

Frequently Asked Questions for Parish and Town Councils

November 2025

Re: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Update December 2024, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Neighbourhood Plan Funding Changes June 2025 and Natural England Advice June 2025

1. What does the new [NPPF \(December 2024\)](#) mean for Herefordshire Council in its plan making role around housing?

The Government has set mandatory housing targets for councils across England. Targets are no longer advisory, and this level of growth must be accommodated. The new housing target for Herefordshire is **27,260** dwellings over a twenty-year plan period.

The Draft Local Plan has been through its Regulation 18 draft plan consultation, but it only had provision for 16,100 new homes, the new NPPF requires an additional 11,160 homes over the 20-year plan period. Therefore, the council has now had to go back to the start of the plan making process as a **new strategy must be devised**. We are unable to carry on with the draft plan that was consulted on in 2024 and will now be producing a new Local Plan in line with the new [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) (LURA). The Ministry for Housing Local Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) have advised that the secondary legislation to progress under this system will not be available until later this year.

2. What does the new NPPF (December 2024) mean for Herefordshire Council with regard to housing targets?

The significant increase in the revised housing target for Herefordshire takes immediate effect. It means the current supply of housing in the county falls short of the new need target. This means the level of planning commitments, allocations and potential housing sites coming forward are not enough. Therefore, if the Council is unable to demonstrate that it is able to meet its housing target then it **does not have a Five-Year Housing Land Supply** (5YHLS).

3. What is a 5 Year Housing Land Supply?

In order to try to maintain the delivery of new homes, national policy in England requires Local Authorities to have a supply of deliverable sites. Authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement, in other words, a Five-Year Housing Land Supply. A supply of 5.00 years and above is when there is a supply but anything at or below 4.99 years is when there is not a supply.

4. What is the 5 Year Housing Land Supply figure for Herefordshire?

Prior to the NPPF December 2024 update, Herefordshire had a 5YHLS of 5.79 years, however the implementation of the new housing targets has meant that the recalculation of the Herefordshire [Five Year Housing Land Supply Document October 2025](#) now sits at **3.11years**. To demonstrate five years' worth of deliverable housing sites, robust, up-to-date evidence needs to be available. The supply is calculated annually, and the results are available annually in the autumn.

5. Does this mean all housing applications will automatically be approved?

No. When an authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land, all of its development plan policies (Core Strategy) for delivering housing are deemed out of date. The NPPF states that planning applications should instead be decided based on the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF must be applied in this situation. While there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, applications can still be refused if:

- The application is in conflict with specific NPPF policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance such as habitats sites, National Landscape (formally Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Local Green Space, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, heritage, assets of archaeological interest and areas at risk of flooding.
- The adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against NPPF particularly on 'key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes'.
- The area has a Neighbourhood Development Plan and NPPF Paragraph 14 is applicable.

6. What is the timescale for producing a new Herefordshire Local Plan in line with the new NPPF (December 2024) guidance?

The council is now going back to the start of the plan making process and will be producing a new Draft Local Plan under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This will allow the council to plan for the new level of growth required by the mandatory housing targets.

Progressing a local plan under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 plan making system, with secondary legislation due to be published in Winter 2025, means that timescales can only be broadly set out. However, submission of the plan mid 2028 is timetabled as the likely possibility. This system comprises of three Gateways in a 30-

month end to end process and at this point the timetable is as follows, however may be subject to change:

- Gateway 1
Plan Visioning and Strategic Development
(8 week consultation)
September 2026
- Gateway 2
Draft Plan
(6 week consultation)
September 2027
- Gateway 3
Submission
June 2028

7. What does the new NPPF (December 2024) guidance mean for Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) form part of the wider Development Plan Scheme for Herefordshire. Given that the 5YHLS falls below 5 years, Paragraph 11(d) of the new NPPF is applicable to NDPs in decision making. However, NPPF paragraph 14 provides the following additional guidance:

In situations where the ‘presumption in favour’(at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:

- a) *the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan **five years or less** before the date on which the decision is made; and*
- b) *the neighbourhood plan contains **policies and allocations** to meet its **identified housing requirement** (see paragraphs 69-70).*

This means that for made plans that contain policies and site allocations to help meet their identified housing requirement, and which **are less than five years old**, paragraph 14 of the NPPF allows the decision maker to attach significant weight to the Neighbourhood Plan, even when the council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

For parish groups with plans that are less than 5 years old; meet both criteria *a* and *b* of paragraph 14, their NDP will be a significant material planning consideration when assessing the principle of future housing developments in the Designated Neighbourhood Area.

Where NDPs are **older than 5 years** from December 2024, then the NDP is out-of-date and paragraph 11d of the NPPF is what the decision maker must determine the application against particularly for housing provision.

8. What does the new NPPF (December 2024) and the MHCLG June 2025 announcement on NDP funding mean for Parishes and Town Councils who wish to begin or continue with a Neighbourhood Development Plan now?

The NDP Process

The NPPF has a set of transitional arrangements for areas of planning that are not set to change to the new guidelines with immediate effect. In terms of NDPs the plan making transitional arrangements are as follows:

For neighbourhood plans, the policies in this Framework will apply for the purpose of preparing neighbourhood plans from 12 March 2025 unless a neighbourhood plan proposal has been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on or before the 12 March 2025. NPPF Annex 1, paragraph 239.

As the March 2025 date has now passed the transitional arrangements no longer apply.

Funding

As of June 2025 MHCLG have announced that they are now unable to provide grant funding to support the production of Neighbourhood Plans going forward. This decision has been made as a result of the Central Government spending review. Herefordshire Council received no advance warning or communication of this announcement and are disappointed with this decision.

This position has been confirmed in a statement from Locality and can be viewed here: [Home - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#).

Neighbourhood Plans who are already in receipt of funding, approved by MHCLG before the end of March 2025, still have until March 2026 before their funding expires, however no new funding is available.

We have contacted MHCLG on a number of occasions for an update and have now received direct correspondence (October 2025) which is in line with advice published within the [Chief Planners letter October 2025](#). Ministers have publicly reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that LPAs continue to receive appropriate funding for their neighbourhood planning function, including costs associated with plan examinations and referendums. MHCLG anticipates making a formal announcement on future funding arrangements in due course.

Therefore we will be able to fund NDPs going through Examination and Referendum based on the Government's promise to reimburse Local Planning Authorities. We will do our utmost to keep Parishes updated and will closely monitor the situation.

9. Can an NDP still be reviewed?

Any reviews going forward must be amended in line with the latest NPPF and must take the [Natural England advice](#) into account (see paragraph 12) and be funded by the Parish Council. The type of review required will depend on the changes you wish to make (see the Herefordshire Council [NDP guidance note on review of NDPs](#) for further detail). There are three main types of review:

Minor

A minor (non-material) modification is for typographical errors or adding information for clarification and does not result in any changes to the policy stance or interpretation. It is a simpler process and requires no consultation, examination or referendum. This, however, would not be classed as 'remaking' your NDP and therefore, the adoption/made date of the original plan would remain the same.

Material Modification

A material modification would be considered as a change which does not alter the overall strategy of the plan but adds additional details to the existing policies. This method would require a Regulation 16 consultation to be undertaken and an examination. The parish council and Herefordshire Council need to submit a statement to the examiner indicating whether they consider the modifications to be of a material or substantial nature. This may require a referendum or could progress straight to being 'made' dependant on the examiners decision.

Substantial Modification

If you are considering including additional site allocations, a new or changes to a settlement boundary or new policy areas, then this would constitute a substantial review. The plan would be required to follow the same process as your first neighbourhood plan i.e. Regulation 14, Regulation 16, examination and referendum. The plan will require a successful referendum result in order to be made.

10. Is the recommendation to pause and wait for Herefordshire Council to decide on their progress with the Local Plan before progressing with an NDP?

Yes, the recommendation is to pause on NDP drafting. The 27,260 housing target must be apportioned at a strategic level across the city, towns and rural areas and ultimately be in line with the new Local Plan. There is an emphasis on sustainable locations for growth as part of the new NPPF and this needs to form part of the options for growth in the new Local Plan. Further consultations on spatial options will be undertaken to determine how this growth will be planned for

11. If a Parish does want to progress with its NDP what is required?

Any group wishing to progress their NDP will need to take the latest NPPF into account and in addition to this the significant change in circumstances that affects housing requirements. Therefore, the authority can only provide an indicative housing need figure ahead of its own apportionment across the county if requested to do so. The need figure will be based on the best available housing need figure at the time of the request. This will be based on the latest information on housing stock for the parish. The standard method formula used to calculate the countywide need figure will be applied to parish level.

This figure could be subject to a further increase as until such time as the council has undertaken detailed work to inform potential strategies and growth apportionment, the level of growth for individual parishes will not be known. Therefore, the parish standard method figure may mean there is too much uncertainty at this point in time and you may not wish to proceed on this basis. The NDP will also have to take account of Natural England advice as of June 2025.

12. How does the Natural England 2025 update affect the production of Neighbourhood Plans?

Herefordshire Council have received further [advice from Natural England](#), regarding Neighbourhood Plans progressing with the revised Standard Method housing requirements as outlined in the December 2024 NPPF.

NDP's who will be most affected by this are those who are wanting to review and those who have provided an oversupply of their housing target as identified in the Herefordshire Core Strategy.

It is advised that all new NDP's (including those under review) will need to demonstrate that they are legally compliant with the Habitat Regulations and SSSI Regulations and have current evidence driven policies that ensure there are no adverse impacts on protected sites.

While the new Herefordshire Local Plan 2025-2045 is under development there is currently a lack of up-to-date environmental evidence to support new site allocations within NDPs.

Any Neighbourhood Plans that come forward before the new Local Plan is adopted would be required to gather their own comprehensive evidence to demonstrate compliance with legal requirements (including the Habitats Regulations and SSSI Regulations) and assess impacts in combination with other plans and projects across the county.

To avoid these challenges, it is strongly recommended that Neighbourhood Plan groups pause the production of new or revised plans that include new housing allocations until the new Local Plan is adopted and the necessary evidence is in place.

In the meantime, NP groups may wish to focus on: preparing for future updates once the new Local Plan and supporting evidence are available and engaging with Herefordshire Council on the Local Plan process to ensure local priorities are reflected.

This approach will help ensure that future Neighbourhood Plans are evidence-based, legally compliant, and deliverable without unnecessary cost or delay, however the announcement of withdrawal of funding may have further impact on this.

13. Can work continue in the background if parishes want to continue?

There may be scope for groups to do background work in preparation for future drafting of an NDP but undertaking formal stages of consultation are not recommended and consideration as to how the NDP is funded will have to be taken into account.

It is also worth noting that Parishes can contribute to a [S106 wish list](#) which they can submit to Herefordshire Council. Your Clerk will be able to provide further information on this.

14. What support will Herefordshire Council provide for NDP's going forward?

While a dedicated Neighbourhood Planning team no longer exists, each member of the Strategic Planning team understands Neighbourhood Planning and will work with parishes

across Herefordshire to ensure that there is a continuing level of support. Officers will be available to answer questions and conduct scoping reports in the first stages of plan development. They will then support the NDP group through the various stages of plan production, such as checking for conformity and organising consultations as has been done in the past. [The Service Level Agreement \(SLA\)](#) for parishes has now been updated and one important change is that Herefordshire Council are no longer able to provide SEA and HRA assessment of draft NDPs. There is no financial support available from MHCLG or Herefordshire Council for producing and NDP. Please see the [Localities](#) website for further information.

15. Will the provision of infrastructure keep pace with these housing numbers?

Once the target has been apportioned at a strategic level across the city, towns and rural areas then it will be clear what the infrastructure requirements will be. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be produced and sit alongside the Local Plan.

16. Is the affordability factor different for rural areas?

The affordability factor in the standard method need calculation is based on a set ratio covering the entire authority area, this does not differentiate between the city, towns or rural areas.

Going forward, the council will be reviewing the “Rural Area” designation under the Housing Act, which would allow for lower site size thresholds (below 10) to trigger the requirement for affordable housing units. This would be subject to viability testing as part of the new Local Plan.

17. Does this mean that areas in the open countryside are at risk from development?

Areas outside of the settlement lists in figures 4.14 and 4.15 of the Core Strategy remain classed as open countryside in planning policy terms. However, the council’s lack of a 5 year housing land supply does now mean that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is employed when determining applications and adopted policies relating to housing distribution are to be considered out of date. Therefore, locations considered sustainable under NPPF definitions may be subject to residential planning approvals.

A new rural settlement hierarchy will be formulated in the new Local Plan, outside of which will be considered open countryside.

18. How is a Parish housing need figure calculated and when will these be released?

This will be calculated using the new standard method that was used for the county, but instead using the baseline figure of 0.8% of existing housing stock within the Parish boundary. The figure returned will likely be higher than previously under this new method.

This can be requested at any time via email.

19. Can excess growth delivered previously in a Parish be taken into account when calculating new growth targets?

No. This has to be treated as a new target as the NPPF indicates that it should be the latest evidence of housing need. Delivery and commitment of units that occur from the start of the plan period (1st April 2025) can be factored in.

20. Does the proportional growth target take account of local services available?

Sustainable development is emphasised in the NPPF. So likely the settlements with more services available will be the focus for future growth in the Local Plan 2025 - 2045.

For further queries please get in touch:
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