

NEW NPPF AND LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Government's new National Planning Policy Framework of Dec 2024 has immediate effect with regard to day-to-day planning (development management) decisions, including policies on land supply.

Land supply – As per NPPF Para 78 'Maintaining supply and delivery', the required land supply is again five years with a 5% buffer, and a 20% buffer (ie six years) where there has been significant under-delivery of housing over previous three years. BDBC's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) of Dec 2024 showed a land supply of 4.2 years as per the 01 April 2024 Standard Method figure of 828 dwellings per annum.

But also, as from 1 July 2026, a 20% buffer – six years' land supply – is needed (NPPF para 78c) where a Local Plan has been adopted within the last five years and examined against a previous version of the NPPF, and its adopted housing figure is less than 80% of current requirements.

Thus there is no 'win' with regards to land supply under any BDBC Local Plan Update scenario that may potentially have been available.

The only means for BDBC to again achieve its required land supply – and have up-to-date Policies (on all issues) – is to have a new Local Plan adopted in compliance with the new NPPF.

New Standard Method requirement is to build 1,127 new homes per year during the Local Plan period to 2040 – an extra c4.5K dwellings.

BDBC launched a new Call for Sites on 06 January to 5pm Mon 17 February.

Whitchurch Town Council has sent an open letter calling on BDBC to continue to Reg 19 by 11 March under transitional arrangements and with additional sites.

See December message from Cllr Andy Konieczko opposite. To await publication of new SHELAA list (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment), and further news from BDBC after 17 February as to how they might proceed.

NEW NPPF (NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK) AND INCREASED HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

emails from Cllr Andy Konieczko, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure, emailed to all Parishes on 13 December

'Government has imposed a higher housing number on our borough as part of its changes to the national planning rules. We've been told that we must build 1,127 new houses each year during our next Local Plan period, up from 828 previously. This means finding space for around 4,500 more properties – on top of the 12,500 or so that we were already being asked to build over the 15-year lifespan of the next Local Plan.

'While we support Government's ambition to make homes more affordable, we don't agree that forcing councils to increase housing targets will achieve this aim. We've robustly told Government this on many recent occasions – through our official response to its consultation on the new planning rules; at meetings with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; in discussions with our MPs; and through our partnerships with other councils – and are frustrated that it hasn't listened.

'We're unable to proceed with finalising the draft Local Plan we've been developing over the past 18 months and which went out to public consultation earlier this year. We've made it clear to the government that we wanted to finalise it as soon as possible so that our borough is protected from unwanted speculative development. It now appears that we'll have to go back a few stages to make sure that our Plan complies with new rules.

THE WAY FORWARD AND A NEW CALL FOR SITES

Further email of 20 December...

'We don't believe that this new higher target is right for our borough, but it looks like we have little choice but to accept it; the Government has made it clear that it'll step in if progress isn't made.

'Our focus is therefore on moving as quickly as we can – the sooner we get a new Local Plan, the sooner we have protection from speculative developers.

'We'll launch a call for sites on Monday 6 January. This will ask developers and landowners to come forward with land that could, potentially, be included in the Plan for future development. Submissions involving brownfield land will be particularly encouraged. The submissions that we receive will then be assessed in terms of whether they are suitable for future development.

'Over the coming weeks, we'll clarify how we aim to progress with our Local Plan and start setting out a timeline to move forward under the new NPPF.'