stage if a draft spatial development strategy, local plan, minerals and waste plan or supplementary plan has yet to be submitted for examination; or, in the case of a neighbourhood plan, the local planning authority publicity period on the draft plan has not ended.

3. Where planning permission is refused on grounds of prematurity, the reason for the refusal should indicate clearly how granting permission for the development proposal would prejudice the outcome of the plan-making process.

DM5: Development viability

1. Where development proposals accord with relevant up-to-date plan policies and national decision-making policies, they should be assumed to be viable. Relevant policies in this context are those that relate to the contributions expected from development.

2. There may be circumstances in which a viability assessment demonstrates that it would not be possible for development to proceed on a policy compliant basis. In such circumstances, the submission of a viability assessment as part of a development proposal may be justified to ensure that the proposed development makes the maximum possible contribution to affordable housing and other infrastructure. Such circumstances may include where:

a. The development proposed is materially different to any development type considered in the viability assessment that informed the development plan;

b. The site characteristics are materially different to those considered in the viability assessment that informed the development plan;

c. The development is demonstrably burdened by costs which were not taken into account in the viability assessment that informed the development plan; and/or

d. Site or economic circumstances have changed significantly[1] since the viability assessment that informed the development plan was prepared.

3. Neither the price paid for land, nor the price intended to be paid through an option agreement, should be a justification for failing to accord with relevant policies in the plan.

4. Where a viability assessment is submitted with a development proposal, this should be based upon and refer back to the viability assessment(s) that informed the relevant development plan policies. It should fully evidence all inputs and assumptions used in the assessment, and explain any differences from those used for viability assessment that informed the relevant plan policies. All viability assessments should reflect the recommended approach in planning practice guidance, including the standardised inputs, and should be made publicly available.

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[1] In the context of economic circumstances, 'changed significantly' would be a recession or similar significant economic change.

5. It is a matter for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances under which the viability assessment is submitted, to assess the weight to be given to a viability assessment.

DM6: Use of planning conditions and obligations

1. Planning conditions should only be attached to planning permissions and other associated consents for development where they are:

   a. Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;

   b. Relevant to the development and to planning considerations generally;

   c. Sufficiently precise to make them capable of being complied with and enforced; and

   d. Reasonable in all other respects.

2. Conditions should not be used to:

   a. Require payments of money; or

   b. Require that land is formally given up to another party (such as highways to the local highway authority); or

   c. Restrict national permitted development rights unless there is clear justification to do so.

3. Where national model conditions are relevant to the development, they should be used unless there are strong reasons for using a different condition. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided, unless there is a clear justification. Applications to discharge conditions should be dealt with in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary delays to development.

4. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address potential unacceptable impacts through a planning condition. Where national model planning obligations are relevant to the development, they should be used unless there are strong reasons for using a different planning obligation.

DM7: Relationship with other regulatory regimes

1. Development proposals should be assessed on the basis of whether they would be an acceptable use of land. Matters which are controlled by separate regulatory regimes may, in the context of a particular development proposal, be a material consideration where they have land-use implications. Decision-makers should assume, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary, that those separate regimes will operate effectively.

2. Planning decisions should not seek to duplicate or extend controls imposed by separate regulatory regimes other than where there is a development plan policy in place applying optional technical standards for the development proposed (see policy PM13).

3. The parallel processing of planning and other regulatory consents is encouraged where this can help to align and expedite the consenting of development.

4. Where compliance under a separate regulatory regime requires subsequent changes to an approved development proposal, such changes should be approved unless they would mean the development is no longer acceptable when assessed against development plan and national decision-making policies.

DM8: Unauthorised development and enforcement

1. Where there has been unauthorised development and local planning authorities are considering whether enforcement action is expedient, they should take account of their local enforcement plan, the impact of the breach of planning control, and the extent to which the breach would otherwise be acceptable.

2. In cases of unauthorised development where consideration is being given to an application for retrospective planning permission (or through an enforcement appeal, whether to grant planning permission in respect of a breach of planning control), if it is concluded based on evidence that the unauthorised development was intentional, that fact should be given substantial weight in considering whether to grant planning permission.

Other routes to consent

DM9: Use of development orders

1. To provide certainty about the prospects of securing planning permission for specified forms of development, local planning authorities and Mayors are strongly encouraged to use Local Development Orders and Mayoral Development Orders, especially where this would support housing, regeneration, economic growth or environmental improvement. These orders should take account of the development plan and national decision-making policies, and set out precisely what development is permitted and how planning obligations will be secured.

2. Local planning authorities should also respond positively to any proposals from communities for Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders, working collaboratively with community organisations to resolve any issues before draft orders are submitted for examination.

DM10: Removal of national permitted development rights

1. The use of Article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights should:

a. Be limited to situations where it is necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of the area (for example safeguarding against the demolition of local facilities, preventing an over-concentration of uses which could affect the quality of life such as small Houses in Multiple Occupation, or supporting the vitality and viability of parts of town centres);

b. Be based on robust evidence; and

c. Apply to the smallest area required to mitigate the evidenced harm.

Annex C: Information requirements.

Policy theme	**National decision-making policy**	**Information requirement** (where applicable under the policies listed)
General decision making	DM1: Preparing development proposals	Planning statement setting out: • How the development proposal is consistent with the relevant development plan and national decision-making policies; • The outcome of any pre-application engagement and the extent to which the proposal has changed in response to it; and • The proposed use of any planning obligations to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms.
Development Viability	DM5: Development Viability	There may be circumstances in which the submission of a viability assessment as part of a development proposal may be justified, as set out in policy DM5. In such circumstances, the information required is a viability assessment reflecting policy DM5 and the recommended approach in planning practice guidance.
Town Centres	TC4: Assessing the Impact of development on town centres	Town centre impact assessment.
Telecommunications	CO2: Supporting information for telecommunications infrastructure proposals	Information on the outcome of pre-submission consultations (in particular with the relevant body).
Telecommunications	CO2: Supporting information for telecommunications infrastructure proposals	Evidence that the applicant has sought to keep the number of new sites to a minimum, where a new site is proposed.

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Telecommunications	CO2: Supporting information for telecommunications infrastructure proposals	Statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International. Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection.
Renewable and low carbon energy generation and electricity network infrastructure	W3: Renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure	Proposals for decommissioning and site restoration, including details of how these measures are expected to be implemented.
Policy theme	**National decision-making policy**	**Information requirement** (where applicable under the policies listed)
Transport	TR6: Assessing transport impacts	Transport statement or transport assessment (depending on the extent and significance of the transport issues involved).
Transport	TR6: Assessing transport impacts	Travel plan, indicating how sustainable transport objectives will be delivered, monitored and managed over time.
Sports, Open Space and Recreation Facilities	HC7: Development affecting existing. recreational land and facilities	Sports, open space and recreation facilities assessment demonstrating that open space, buildings or land are surplus to requirements.
Ground Conditions	P2: Ground conditions	Site investigation information, prepared by a competent person.
Living conditions and pollution	P3: Living conditions and pollution	Such information as required to demonstrate compliance with relevant aspects of Policy P3.
Flood Risk	F4: Assessing flood risk for decision-making	Site-specific flood risk assessment appropriate to the scale, nature and location of development.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	F8: Sustainable drainage systems and watercourses	Statement outlining how the national SuDS standards have been achieved for development proposals which could affect drainage on or around the development site.
Coastal Change	F9: Development in Coastal Change Management Areas	Coastal change vulnerability assessment to demonstrate compliance with policy F9, where relevant.
Improving the natural environment	N2: Improving the natural environment	Such information as required to demonstrate compliance with relevant aspects of Policy N2.
Protected Landscapes	N4: Protected Landscapes	Assessment of the effect of major development proposals.
Heritage	HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets	Heritage impact assessment. assessment of the significance of the asset(s) affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect(s) of the proposal(s) on their significance.

CO1: Proposals for telecommunications infrastructure

1. In considering proposals for the expansion or upgrading of electronic telecommunications networks, substantial weight should be given to the benefits of maintaining or improving network coverage, capacity, reliability and resilience, including where significant improvements are required such as along rail corridors. This includes, but is not limited to, providing for next generation wireless technologies (such as standalone 5G), gigabit capable broadband connections and supporting infrastructure such as fibre exchanges. Proposals for such development should:

   a. Use existing masts, buildings and other structures already employed for this purpose, upgrade, or replace existing infrastructure, unless there is no reasonable opportunity to do so (taking into consideration meeting consumer needs, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion);

   b. Be sited and designed to minimise the visual impact of the proposals, especially in situations where a new site or structure is proposed, so far as practical taking into account its operational requirements;

   c. Not result in cumulative exposure to non-ionising radiation exceeding International Commission guidelines[2] when the development is operational; and

   d. Not cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest.

2. In assessing proposals for telecommunications infrastructure, local planning authorities should not require minimum distances to be maintained between telecommunications infrastructure and other development, seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for the expansion or upgrading of telecommunications networks, or use health safeguarding standards different from the International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection.

CO2: Supporting information for telecommunications infrastructure proposals.

1. Development proposals for electronic telecommunications infrastructure (including applications for prior approval under the General Permitted Development Order, as amended) should be supported by the following, where relevant:

   a. Information on the outcome of pre-submission consultation with organisations with an interest in the proposed development (in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college, or within a statutory safeguarding zone surrounding an aerodrome, technical site or military explosives storage area;

   b. Where a new site is proposed, evidence that the applicant has sought to keep the number of these to a minimum in accordance with policy CO1(1)(a). This should include evidence that the possibility of erecting any antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure has been explored; and

[2] International Commission guidelines published in: International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection guidelines.

Evidence demonstrating compliance with policy CO1(1)(c) and (d), including a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection.

P4: **Impact of development on existing activities**

1. Existing businesses, community facilities, public services and defence and security activities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on their current or permitted operation as a result of development being approved after they were established. This means that development proposals should be capable of being integrated effectively with existing business, community and public service activities and infrastructure in their vicinity (including, but not limited to, uses such as pubs, music venues, places of worship, sports clubs, blue light services, defence, electricity network infrastructure and industrial and waste sites).

2. Where the operation of an existing activity could have a significant adverse effect on a proposed new development in its vicinity, development proposals should:

    a. Identify the nature of the potential impacts, informed where necessary by early discussions between the applicant (i.e. the ‘agent of change’) and those existing uses which could be affected by the proposal to inform the scope for mitigation; and

    b. Be able to demonstrate that suitable mitigation can be provided before first occupation of the development, if it is to be acceptable. Planning conditions or obligations should be used to secure agreed mitigation measures.

3. This policy applies to new development involving changes of use of land and property, as well as to new construction, and includes situations where new development may interfere with the operation of electronic communications networks. Both lawful current and permitted levels of operation of existing activities should be taken into account when applying this policy.

PM13: Setting standards.

1. Quantitative standards set through development plan policies for infrastructure provision, affordable housing requirements, parking, density, and design and placemaking should provide clarity and a high degree of certainty about the requirements that relevant development proposals are expected to meet. Such standards should:

    a. Be justified, drawing upon relevant evidence of local characteristics and needs, while utilising or adapting relevant national standards where it is appropriate to do so (such as in relation to green infrastructure). Evidence in support of standards should be proportionate, in accordance with policy PM8, especially where relevant national standards already exist; and

    b. Not cover matters that are already addressed by Building Regulations, other than in relation to:

        i. Accessibility standards, for which local standards in relation to requirement M4(2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings) and/or M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings) of the Building Regulations should be set in accordance with policy HO5; or

ii. Water efficiency, for which it may be appropriate to apply the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement where justified, or exceptionally a more stringent local standard in areas of serious water stress; or

iii. Energy efficiency, for which any standards that go beyond the current or proposed Building Regulations should have a clear and robustly costed rationale which shows that there will not be an adverse impact on the viability and deliverability of development. Any such standards should be expressed as a percentage uplift of a dwelling's Target Emissions Rate (TER) calculated using a specified version of the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) or other approved calculation methodology.

2. Quantitative standards should not cover other matters, or relate solely to the internal layout of buildings, unless:

a. They are to implement the nationally described space standard; or

b. They have a clear and robustly costed rationale, are proportionate and will not have an adverse impact on the viability and deliverability of development.

National DM Policies → Material Planning Considerations (NPPF August 2026)

Section 3: Decision-Making Policies (DM1–DM10)

These policies **always** form material considerations under s70(2) TCPA 1990 and s38(6) PCPA 2004.

Table: DM Policies and Their Material Considerations

DM Policy	Material Planning Considerations Created by the Policy
DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	• Whether the proposal delivers **economic, social, environmental** benefits. • Whether adverse impacts **significantly and demonstrably outweigh** benefits. • Whether the **tilted balance** applies (e.g., HLS shortfall).
DM2 – Decision-Taking Principles	• Whether evidence is **proportionate and robust**. • Whether the LPA has acted **positively and proactively**. • Weight given to **expert reports**, consultation responses, and applicant evidence.
DM3 – Using Development Plans & National Policies	• Status and weight of the **development plan**. • Weight of **emerging plans** (Reg 18/19). • Relevance and weight of **national policy** as a material consideration.
DM4 – Planning Conditions & Obligations	• Whether conditions meet the **Newbury tests** (necessary, relevant, enforceable, precise, reasonable). • Whether obligations meet **CIL Reg 122** tests (necessary, directly related, fairly related in scale).
DM5 – Viability in Decision-Making	• Whether viability evidence is **transparent**, **benchmark-based**, and **realistic**. • Whether affordable housing or infrastructure contributions are **deliverable**.
DM6 – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	• Significance of **environmental effects**. • Adequacy of **mitigation**. • Whether the proposal triggers **EIA thresholds**.
DM7 – Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	• Likely significant effects on **European sites**. • Adequacy of **mitigation** and **appropriate assessment**. • Whether the proposal meets the **integrity test**.
DM8 – Heritage & Archaeology	• Level of **harm** to designated heritage assets (substantial / less than substantial). • **Public benefits** capable of outweighing harm. • Impact on **non-designated** assets and archaeology.
DM9 – Flood Risk & Drainage	• Whether the **sequential test** is passed. • Whether the **exception test** is met. • Adequacy of **surface water drainage**, SuDS, and flood mitigation.
DM10 – Safety, Security & Critical Infrastructure	• Impacts on **public safety**, defence, aviation, pipelines, utilities. • Whether the proposal compromises **critical national infrastructure**.

Topic-Based Policies → Additional Material Considerations

These apply **when relevant to the proposal**.

Examples:

- **Design (DP1–DP4)** → character, appearance, local distinctiveness
- **Transport (TR1–TR8)** → highway safety, parking, sustainable travel
- **Green Belt (GB1–GB8)** → openness, purposes, harm, very special circumstances

- **Housing (HO1–HO13)** → mix, density, affordability, specialist housing
- **Climate & Energy (CC1–CC3, W1–W4)** → carbon reduction, water supply, wastewater capacity
- **Healthy Communities (HC1–HC8)** → amenity, noise, open space, social infrastructure
- **Pollution (P1–P6)** → air quality, contamination, noise, odour

All of these become **material considerations** when they relate to the development.

Inspector Practice: How Weight Is Applied

Inspectors typically apply weight based on:

- **Development plan primacy** (unless overridden by material considerations)
- **Consistency with national policy** (DM policies carry significant weight)
- **Evidence quality** (DM2)
- **Statutory duties** (heritage, habitats, flood risk)
- **Local impacts** (design, amenity, transport)
- **Public benefits vs harm** (DM1, DM8)