

National Planning Policy Framework

Appellant's Note on the Implications of the NPPF December 2024

1. The NPPF December 2024 (2024 NPPF) comes into immediate effect for the purposes of decision making (see para 231). It is accompanied by the new standard method for calculating local housing need and by a spreadsheet setting out the outcome of the new method for each region and district. Paragraphs 11, 62, 78, 79, 234 and footnote 8 of the 2024 NPPF give effect of the increase in the local housing need in plan making and decision taking.
2. Compared to the July 2024 draft version of the standard method, the increase in calculated local housing need (LHN) from the previous standard method is slightly reduced for the West Midlands. The LHN under the previous standard method was 24,734. In the draft version of the new methodology, it was set to increase to 31,754 (see CD12.43). It is now set to increase from 24,734 to 29,940, a slightly reduced, albeit still significant increase. The increase for Wyre Forest District is also slightly reduced (now from 211 to 584, where the draft showed an increase from 211 to 617), but the increases in Malvern Hills and Wychavon are now higher (to 651 and 979 respectively, whereas the draft showed increases to 609 and 959 respectively).
3. However, the main change from the position set out in closing submissions is that the significant increases in LHN (albeit slightly reduced in Wyre Forest but further increased in Malvern Hills and Wychavon) should now be accorded full weight. This is because the new NPPF and accompanying documents are now in full force and not subject to consultation. The effect of this will be to increase the weight to be accorded to housing need (whether by reference to shortfall in five year housing land supply¹ and/or by increased plan requirements or otherwise). This will likely result in an increase in the number and rate of housing permissions granted (see the above referenced paras and fn in the 2024 NPPF).
4. This means that the Appellant's arguments as to the likely increased need for inert fill capacity (closing para 174) and the likely increased need for sand and gravel (closing para 152) are further strengthened.

¹ In relation to this, it is also to be noted that the previous ability to rely on a four year housing land supply (paras 77 and 226 in the December 2023 NPPF) has been removed with immediate effect by the publication of the 2024 version of the NPPF.

5. As to the r.6 parties' argument that Malvern Hills and Wychavon will not be affected by the changes (r.6 closing para 206), this is now demonstrably wrong. The effect of para 78(c) of the 2024 NPPF is that from 1 July 2026, there will be an uplift of 20% in the supply of specific deliverable housing sites required to be demonstrated in circumstances where the adopted housing requirement is 80% or less of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method.

6. The South Worcestershire Development Plan (which includes Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Worcester City Council) is currently at examination. The annual housing requirement taken forward in the Emerging Plan does not set an individual figure for each individual authority and totals 1,293 dwellings per annum across all three authorities involved. The revised Standard Methodology published 12th December 2024 sets a requirement for each of the authorities individually, which when combined totals 2,174 dwellings per annum. The figure in the emerging Development Plan is less than 80% of the figures calculated using the standard method (1,293 and 2,174 respectively). Accordingly, even once the emerging plan is adopted, the effect of para 78(c) of the revised NPPF (see above) is that the significant increases in the calculated local housing need in these areas will have a material effect on the determination of housing planning applications from 1 July 2026 and thus will have a material effect in terms of the number of planning permissions granted and consequent increased need for inert fill capacity and increased demand for sand and gravel.