NPPF IMPLICATIONS - ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Welcome to the first segment of our new blog series; exploring the implications of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on planning appeal decisions. The final version of the revised NPPF was published on 24 July 2018. This followed on from the Draft NPPF published in March 2018 which received nearly 30,000 responses.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The framework shows the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. Furthermore, it provides a structure within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

The implications of the new NPPF will become clearer over time, however it is apparent they are already impacting upon the planning system and influencing planning appeal decisions. Planning Insight will use this series to discuss the main changes between the 2012 NPPF, the draft version and the July 2018 adopted document.

Achieving Sustainable Development

When applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development, paragraph 11 of the new NPPF includes additional specificity around the implication and form of individual strategic policies (rather than the Local Plans as a whole) when addressing objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses.

The emphasis here seems to be that in terms of plan making and decision making, these policies need to be more proactive in meeting development needs that are out of date. In general, it seems there will be greater scrutiny that these policies are up to date and sufficiently flexible and responsive to changes in the development environment.

Housing Delivery Test

This is intrinsically linked to the new Housing Delivery Test (HDT). Whilst the lack of deliverability of a five year housing supply previously impacted upon the application of strategic policies in appeal decisions (such as those which set the parameters of development with a settlement hierarchy) the new HDT also challenges the application of these policies, if delivery of housing has been substantially below (less than 75%) this target over the previous three years.

Conclusion

It's clear that the adopted NPPF focuses on the individual strategic policies, however it will be intriguing to see if these policies are more proactive in meeting development needs that are out of date.