

Summary of the New National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

Salient changes and updates

The August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a substantial rewrite rather than a routine update. It restructures national planning policy into two distinct parts: **plan-making policies** and **national decision-making policies**. This separation is intended to make it clearer which policies apply when preparing development plans (including Neighbourhood Plans) and which apply when determining planning applications.

1. A genuinely plan-led planning system

The Government places renewed emphasis on a genuinely **plan-led planning system**, making clear that preparing and maintaining up-to-date development plans is a priority. Planning decisions should continue to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2. New structure of the NPPF

The Framework has been reorganised into (see appendix for full breakdown of the PM and DM's):

- Procedural policies for **Plan-Making (PM1–PM17)**
- Procedural policies for **Decision-Making (DM1–DM10)**
- Topic-based chapters, each divided into separate plan-making and decision-making policies.

This is intended to remove previous ambiguity over which policies apply in different circumstances.

3. Greater emphasis on strategic planning

The Framework introduces a much stronger role for:

- Spatial Development Strategies;
- Local Plans;
- Infrastructure planning; and
- Cross-boundary cooperation.

Plans are expected to identify long-term infrastructure requirements, including transport, utilities, flood mitigation, social infrastructure and community facilities, alongside housing and employment growth.

4. Stronger requirements for evidence

Development plans are expected to be supported by:

- proportionate but robust evidence;
- up-to-date information;
- assessment of land availability;
- infrastructure capacity;
- environmental assessment where required;
- joint evidence with neighbouring authorities where appropriate.

The Framework also discourages unnecessary duplication of evidence and encourages use of existing evidence wherever possible.

5. Cross-boundary cooperation strengthened

The former "Duty to Cooperate" approach is replaced by stronger expectations that authorities:

- work jointly on strategic issues;

- produce Statements of Common Ground;
- plan infrastructure collaboratively;
- consider development impacts across administrative boundaries.

Cross-boundary infrastructure planning receives significantly greater emphasis than in previous versions.

6. Developer contributions

Development plans should now be much clearer regarding:

- infrastructure contributions;
- affordable housing requirements;
- viability expectations;
- review mechanisms;
- certainty for developers.

The intention is to reduce later negotiation and provide greater certainty at planning application stage.

7. Greater emphasis on infrastructure

Infrastructure is embedded throughout the Framework rather than being treated separately.

Infrastructure now explicitly includes:

- highways;
- public transport;
- walking and cycling;
- flood management;
- utilities;
- schools;
- healthcare;
- telecommunications;
- green infrastructure.

Plans are expected to identify infrastructure needed to support both existing and future communities.

8. Climate change and resilience

Climate change policies have been strengthened with greater emphasis on:

- adaptation;
- resilience;
- flood risk;
- biodiversity;
- sustainable water management;
- energy efficiency.

These themes appear throughout the Framework rather than in a single dedicated chapter.

9. Design and placemaking

The Framework continues to strengthen expectations around:

- high quality design;
- local character;
- design codes;
- accessible development;
- healthy places;
- environmental quality.

Neighbourhood Plans are specifically identified as suitable vehicles for local design policies and design codes.

10. Transitional arrangements

An important practical change is that:

- **Neighbourhood Plans submitted before 17 August 2026** continue under the December 2024 Framework.
- **Neighbourhood Plans not yet submitted** must comply with the new 2026 Framework.
- Qualifying bodies may withdraw and update already-submitted plans if they wish to reflect the new Framework.

Implications for Little Harrowden Parish Council

Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

The new Framework does not remove the ability of parish councils to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. Instead, it places greater emphasis on Neighbourhood Plans as an integral part of the Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans are described as allowing communities to:

- identify community priorities;
- allocate land where appropriate;
- include policies addressing local issues;
- provide infrastructure policies;
- include design codes;
- conserve local heritage assets;
- support environmental improvements.

For Little Harrowden, this means the emerging Neighbourhood Plan can continue to include locally specific planning policies addressing matters such as:

- highway safety;
- traffic management;
- walking and cycling connections;
- infrastructure provision;
- local green spaces;
- village character;
- heritage;
- design requirements.

Increased importance of infrastructure

Perhaps the most significant opportunity for Little Harrowden is the Framework's increased focus on infrastructure planning.

The Neighbourhood Plan can now place much greater emphasis upon evidence relating to:

- cumulative highway impacts;
- road safety;
- sustainable transport;
- pedestrian safety;
- infrastructure capacity;
- community facilities.

This aligns closely with the parish's existing concerns regarding the impacts of the Glenvale Park development.

Cross-boundary planning

The Framework places considerably greater emphasis on planning across administrative boundaries.

For Little Harrowden this is particularly relevant because many of the impacts experienced within the parish originate from development outside the parish boundary.

The Framework now expects planning authorities to work collaboratively where developments create cross-boundary effects, including transport infrastructure and strategic growth.

Evidence-based policies

The emerging Neighbourhood Plan will benefit from incorporating local evidence such as:

- speed surveys;
- traffic counts;
- road safety assessments;
- pedestrian movement;
- infrastructure capacity;
- flooding;
- landscape;
- community consultation.

The Framework specifically supports proportionate evidence based on local circumstances.

Statutory consultee role

The Framework **does not increase or reduce the statutory powers of parish councils** as statutory consultees.

Little Harrowden Parish Council remains:

- a statutory consultee on planning applications;
- the qualifying body for preparing its Neighbourhood Plan;
- entitled to submit planning representations based on material planning considerations.

The Council does **not** gain any new decision-making powers over planning applications under the 2026 NPPF.

However, the strengthened emphasis on:

- development plans;

- neighbourhood plans;
- infrastructure evidence;
- cross-boundary impacts; and
- local evidence,

means that well-evidenced representations from the Parish Council are likely to carry greater influence where they are clearly linked to adopted planning policies and the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

Glenvale Park context

Although the Framework does not specifically address Glenvale Park, several changes are directly relevant to the issues Little Harrowden has consistently raised:

- greater emphasis on infrastructure being delivered alongside development;
- stronger recognition of cumulative impacts;
- greater importance of transport planning;
- stronger expectations regarding cross-boundary cooperation;
- increased emphasis on evidence-led planning;
- greater consideration of community infrastructure and sustainable transport.

These changes do not create additional powers for the Parish Council but provide a stronger national planning policy context within which the Council can continue to make evidence-based representations on the impacts of major developments affecting the parish.

Appendices

1. Procedural Policies for Plan-Making (PM1–PM17)

- **PM1 – Spatial Development Strategies:** Introduces strategic, long-term planning (minimum 25 years) to coordinate housing, infrastructure, transport, employment, Green Belt and environmental priorities across wider geographic areas.
- **PM2 – Local Plans:** Requires Local Plans to contain a clear vision, spatial strategy, site allocations, infrastructure requirements and measurable outcomes. Plans should generally be prepared within 30 months and reviewed at least every five years.
- **PM3 – Minerals and Waste Plans:** Sets out requirements for preparing plans for minerals supply and waste management, including joint plans where appropriate.
- **PM4 – Supplementary Plans:** Introduces supplementary plans for site-specific issues or local design matters without replacing or undermining the Local Plan.
- **PM5 – Neighbourhood Plans:** Confirms neighbourhood plans remain part of the Development Plan, allowing communities to address local planning issues, infrastructure, design, heritage and community facilities.
- **PM6 – General Principles:** Requires plans to be proportionate, avoid duplication, engage communities early, use digital formats and rely on relevant evidence.
- **PM7 – Initiating Plan-Making:** Requires authorities to establish a structured project plan, timetable, governance and stakeholder engagement before preparing a plan.
- **PM8 – Evidence:** Requires plans to be based on proportionate, up-to-date evidence, encouraging reuse of existing information and joint evidence gathering where possible.
- **PM9 – Land Assessment:** Requires comprehensive assessment of land availability, suitability, deliverability and development capacity before allocating sites.
- **PM10 – Cooperation:** Strengthens requirements for authorities to work together on cross-boundary infrastructure, housing needs and strategic growth.
- **PM11 – Statements of Common Ground:** Requires authorities to demonstrate how cross-boundary issues have been addressed through published agreements.
- **PM12 – Developer Contributions:** Requires plans to clearly identify infrastructure and affordable housing contributions expected from development.
- **PM13 – Setting Standards:** Encourages locally justified standards for matters such as parking, density, accessibility, design and infrastructure while avoiding unnecessary duplication of Building Regulations.
- **PM14 – Examination of Spatial Development Strategies:** Establishes independent examination against tests of soundness.
- **PM15 – Examination of Local Plans:** Sets out the tests of soundness for Local Plans, including being positive, appropriate, effective, consistent with national policy and in conformity with strategic plans.
- **PM16 – Examination of Supplementary Plans:** Provides a streamlined examination process for supplementary plans.
- **PM17 – Examination of Neighbourhood Plans:** Confirms neighbourhood plans continue to undergo independent examination against the statutory basic conditions before referendum.

2. Procedural Policies for Decision-Making (DM1–DM10)

- **DM1 – Preparing Development Proposals:** Requires early pre-application engagement with communities, statutory consultees and infrastructure providers for major developments, supported by a planning statement.
- **DM2 – Information Requirements:** Standardises application validation requirements, ensuring only proportionate and policy-supported information is requested.
- **DM3 – Determining Development Proposals:** Reaffirms that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- **DM4 – Decision Notices and Conditions:** Strengthens expectations for clear, precise planning conditions and decision notices that explain the reasons for decisions.
- **DM5 – Planning Obligations:** Reinforces appropriate use of Section 106 obligations, ensuring they remain necessary, directly related to development and fairly related in scale and kind.
- **DM6 – Planning Performance:** Encourages timely, proportionate and efficient determination of planning applications.
- **DM7 – Post-Permission Flexibility:** Supports appropriate amendments and variations to planning permissions where justified without undermining planning objectives.
- **DM8 – Monitoring and Implementation:** Promotes monitoring of planning permissions and delivery to ensure approved development is implemented as intended.
- **DM9 – Enforcement:** Reaffirms the role of proportionate planning enforcement where development breaches planning control.
- **DM10 – Decision-Making Principles:** Promotes efficient, transparent and proportionate planning decisions, with national decision-making policies applied consistently alongside the Development Plan.