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10 March 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system – Public Consultation - Response on behalf of the London Property Alliance**

I am writing on behalf of the London Property Alliance CPA/WPA (“LPA”) to respond to the consultation on the *National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system* document and associated *National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation*.

The LPA is a not-for-profit membership body and advocacy group representing more than 300 of the leading owners, investors, professional advisors and developers of real estate operating in the Cities of London and Westminster, via our respective associations City Property Association (“CPA”) and Westminster Property Association (“WPA”). The LPA provides a unified voice for the real estate sector across London’s Central Activities Zone (CAZ). You can see a full list of our members for our respective bodies [here](#) and [here](#).

The LPA fully supports the Government’s aspirations to make planning policy easier to use, underpin the development of faster and simpler local plans, and be more directive of decision-making. We particularly welcome the new emphasis that the Government has placed on recognising the benefits of economic growth in the planning balance. As we explain in our representations, this emphasis should be further strengthened to ensure that the development industry can deliver the high-quality workplaces that boost productivity and drive economic growth. Offices underpin the UK’s service sector economy, which in turn accounts for 81% of the country’s economic output and 83% of all jobs.<sup>1</sup> Such spaces directly support the Government’s Industrial Strategy, through providing spaces for the IS-8 industries, particularly professional and business services, financial services and creative industries. Creating new, high quality, well-connected office spaces in vibrant urban centres enables these industries, and others, to thrive and it is important that the role of **office space** is fully acknowledged and supported by Government. We would like to see the Government move further and specifically **recognise offices as critical economic infrastructure in policy** to reflect their **outsized role supporting jobs and growth**.

The planning system is a key enabler of growth. Our own research, *Good Growth in Central London*, revealed that a balanced approach to growth with flexible planning policy in London’s Central Activities Zone (CAZ+) could **unlock 407,000 jobs, 50,700 new homes and an additional 55.7m sq**

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Library, [Service industries: Economic indicators](#), February 2026

**ft in commercial floorspace by 2045** – boosting the UK economy by £101bn (GVA).<sup>2</sup> Sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without a strong supply of offices, work and lab space that can accommodate the next generation of talent, boost productivity, foster innovation and support growth industries. However, central London’s CAZ+ has seen a **54% fall in major office planning applications between 2013-2023** and a **loss of over 14 million sq ft in office floorspace since 2019** alone.<sup>3,4</sup> Given the important role of offices in supporting industry, and the Government’s Industrial Strategy objectives, it is important that new, high quality office space comes forward.

To help reverse this trend, it is essential that the planning system, underpinned by the National Planning Policy Framework, fully supports and encourages the development of commercial offices and their role in growing the country’s economy.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and our detailed representations to the consultation questions can be found in Appendix 1 attached to this letter. We have only listed the questions where we have provided a response.

We set out below a summary of our overarching comments on the draft National Planning Policy Framework:

### **Overarching points**

1. **Critical economic infrastructure** – LPA strongly supports and welcomes the new emphasis that the Government has placed on recognising the benefits of economic growth within the planning balance. Notwithstanding this, the NPPF **should go further and more explicitly support offices as critical economic infrastructure**, particularly offices within city centres. Offices provide the **physical spaces for the industries listed in the Government’s Modern Industrial Strategy**, particularly professional and business services, financial services and creative industries to thrive. Locating new high-quality offices within well-connected, vibrant urban centres creates spaces where businesses want to invest in and grow. **This should be recognised and better supported in national policy.**

The latest data indicates that **office-based sectors support about 2.8m jobs across Greater London alone** and produce almost half of the capital’s economic output – close to £290bn in economic output per annum and around £105,000 per office job. Every 100 office jobs support roughly 40 jobs in supply chains and about 18 on the high street.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding this critical role, often securing planning permission for new and extensively refurbished offices in central London can be challenging. The NPPF should be strengthened to actively promote and prioritise commercial office development - particularly in urban and city centres - so the sector can fully support the Government’s ambition for sustained national economic growth.

2. **Development in urban areas** – LPA strongly welcomes the general presumption in favour of development, which itself would cover London (Policy S4). Development within settlements, and on brownfield land, should continue to be the priority. Such development is the most sustainable and has the greatest potential to deliver planning benefits – including the greatest

<sup>2</sup> London Property Alliance, [Good Growth in Central London](#), July 2024

<sup>3</sup> London Property Alliance, [Good Growth in Central London](#), July 2024

<sup>4</sup> London Property Alliance, [Space for Change: Office space dynamics in central London](#), December 2025

<sup>5</sup> London Property Alliance, [Space for Change: Office space dynamics in central London](#), December 2025

potential to deliver sustainable economic growth. We have suggested amendments to Policy S4 to further emphasise the priority role which development within settlement areas should take, as per the existing approach within para 125(c) of the existing NPPF (2024).

3. **Application** – Whilst we welcome the proposed streamlining, LPA considers that the National Development Management Policies should be introduced on a statutory basis to give further effect to this. We are concerned that introducing these policies as a material consideration could give rise to legal uncertainty on their application, particularly where this conflicts with adopted development plan policies. This may limit its effectiveness.

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Whilst LPA is supportive of the general simplification of terminology, we consider that stronger guidance should be given to decision makers when making balanced planning judgement and application of policies with “substantial weight”. In particular, it is imperative that decision makers be directed to attach the highest level of weight when considering the economic benefits of proposals for commercial development, particularly those for the commercial office sector. Insofar as quantitative standards remain, they should be applied flexibly having regard to the wider benefits of development and its contribution to realising the economic, social and environmental objections of the Framework.

4. **Heritage** – The WPA’s paper *Zero Carbon Westminster: A focus on retrofit in historic buildings*<sup>6</sup> considers the challenges faced in planning terms in retrofitting historic buildings in Westminster. Enabling building upgrades not only adapts them to meet changing business needs, thereby aiding in their conservation and use, they also improve their climate resilience and sustainability. The report recommends that there be **more emphasis placed upon the importance of sustainability improvements when making planning decisions**. The acknowledgement within the NPPF therefore that such works are “important public benefits” is most helpful. Notwithstanding this, it will be important for the NPPF to clarify that the list of such “important” benefits is not exhaustive, and other benefits, such as supporting economic growth, should also be considered “important”.
5. **Density and design** – LPA is strongly supportive of the overarching aspiration within the NPPF to make effective use of land. Ensuring that London’s CAZ is appropriately utilised for a mix of uses, particularly commercial office uses, is entirely aligned with that aspiration.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss these points, and our representations, with MHCLG further if that would be helpful.

Yours faithfully,



Charles Begley  
**Chief Executive, London Property Alliance**

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<sup>6</sup> WPA, [Zero Carbon Westminster: A focus on retrofit in historic buildings](#), December 2021

## Appendix 1 – London Property Alliance – Representations on Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system

### Chapter 1: Introduction

#### **1) Do you have any views on how statutory National Development Management Policies could be introduced in the most effective manner, should a future decision be made to progress these?**

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1. The LPA consider that the National Development Management Policies ('NDMPs') should be introduced on a statutory basis, as enabled by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. We are concerned that introducing the NDMPs as part of the NPPF, and therefore a material consideration, could give rise to legal uncertainty on the application of the NDMPs, particularly where this conflicts with adopted development plan policies. This may reduce effectiveness.

### Chapter 2: Plan-making policies

#### **5) Do you agree with the proposed approach to simplifying the terminology in the Framework where weight is intended to be applied? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree**

2. Partly agree.
3. Whilst the simplification of terminology is supported, we question the direction provided to decision makers when making balanced judgements. For example, there is no differentiation made between the “substantial weight” to be given to the economic benefits of proposals for commercial development (Policy E2) versus the “substantial weight” given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings (Policy CC2) or the “substantial weight” to be given to conserving a designated heritage asset’s conservation (Policy HE6). There may be instances where schemes create a conflict between policy priorities, and decision makers should be given clearer direction on how to balance these priorities.
4. LPA strongly considers that the Government should class offices as critical economic infrastructure to reflect their outsized role supporting jobs and growth. Offices provide the physical spaces for the industries listed in the Government’s Modern Industrial Strategy, particularly professional and business services, financial services and creative industries to thrive. Locating new high-quality offices within well-connected, vibrant urban centres creates spaces where businesses want to invest in and grow. This should be recognised.
5. The planning system is a key enabler of growth, and our own research, *Good Growth in Central London* (2024), revealed that a balanced approach to growth with flexible planning policy in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ+) could unlock 407,000 jobs, 50,700 new homes and an additional 55.7m sq ft in commercial floorspace by 2045 – boosting the UK economy by £101bn (GVA).<sup>7</sup> It is imperative therefore that decision makers be directed to attach the highest level of weight when considering the economic benefits of proposals for commercial development, particularly those for the commercial office sector. As noted above, these spaces are vital to support economic growth as envisaged by the Government’s Industrial Strategy.

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<sup>7</sup> London Property Alliance, [Good Growth in Central London](#), July 2024

**9) Do you agree with the role, purpose and content of local plans set out in policy PM2? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

6. Partly agree.
7. The LPA agree with the principle of a more streamlined Local Plan system. In respect of planning for objectively assessed need, as per Policy S1, specific reference should be made to planning for economic infrastructure, including commercial offices, given their importance to the country's economy.
8. Local Plans should not only provide for the "minimum" amount of development to be provided, but should be aspirational in setting targets, particularly in respect of economic infrastructure.

**11) Do you agree with the principles set out in policy PM6(1c), including its provisions for preventing duplication of national decision-making policies? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

9. Partly agree.
10. The LPA supports the principle of a more streamlined planning system and the principle of Local Plans not duplicating policies set out within the NDMPs. PM6(1)(a) needs to be amended to refer to the NDMPs and NPPF, not just the development plan, should the NDMPs/NPPF continue to be brought in on a non-statutory basis.
11. However, as noted in our response to Q1, we are concerned that the non-statutory form of the NDMPs could give rise to legal uncertainty, particularly where this conflicts with adopted development plan policies. This may reduce effectiveness.

**14) Do you agree with the approach to identifying land for development in PM9? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

12. Partly agree.
13. As noted in our response to Q9, Local Plans should be required to be aspirational in setting development targets, particularly in respect of economic infrastructure. Such targets should be informed by an assessment of land available, but given the time period for plans (15 years), plus the time taken to prepare such plans, it is likely that contexts will change. Local Plans should not act as a brake on growth and should create a framework for sustainable development to come forward, notwithstanding minimum target needs or land availability.

**16) Do you agree that policy PM12 increases certainty at plan-making stage regarding the contributions expected from development proposals? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

14. Disagree.
15. LPA does not agree that Policy PM12 provides greater certainty as to whether the maximum viable contributions are determined for the planned forms of deliverable development in the Local Plan.
16. The policy intention is helpful in seeking to ensure that requirements are set at a level where planned forms of development are deliverable. However, this approach has important implications which require clearer acknowledgement.

17. If policies are to be demonstrably deliverable at plan-making stage across a wide range of development typologies and market conditions, viability testing must necessarily include a degree of tolerance or “headroom” to account for uncertainty and variation between sites.
18. Policies designed to ensure universal deliverability cannot simultaneously maximise contributions in every case, as they must accommodate weaker-performing sites and future market fluctuations. Plan-stage viability, therefore, must establish a cautious or averaged position rather than an optimised one.
19. Where opportunities to test viability at application stage are limited, this built-in buffer risks becoming fixed, preventing higher-performing or less constrained sites from delivering greater policy benefits. In effect, the mechanism that ensures plan robustness may unintentionally suppress the ability to maximise contributions where viability allows.
20. This creates a fundamental tension. To be robust, plan-level viability assessments must either:
- Set policy requirements conservatively to ensure delivery across all scenarios, thereby reducing potential contributions overall; or
  - Adopt more aspirational targets reflecting identified need but rely on application-stage viability to resolve site-specific deliverability.
21. Without sufficient flexibility at application stage, authorities may be incentivised to set policies at a cautious “lowest common denominator” level to withstand examination, rather than at a level that reflects ambition supported by appropriate adjustment mechanisms. Conversely, if policies are set at an aspirational level, without a clear route to test viability later, development delivery risks being stalled where schemes cannot viably comply. Existing London Plan policies such as the 50% housing target would require reconsideration to accord with PM12 as it is accepted by both the GLA and MHCLG that this cannot and has never been achieved across all planned development in London.
22. There is, therefore, an important and continuing role for application-stage viability assessment and the NPPF should not limit its benefits unintentionally. Properly applied, it enables policy outcomes to be maximised both on individual sites and across the plan area by allowing stronger schemes to contribute more while ensuring weaker schemes remain deliverable. Over-reliance on plan-level viability evidence risks producing one of two unintended outcomes: either policy requirements are set too low, to guarantee deliverability, or schemes stall because policy expectations exceed what can realistically be justified in practice but cannot be revisited. In both scenarios, overall delivery and policy outcomes may be diminished.
23. Policy PM12 would benefit from greater clarity as to whether its purpose is to support aspirational policy targets informed by viability evidence, or to establish universally deliverable requirements. A balanced approach, recognising the strategic role of plan viability while retaining proportionate application-stage testing, is likely to achieve both robust delivery and maximised planning benefits. However, this is not the intention of the current policy looking to limit viability assessment at application stage.

**17) Do you agree that plans should set out the circumstances in which review mechanisms will be used, or should national policy set clearer expectations? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

24. Partly disagree.

25. While review mechanisms can play a useful role in capturing improvements in viability over time, it is not beneficial for policy to prescribe rigid circumstances in which such mechanisms must be applied.
26. Decision-makers should instead retain discretion to assess whether the use of a review mechanism would genuinely support delivery or risk discouraging schemes from coming forward. In certain cases, enabling development to proceed at the outset, even where policy targets cannot be fully met initially, may deliver greater overall planning benefit than relying on uncertain future contributions secured through review provisions.
27. It is important that policy recognises the balance between early delivery and future value capture. Developers and investors assume significant upfront risk when commencing development, including exposure to market uncertainty, cost escalation, and financing pressures. If review mechanisms are structured such that a substantial proportion of any future uplift is absorbed through later contributions, the incentive to take that initial delivery risk may be undermined. Where investors cannot reasonably retain a share of the upside associated with that risk, schemes may simply not proceed.
28. Clearer guidance on when review mechanisms may be appropriate, particularly for phased or long-term developments, would therefore be welcomed. However, any approach should ensure that appraisal and review requirements remain proportionate to the scale and complexity of development and that the primary objective remains enabling delivery from day one.
29. A balanced framework should recognise both the public interest in capturing improved viability where it genuinely arises and the need to maintain sufficient incentive for developers to initiate development in the first place. Properly calibrated and limited review mechanisms should therefore support delivery by sharing risk and reward appropriately, rather than transferring development risk entirely onto applicants in a manner that could inhibit investment and delay housing delivery.

**18) Do you agree with policy PM13 on setting local standards, including the proposal to commence s.43 of the Deregulation Act 2015? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

30. In the absence of national guidelines London has led the way in decarbonising its built environment, introducing whole life cycle limits to support the transition to a low carbon future. The GLA has navigated the issue of translating environmental targets around carbon into policy, recognising whole life carbon in the sustainability equation. This has worked in many instances. However, this area is evolving at pace, faster than plan-making can realistically adapt. It is also becoming increasingly complex and technical whilst the level of expertise and practical understanding within individual planning authorities to set these technical limits and assess applications varies considerably. This is especially true on matters relating to carbon which require deep technical knowledge and scientific modelling, alongside the ability to assess these against competing local plan requirements. It is our view that local authorities may struggle to assess how the industry can respond without inadvertently constraining investment, slowing delivery, or undermining local economic growth, which is a major concern for our members.
31. The LPA therefore agrees with the proposed approach in PM13 and the commencement of section 43 of the Deregulation Act 2015 and strongly supports the Government's efforts to streamline the planning application process. In recent years, planning applications have

become increasingly complex and burdensome, slowing down the system, undermining investor confidence and delaying the delivery of new workplaces and homes. In central London, it is not unusual for planning applications for major commercial development to span hundreds of pages and take many years to secure planning consent. A more proportionate, streamlined and consistent approach would help restore confidence and improve the overall functioning of the planning system.

**19) Do you agree that the tests of soundness set out in policies PM14 and PM15 will allow for a proportionate assessment of spatial development strategies, local plans and minerals and waste plans at examination? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) If not, please explain how this could be improved to ensure a proportionate assessment, making it clear which type of plan you are commenting on?**

32. Partly agree.
33. Spatial Development Strategies and Local Plans must be aspirational. This is particularly the case for commercial offices. Policy PM14(2)(a) and PM15(1)(a) should be amended to require plan-makers to be aspirational in setting targets, not just meeting minimum levels of need.
34. It is imperative that Spatial Development Strategies and Local Plans are based on robust evidence. Whilst reference to evidence is included elsewhere in the plan-making section, it is important that Policy PM15 be amended to specifically refer to evidence given that this policy will form the basis of any plan examination process.
35. We also consider, in relation to policy PM15, that, as with Spatial Development Strategies, Local Plan policies should still be required to be 'effective', not just 'realistic'. For example, a policy may be drafted in a manner which is confusing for applicants/decision makers to understand how it should be applied. This would not pass the 'effective' test but it could pass a 'realistic' test. Policy PM15 should be amended accordingly.

### **Chapter 3: Decision-making policies**

**21) Do you agree with the principles set out in policy DM1? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

36. Partly agree.
37. LPA support the principle of streamlining the information submitted alongside a planning application, particularly for Planning Statements. However, Policy DM1(1)(b)(i) should be amended as follows (changes shown in red):

*b. Be accompanied by a concise planning statement setting out:*

*i. how the proposals ~~accord are consistent~~ with relevant development plan and national decision-making policies, ~~taken together, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise;~~*

38. Particularly on complex schemes, there will often be instances where schemes conflict with some policies of the development plan (and will conflict with some of the NDMPs). This does not necessarily mean that planning permission should be refused and a balanced judgement will need to be taken. Such judgement will need to consider the scheme against the

development plan (and NDMPs) **as a whole** as well as considering material considerations which may justify conflict with policy. This framework is well established and we have suggested text amendments to better reflect the statutory requirements for decision makers as set out in s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**22) Do you agree with the policy DM2 on information requirements for planning applications? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

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39. Strongly agree.

40. The LPA strongly supports the Government's intention to seek to streamline the planning application process. Annex C should be clear that the information requirements only apply where triggered by the relevant NDMP i.e. not all documents will be required in all submissions.

41. The LPA also suggests that further clarity is provided on the transitional arrangements regarding information requirements, set out at Annex A, paragraph 1, in relation to information requirements. WPA is concerned that, if the NPPF is published as proposed, the status of existing local policies that are inconsistent with the NPPF, including those setting quantitative standards beyond those that would be permitted by policy PM13, would be unclear in the short term. This would cause uncertainty and delays in both the preparation of applications, and their submission and determination. The LPA suggests that Annex A paragraph 1 is amended to clarify that information requirements would be based upon policy DM2 and subsequent local plan policies, consistent with policy PM13.

**23) Do you have any views on whether such a policy could be better implemented through regulations?**

42. The LPA would not support an approach whereby validation requirements were set out in a regulatory manner. This risks having to be too binary and would not be flexible enough should localised amendments need to be made by the Local Planning Authority.

**24) Do you agree with the principles set out in DM3? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

43. Partly agree.

44. LPA welcome the focus in Policy DM3 on LPAs and applicants working positively and proactively together ((1)(a)) as well as the direction that applications should not be refused where they should clearly be approved ((1)(f)).

45. It is noted that reference to the use of voluntary planning performance agreements as included in the current (2024) NPPF (para 47) has been removed. We strongly advocate for this reference to be re-inserted. Planning performance agreements can be an invaluable resource for both applicants and LPAs to aid the resource of determining applications and through setting clear milestones. In some instances, it may be appropriate for statutory determination deadlines to be extended (where agreed by both the applicant and the LPA). Whilst the statutory determination deadlines are good targets, our concern is that an over-reliance on such targets leads either to unnecessary refusals (or withdrawal and re-submissions) or a protracted pre-submission period.

46. In inserting reference to planning performance agreements, para (1)(d) of Policy DM3 should also be updated to refer to agreed timescales via a planning performance agreement.

**25) Do you agree that policy DM5 would prevent unnecessary negotiation of developer contributions, whilst also providing sufficient flexibility for development to proceed? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

47. Partly disagree.
48. The intention behind draft Policy DM5, to provide certainty, reduce protracted negotiation, and reinforce a plan-led approach to developer contributions, is supported in principle. Clear expectations informed by plan-stage viability testing can improve transparency, reduce delay, and discourage speculative viability challenges, thereby assisting more efficient decision-making.
49. However, as currently framed, the policy risks limiting necessary flexibility and may not ensure development can proceed in the majority of circumstances. Significant reliance on Local Plan viability evidence places considerable weight on assessments that are inherently strategic, high-level, and time-specific. Such testing provides assurance that policies are broadly deliverable in aggregate, but it cannot account for the detailed realities of individual schemes, particularly within complex urban environments where sites may share typological characteristics yet differ materially in costs, values, constraints, or delivery risk.
50. Plan-level viability evidence should therefore be afforded weight but recognised as indicative rather than determinative. It demonstrates that development should generally be viable at the point of plan preparation, not that all schemes will remain viable at implementation or throughout changing economic cycles. Viability is highly sensitive to fluctuations in construction costs, finance rates, regulatory requirements, and market performance, all of which may change rapidly over a plan period.
51. If Policy DM5 overly restricts when viability can be revisited, assumptions embedded at plan adoption risk becoming effectively fixed despite materially altered circumstances, potentially delaying or preventing development rather than facilitating it. Flexibility is therefore necessary to ensure policies remain deliverable in practice as well as in principle.
52. Recognising this flexibility does not imply that viability should routinely reopen negotiation. Rather, there should remain a clear and proportionate pathway for robust, transparently evidenced scheme-specific assessments where policy compliance would otherwise render development undeliverable. Plan viability modelling is not empirical proof of scheme viability and was never intended to operate at site-specific resolution.
53. In addition to the circumstances listed at criteria (a)–(d), there are legitimate delivery factors that may justify review but do not sit neatly within those categories, including cumulative policy and regulatory changes, infrastructure timing and cashflow pressures, regeneration-led schemes, long term major strategic and multi-phase schemes, alternative delivery models, public sector delivery constraints, land assembly or legal obligations, market absorption risk, funding dependencies, and policy threshold effects arising through phasing. Given the complexity of development over a 10–15 year plan period, it is unrealistic to assume all such factors can be anticipated at plan-making stage.
54. Restricting application-stage viability to narrowly defined triggers may also create unintended procedural complexity, introducing a two-stage dispute process, first over whether review is permitted, and second over viability outcomes, potentially increasing appeals focused on principle rather than substance. Equally, applicants should retain a reasonable route to challenge where justified circumstances fall outside prescribed categories.

55. Policy DM5 has clear merit in strengthening plan-led delivery and reducing unnecessary negotiation. However, to genuinely support delivery, it must balance certainty with realism. Because Local Plan viability testing is necessarily generic and time-sensitive, it cannot provide assurance that all schemes will remain viable throughout the life of a plan. The policy should therefore allow proportionate consideration of credible scheme-specific viability evidence where justified, ensuring housing delivery and policy objectives are maximised through implementation rather than constrained by inflexibility.

**26) Do you have any further comments on the likely impact of policy DM5: Development viability?**

56. Policy DM5 has the potential to provide greater certainty around developer contributions and reinforce a plan-led approach to viability. However, as currently drafted, aspects of the policy may create unintended consequences for decision-making clarity and, ultimately, development delivery unless refined.

**Clarification of “Policy Compliance”**

57. DM5 would benefit from amendment to clarify that schemes which justify a deviation from policy targets through robust viability evidence remain policy compliant. The current drafting risks conflating compliance with achieving prescribed targets (for example, affordable housing percentages) rather than complying with policy through the application of viability principles.

58. The purpose of viability assessment is not to redefine policy compliance, but to determine the maximum reasonable delivery of policy requirements in practice. Without clearer wording, schemes delivering below target levels, even where fully justified, may be perceived as non-compliant, creating uncertainty for decision-makers and potentially discouraging deliverable development proposals.

**Weight Attributed to Local Plan Viability Assumptions**

59. As drafted, DM5 appears to assume that Local Plan viability assumptions are inherently accurate and suitable as a fixed benchmark for application-stage assessment. In practice, plan-making viability evidence is often accepted as part of a balanced overall planning judgment rather than because each individual assumption has been exhaustively tested or agreed.

60. Plan examination does not necessarily validate every input as optimal or universally applicable; rather, it confirms that policies are broadly deliverable in aggregate. Treating those assumptions as effectively definitive risks elevating strategic modelling beyond its intended purpose and may constrain appropriate scrutiny at application stage.

61. There is also uncertainty as to how application-stage appraisals should treat plan assumptions. For example, where an applicant adopts a Local Plan assumption, it is unclear whether that input should be considered automatically acceptable or still open to challenge. Conversely, there have been instances where local planning authorities seek to revise plan assumptions during application reviews despite applicants not disputing them. Greater clarity is needed to ensure consistency and fairness in how plan evidence is applied.

62. Decision-makers should therefore be required to consider both the weight of Local Plan viability evidence and the submitted scheme-specific appraisal when reaching a balanced planning judgment.

**Impact of Review Mechanisms on Delivery**

63. The policy’s approach to review mechanisms may also influence delivery outcomes. While reviews can help capture uplift where viability improves, their application must remain

proportionate. Excessively onerous or uncertain review requirements may deter investment or delay implementation, particularly on marginal or complex schemes.

64. Decision-makers should retain discretion to consider whether review mechanisms genuinely support delivery or risk inhibiting schemes coming forward. In some circumstances, enabling early delivery below policy targets may achieve greater overall planning benefit than seeking uncertain future gains through review provisions.

**Suggested Improvements to Strengthen Policy Impact**

65. While the objectives of DM5 are supported, several refinements would improve clarity, effectiveness, and deliverability:

**a) Clarify the Status of Plan Viability Evidence**

Explicitly confirm that Local Plan viability testing establishes a starting point carrying significant weight but does not preclude proportionate scheme-specific evidence where material differences arise.

**b) Avoid Overly Restrictive Triggers for Review**

Replace references to “limited” circumstances with guidance enabling reasonable planning judgment, supported by examples rather than exhaustive criteria, alongside a clear route for challenge where disagreement arises.

**c) Recognise Economic Change Over the Plan Period**

Acknowledge that material changes in market conditions, development costs, financing, or regulatory requirements following plan adoption may justify reassessment.

**d) Emphasise Deliverability as the Primary Objective**

The policy should explicitly state that viability processes exist to maximise delivery of housing and policy benefits, not simply to secure theoretical policy targets. This would assist decision-makers in balancing immediate delivery against uncertain future outcomes.

**e) Provide Clear Evidential Standards**

Supporting guidance should establish consistent expectations regarding transparency, appraisal inputs, independent review, and proportionality of information requested. Collaboration with professional bodies such as RICS could help standardise evidence requirements in a manner comparable to established professional valuation standards.

***27) Do you have any views on how the process of modifying planning obligations under S106A, where needed once a section 106 agreement has been entered into, could be improved? a) If so, please provide views on specific changes that may improve the efficacy of S106A and the main obstacles that result in delay when seeking modification of planning obligations.***

66. It is imperative that there is a clear route for developers to amend permissions and obligations post the grant of planning permission. Changes may be required for a myriad of reasons – economic and build context, occupier requirements, materials procurement, technical matters arising during construction etc.
67. Presently, S106A can only be used where five years have passed from the obligation being entered into. This should be amended to a shorter timeframe.
68. There should also be greater confidence provided that the use of Section 73 is an entirely appropriate route for the amendment of changes to a planning permission and associated planning obligations (if relevant).

**28) Do you have any views on how the process of modifying planning obligations could be improved in advance of any legislative change, noting the government's commitment to boosting the supply of affordable housing. a) If so, please provide views on the current use of s73 and, if any, the impact on affordable housing obligations.**

69. S106A could be amended to refer to a shorter time period.

70. We would also support the activation Section 73B, as provided for in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

**29) Do you agree with the approach for planning conditions and obligations set out in policy DM6, especially the use of model conditions and obligations? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

71. Strongly agree.

72. LPA supports the streamlining of the planning system and in principle agrees with the use of national model planning conditions and obligations (subject to their content) and the flexibility for local authorities to apply local conditions/obligations where these may be justified by the scheme. LPA would welcome the opportunity to feed into MHCLG's ongoing work on developing the model conditions and obligations.

**30) Do you agree that policy DM7 clarifies the relationship between planning decisions and other regulatory regimes? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

73. Partly agree.

74. LPA agrees that the draft wording of DM7 provides some clarity on the relationship between planning decisions and other regulatory regimes and LPA agrees in principle to the separation of matters between the planning systems and building regulations for example.

75. However, it explicitly notes that PM13 is optional i.e., "planning decisions should not seek to duplicate or extend controls imposed by separate regulatory regimes other than where there is a development plan policy in place applying optional technical standards for the development proposed". Our reading of PM13 is that it is not clear that PM13 is optional.

76. To reiterate our response to Question 18, we consider the wording of PM13 to be ambiguous and are concerned that the wording could leave a vacuum in planning policy, which could lead to uncertainty and delay in decision-making.

#### **Chapter 4: Achieving sustainable development**

**36) Do you agree with the revised approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

77. Strongly agree.

78. The LPA agrees with the approach which supports the approval of proposals which accord with the development plan and national decision-making policies. The LPA also agrees that the proposed restructuring to create Policy S4 successfully indicates that development within

settlements is fundamentally the most sustainable approach, distinguishing it from that outside settlements, and that the NPPF should indicate as such.

**37) Do you agree to the proposed approach to development within settlements? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

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79. Strongly agree.

80. The LPA strongly supports the overall approach of policy S4, which would apply to Central London as well as other town and city centres, given the critical role which development in these locations plays in supporting sustainable development in economic, social and environmental senses. The unique benefits and role played by developments in our urban centres cannot be replicated by development in any other type of location. It is therefore critical that the NPPF supports those developments in town and city centres which are aligned with planning policy as strongly as possible.

81. The LPA suggests the current wording ‘substantially’ in parts 1 and 2 of the policy should be made even stronger, for example “very substantially”, to indicate that in these locations, the impact of adverse effects needs to be very much greater than the benefits of development in sustainable locations, to result in refusal. This is very important given that paragraph 125(c) of the adopted NPPF, which strongly supports sustainable brownfield development in a manner which the LPA considers helpful, would be lost.

82. The LPA suggests that the drafting of part 2a(i) could clarify the exact types of site ‘allocation’ and ‘safeguarding’ which are referred to. This would aid clear plan-making across different scales, especially in complex urban areas where specific site allocation and safeguarding designations are used far less frequently than elsewhere because the context is of a fine grain with huge complexity (making it very difficult for local authorities to anticipate where development will be brought forward in the forthcoming Plan period).

83. It is also suggested that the wording of policy S4 should be amended to clarify that there are very specific and limited circumstances in which development relating to heritage assets in settlements should be refused. As noted elsewhere in the consultation document, this is an issue of uncertainty presently, which requires clarification to ensure heritage assets contribute positively to sustainable development in a manner which also preserves them appropriately for the future.

**43) Do you agree with the approach to mitigating climate change through planning decisions in policy CC2? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) If not, what additional measures could be taken to ensure climate change mitigation is given appropriate consideration?**

84. Partly agree.

85. The LPA agrees with the proposed policy approach. The LPA suggests the policy should refer also to the specific benefits of enhancing the energy efficiency of heritage assets, as well as to other existing buildings, in part 2, given that the extent of energy savings which can be achieved by undertaking works to heritage assets is often greater than for other buildings.

## **Chapter 6: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes**

**64) Do you agree flexibility relating to the size of market homes provided will better enable developments providing affordable housing? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

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86. Partly agree.

87. The LPA welcomes the encouragement of a flexible approach to the size of market homes. However, this flexibility should not only be applied in instances where development proposals “meet or exceed” development plan requirements for the proportion and mix of affordable housing tenures. There may for example be instances where flexibility on unit sizes for market units could improve the affordable housing offer, but such an offer may still not be fully policy compliant. It seems counterproductive for these schemes, which nonetheless would still be improving on the affordable housing provision, to be excluded from the application of the flexibility proposed.

## **Chapter 7: Building a strong, effective economy**

**84) Do you agree that more emphasis should be placed on relevant national strategies and the need for flexibility in planning for economic growth, as drafted in policy E1? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

88. Partly agree. The LPA strongly supports the increased emphasis placed on planning for economic growth within the draft NPPF however it could go further to better support the commercial office sector, which is vital to the success of London and the nation. Commercial offices provide the physical spaces for industries, particularly professional and business services, financial services and the creative industries, all of which are listed as high potential ‘IS-8’ industries in the Government’s Industrial Strategy. Given the role of offices as critical economic infrastructure to support these industries, the NPPF should explicitly and clearly provide support.

89. Policy E1 should make specific reference to supporting the commercial office sector. Whilst the Industrial Strategy itself does refer to the professional and business services sector, the financial services sector and creative industries (amongst other industries) (inside the report), there needs to be a much clearer link made between the support of these industries and support of the physical office spaces which enable their growth.. The latest data indicates that office-based sectors support about 2.8m jobs across Greater London and produce almost half of the capital’s economic output – close to £290bn in GVA per annum and around £105,000 per office job. Every 100 office jobs support roughly 40 jobs in supply chains and about 18 on the high street.<sup>8</sup> Notwithstanding this critical role, often securing planning permission for new offices in central London can be challenging given the complex urban landscape and myriad of planning considerations. The Framework should explicitly provide support for offices in principle in sustainable, well-connected locations.

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<sup>8</sup> London Property Alliance, [Space for Change: Office space dynamics in central London](#), December 2025

90. Policy E1 should also specifically support urban centres as the cores where such office development should primarily be directed. Such centres provide sustainable, well-connected, vibrant places suitable for the development of high-quality new offices. In London, the CAZ is the UK's economic engine, contributing £315bn in annual GVA, with the City and Westminster comprising over £200bn of this total. High-quality offices are the engine rooms where much of this economic activity happens.<sup>9</sup> The Industrial Strategy is largely focused on achieving growth outside of London. Given the Industrial Strategy's prominence in references within the NPPF, policy wording should also make specific reference to the role of urban centres, which would include London's CAZ, given its critical role in supporting and growing the national economy. Not only does London's CAZ have the economic potential to best support the Government's economic growth mission, it is the most sustainable location in the UK for growth given the quantity of brownfield land, excellent connectivity and high concentration of goods and services.
91. We therefore suggest the following amendments to Policy E1(a):

*"1. To support business investment and employment, development plans should, at the most appropriate level:*

*a. Set out a clear economic vision and strategy, which takes a positive, proactive and realistic approach to encouraging sustainable economic growth in both urban and rural areas, having regard to the **commercial office sector**, the Industrial Strategy<sup>33</sup> and any relevant strategic and local strategies for economic development and regeneration. In doing so they should take into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for economic growth, including priority places for investment in **urban centres**, key sectors set out in the Industrial Strategy, and the location of Industrial Strategy Zones<sup>34</sup> and AI Growth Zones;"*

92. We support reference in Policy E1(1)(c) to development plans quantifying and planning for economic needs over the plan period. Having appropriate targets set within development plans not only provides a framework for sustainable growth, it also provides confidence and clarity for developers. The LPA is very supportive of the Government's mission to kickstart economic growth and aim for the highest sustained growth in the G7<sup>10</sup> as well as the Industrial Strategy's aim for a 10-year plan to make the UK the best country to invest in anywhere in the world<sup>11</sup>. Achieving these aspirations will require the planning framework at all levels to be fully supportive of sustainable economic growth. The benefits of a flexible planning policy framework has been illustrated in our own research, *Good Growth in Central London* (2024), revealed that a balanced approach to growth with flexible planning policy in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ+) could unlock 407,000 jobs, 50,700 new homes and an additional 55.7m sq ft in commercial floorspace by 2045 – boosting the UK economy by £101bn (GVA).<sup>12</sup>
93. It is important that any economic needs targets are not only linked to the allocation of sites (given the long lifespan of development plans), and that such targets are set as minimum targets, not maximum. We have been closely involved with the City of London's emerging new City Plan 2040, where the emerging Plan has, quite rightly, taken an approach to set a guiding

<sup>9</sup> London Property Alliance, [Space for Change: Office space dynamics in central London](#), December 2025

<sup>10</sup> HM Government, Plan for Change, 5 December 2024

<sup>11</sup> UK Government, The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, November 2025

<sup>12</sup> London Property Alliance, [Good Growth in Central London](#), July 2024

minimum new office target for the City, helping to support its ambition to continue to drive economic growth and continue to lead and compete globally as a world class location for business and leisure. It is clear within the draft emerging Plan that this target is a minimum only, and it should only help guide development, not constrain any development that may come forward above this target.

94. We query the reference to “modern economy” given that the term is not defined. Given the critical importance of offices to delivering on the Modern Industrial Strategy, we suggest that extra strength within the NPPF is given to supporting this vital sector.
95. We therefore suggest that the wording in Policy E1(1)(c) be amended as follows:

*“c. Meet existing and anticipated needs over the plan period including through setting minimum aspirational targets and allocating ~~Allocate~~ sites to implement the economic vision and strategy ~~and meet existing and anticipated needs over the plan period~~, paying particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy (including sites and premises which are flexible and adaptable) and the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes, ~~where a need exists or is anticipated~~, making provision for:*

96. To reiterate the point that development plans should guide, but not constrain, economic development, we suggest that Policy E1(2) be amended as follows:

*“2. Given changing commercial property requirements, development plans should not be overly prescriptive about the types of uses that would be acceptable on particular sites (other than where there is a clear and justified rationale for being specific about acceptable uses at the plan-making stage), nor should they constrain development where it exceeds anticipated development plan need targets, where such development would be sustainable development in line with Policy S3.”*

**85) Do you agree with the approach to meeting the need for business land and premises in policy E2? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

97. Partly agree – the LPA strongly supports the emphasis which the NPPF places on recognising the benefits of economic growth in the planning balance however the NPPF should go further to better support the commercial office sector, which is vital to the success of London and the nation.
98. As referred to in our response to Q5, the simplification of terminology around application of weight in the NPPF is welcomed, however no direction is given to decision makers when applying “substantial weight”. As noted above, the LPA is fully supportive of the Government’s aspirations to kickstart economic growth<sup>13</sup> and make the UK the best country to invest in anywhere in the world.<sup>14</sup> If these aspirations are to be achieved, the highest level of weight needs to be given to economic benefits in the planning balance, much the same approach that is often applied to housing schemes where there is a need.
99. For the same reasons as set out in our response to Q84, Policy E2 should specifically include support for the commercial office sector, as well as urban centres, not just the Industrial Strategy and Industrial Strategy Zones and AI Growth Zones. Directly supporting offices in city

<sup>13</sup> HM Government, Plan for Change, 5 December 2024

<sup>14</sup> UK Government, The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy, November 2025

centres i.e. the critical economic infrastructure which provides the spaces for businesses to thrive and grow, is crucial. We therefore suggest that Policy E2(1)(a) be amended to read:

*“a. The economic benefits of proposals for commercial development which allow businesses to invest, expand and adapt; especially where this would support the economic vision and strategy for the area, **urban centres**, the implementation of the Industrial Strategy<sup>35</sup>, **support the commercial office sector**, support improvements in freight and logistics and/or reflect proposals for Industrial Strategy Zones and AI Growth Zones;”*

**89) Do you agree with the approach to development in town centres in policy TC2? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) If not, please explain how you would achieve this aim differently?**

100. Strongly agree.

101. Given the LPA’s experience of the benefits of the introduction of Use Class E in helping town centres to respond to ever more quickly changing environments, the LPA strongly agrees with wording which explicitly supports the diversification and intensification of uses, both of which are important to supporting the long-term vitality and viability of town centres to deliver economic growth.

**90) What impacts, if any, have you observed on the operation of planning policy for town centres since the introduction of Use class E?**

102. The LPA’s experience is that the introduction of Use Class E, and the policy changes flowing from it, has been positive for town centre environments overall. It has allowed town centre uses to adapt and diversify more quickly in high street environments than they otherwise would have been with the old Use Classes Order, in the context of an ever more rapidly changing retail and economic environment where there is uneven competition from other formats (such as those online). This has helped to support economic growth of towns and cities and the vibrancy of communities in challenging circumstances since the pandemic.

**98) Do you agree with the proposed approach to supporting development for renewable and low carbon development and electricity network infrastructure in policy W3? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree, and any changes you would make to improve the policy.**

103. Strongly agree.

104. The LPA supports the proposed wording, which in the range of benefits to be considered, and the weight it affords them, better reflects the benefits associated with renewable and low-carbon energy generation. District heating networks, for example, can play a significant role in reducing carbon emissions and enhancing energy security in high-density town and city centre environments.

## **Chapter 12: Making effective use of land**

**114) Do you agree policy L1 provides clear guidance on how Local Plans should be prepared to promote the efficient use of land? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**115) If not, what further guidance is needed?**

105. Partly agree.

106. The LPA supports the principles outlined in this policy but is conscious that in more complex urban environments like town and city centres, much of the overall development which takes place currently comes forward on sites where there is no express site allocation in place. This is often because it is more difficult in these locations to anticipate where development may come forward in the plan period. The NPPF should not, therefore, be worded to constrain development specifically because there is no site allocation. Wording could be added to policy, L1 or to policy L2 to make this intent clear in decision-making.

107. The LPA also suggests that the policy wording should also explicitly support the densification of brownfield land, especially in the most sustainable locations.

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**116) Do you agree policy L2 provides clear guidance on how development proposals should be assessed to ensure efficient use of land? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

108. Strongly agree.

109. The LPA agrees that policy L2 provides clear guidance on how development proposals should be assessed to ensure the most efficient and optimal use of land, with the exception of plots which are under-developed. There is significant, unrealised development potential in dense urban contexts to accommodate additional development which increases the height of existing building plots to intensify the use of the land. This is the currently the source of much of the 'net additional' (rather than replacement) development floor space, and therefore economic growth, in dense urban locations. These are also the locations where development has the greatest potential to deliver economic growth, due to their locations having the highest level of economic activity, and where public transport connectivity tends to be highest. It is therefore critical that the policy wording at part b expressly supports the vertical extension above existing buildings, where the context means it is appropriate to do so.

**117) Do you agree policy L2 identifies appropriate typologies of development to support intensification? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) If not, what typologies should be added or removed and why?**

110. Partly agree.

111. Policy L2 generally identifies successfully many of the typologies of development which would support densification. The policy should also refer specifically to the space above existing city centre and town centre buildings and sites, where there is significant, unrealised development potential in dense urban contexts to accommodate additional development which increases the height of existing building plots to intensify the use of the land, in a highly sustainable manner.

**118) Do you agree the high-level design principles provided in policy L2(d) appropriate for national policy? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

112. Partly agree.

113. The LPA agrees these principles are appropriate. In addition, the first part of part (d) should be expanded beyond residential to refer explicitly to all forms of development, such as commercial development, “using the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises”. Such development is equally, and often more, capable of delivering economic growth by providing additional floorspace in the areas of the greatest demand, in town and city centres.

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**119) Do you agree policy L2 (d)(i) achieves its intent to enable appropriate development that may differ from the existing street scene, particularly in cases such as corner plot redevelopment and upwards extensions. Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

114. Strongly agree.

115. The LPA supports the policy wording and suggests d(i) is expanded to include other forms of development which would not ‘be consistent with the street scene’ but would also not be visible from the majority of the surroundings. This includes vertical extensions which are set well back from the edges of existing buildings. LPA’s experience is that such extensions are critical to delivering much of the ‘net additional’ (rather than replacement) development floor space, and therefore economic growth, in dense urban locations. Express support for these extensions should therefore be provided in the Framework wording.

**121) Do you agree policy L3 provides clear guidance on achieving appropriate densities for residential and mixed-use schemes? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) If not, please explain how guidance could be clearer?**

116. Strongly agree.

117. The LPA agrees that policy L3 provides clear guidance. Part 2 of the policy is particularly helpful in confirming that the existing character of an area “should be taken into account ... but should not preclude development which makes the most of an area's potential”. The LPA suggests expanding the proposed policy wording at the end of policy L3 paragraph 2, to state that “Development proposals which affect heritage assets but also achieve an increase in density should be considered positively”. The LPA also suggests that the policy should specifically state that significantly higher densities of development are likely to be appropriate in city centres than in other contexts (such as inner city, suburban and rural environments). The LPA therefore agrees that there should be no reference to maximum densities in the policy wording.

## **Chapter 14: Achieving well-designed places**

**146) Do you agree that policy DP1 provides sufficient clarity on how development plans should deliver high quality design and placemaking outcomes? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree**

118. Partly agree.

119. Development Plans should set also out in what circumstances design review and other design processes will be required.

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**148) Do you agree policy DP3 clearly set out principles for development proposals to respond to their context and create well-designed places? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

120. Partly agree.

121. Policy DP3 does clearly set out key design principles, and it is welcome that this includes reference to innovative design, increased scale/density where justified and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

122. However, it must be acknowledged that not all proposals will comply with all elements of the principles set out within Policy DP3. For example, a scheme may cause an element of heritage 'harm' (and therefore not fully respond to a site's context (part a) in order to deliver climate change or other benefits. Part (2) is too restrictive and risks being applied too stringently. As drafted, it could be interpreted that all of Policy DP3 has to be complied with for developments to be approved. There may be good planning reasons why a deviation would be acceptable and we suggest that the wording in Part (2) be reviewed to ensure it aligns with the wider aspiration of the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development in line with Policy S3.

123. We welcome the recognition in part (4) regarding outstanding or innovative design which promotes high levels of sustainability. We suggest that reference to such proposals needing to be "consistent" with their surroundings is removed. Designs which are different from local context should not in principle be unacceptable – on the contrary such proposals should be welcomed, where such difference can be justified giving due consideration to the existing local area.

**149) Do you agree with the proposed approach to using design review and other design processes in policy DP4? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) If not, what else would help secure better design and placemaking outcomes?**

124. Partly disagree.

125. In order for development to come forward as quickly as possible, it is crucial that local authorities are proactive and constructive when dealing with post-permission changes to schemes. This includes changes to approved details for example materials. Scheme changes are often necessary post-permission due to a range of factors such as procurement issues, contractor matters, site investigations, cost and feasibility etc. Many design and procurement decisions are not made until after the determination of a planning application, requiring these to be secured at planning stage will add to, rather than reduce, complexity. Clarity should be made within Policy DP4(2) that such changes will be considered acceptable where they maintain design quality.

**150) Do you agree that policy TR1 will provide an effective basis for taking a vision-led approach and supporting sustainable transport through planmaking? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

126. Strongly agree.

127. The LPA agrees with the principle that plans, whether at local or strategic level, should set out thresholds for what constitutes a “significant amount of movement” arising from new development. This would be a proportionate approach which prevents developments which would have insignificant transport impacts from needing to provide unnecessarily onerous assessments, encouraging such developments to support sustainable growth.

**152) Do you agree with the changes proposed in policy TR3(1a), including the reference to proposals which could generate a significant amount of movement, and the proposed use of the Connectivity Tool? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

128. Strongly agree.

129. The LPA agrees with the changes proposed to the policy, especially the reference to proposals which generate a significant amount of movement, because this will better ensure decision-making is appropriate to the context. For example, larger developments in dense urban areas are likely to generate higher overall levels of journeys than a comparably sized development in other locations, but far better connectivity and public transport access means the impact of those journeys, principally by public transport, will be far more limited than many other types of development with a reliance on the private car.

**155) Do you agree that the amended wording proposed in policy TR6 provides a clearer basis for considering when transport assessments and travel plans will be required, and for considering impacts on the transport network? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

130. Partly agree.

131. The LPA largely agrees with the proposed wording. Part 1 should however be amended to clarify that “Development proposals that are likely to generate significant amounts of movement in relation to their context”, should be supported by a transport statement or assessment and a travel plan. This would avoid unnecessarily requiring transport statements and assessments in cases where there is clearly no prospect of a development in a location with good transport connectivity and infrastructure resulting in any significant transport impacts. For example developments in dense urban areas are likely to generate higher overall levels of journeys than in suburban or rural settings, but their far better connectivity and public transport access means the impact of the same number of journeys is far more limited than many other types of development (where journeys are often heavily car-dependent).

## **Chapter 16: Promoting healthy communities**

**163) Do you agree with the approach taken to recreational facilities in policy HC7, including the addition of ‘and/or’ with reference to quantity and quality of replacement provision? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

132. Partly disagree.

133. This policy should **only** relate to the loss of existing public sports and recreational buildings and land (and presumably uses), not private facilities. Private sports and recreation facilities often operate under commercial, operational and market driven conditions that differ significantly from public provision. It is therefore important that policy does not inadvertently constrain opportunities for investment in sites where private facilities may no longer be viable or aligned with business needs. In addition, it is important that policies do not disincentivise private facilities from being brought forward, due to future concerns over policy protection.

**167) Do you agree with the criteria set out in proposed policy P3 as a basis for securing acceptable living conditions and managing pollution? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

134. Partly agree.

135. The LPA largely agrees with the criteria set out in the policy. The LPA considers that the wording of part 3 should be extended to “having adequate access to light in relation to its context”. This would reflect the reality of the highly varied natural light environments which exist. In locations with existing mid- and high-density development, which are identified elsewhere in the NPPF (especially chapter 12), as the most sustainable locations for accommodating development, it will not be possible to achieve levels of natural light which are commonplace in rural and suburban locations. If the NPPF were interpreted to require the delivery of the same level of natural light in delivered in dense urban locations as in rural and suburban ones, it would drastically reduce the density of development which could be achieved in the most sustainable locations, urban and town centres. The NPPF should clarify in this policy that the determination of an ‘adequate’ level of light will be different for developments in more densely developed contexts than in other settings.

**174) Do you agree with the proposed requirement in policy F8 for sustainable drainage systems to be designed in accordance with the National Standards? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

136. Strongly agree.

137. The LPA agrees with the reorganization of these policies to move all content regarding Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems into policy F8, which is separate to policy F7 which seeks to manage flood risk. The LPA’s experience is that, despite the NPPF to date already including wording which states that Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be incorporated only where it is possible to do so, some very small scale developments in urban areas which were clearly unsuitable for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems were the subject of requests for extensive detail demonstrating that opportunities to incorporate such systems had been maximised. This had the effect of slowing down the approval of small-scale

developments never intended to accommodate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. The LPA's view is that the new structure proposed will reduce such requests in urban contexts, where the primary policy goal is to ensure flood risk is not being increased.

## **Chapter 19: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**

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**179) Do you agree that the proposed approach to planning for the natural environment in policy N1, including the proposed approach to biodiversity net gain, strikes the right balance between consistency, viability, deliverability, and supporting nature recovery? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

138. Partly agree.

139. We comment only on part (2) of Policy N1 and strongly agree with the approach for development plans to be limited in setting local biodiversity net gain ('BNG') standards above the statutory requirement.

140. We responded to the Defra consultation in July 2025 for improving the implementation of BNG for minor, medium and brownfield development. Improving biodiversity in our built environment is incredibly important, however, as with all planning considerations the benefits of delivering biodiversity through development needs to be weighed up in the planning balance on a case-by-case basis. In dense urban environments like London it can sometimes be challenging for schemes to deliver BNG requirements in line with regulations, where the application of requirements is binary and not able to be considered against the need for other, equally important, planning considerations, for example, energy efficiency measures, heritage preservation/enhancement, flooding considerations, public realm improvements etc. We look forward to the Government's response to the Defra consultation last year and we hope that efforts are continued to review how the system could be improved.

**180) In what circumstances would it be reasonable to seek more than 10% biodiversity net gain on sites being allocated in the development plan, especially where this could support meeting biodiversity net gain obligations on other neighbouring sites in a particular area?**

141. Any circumstance for a development plan to seek higher than the statutory target should be very limited, and as suggested in Policy N1, only where **fully** justified. Such justification would need to consider how an increase in targets may affect the delivery of development and other important planning benefits.

## **Chapter 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**

**189) Do you agree with the approach to considering impacts on designated heritage assets in policy HE6, including the change from "great weight" to "substantial weight", and in particular the interactions between this and the statutory duties? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

142. Partly agree.

143. The LPA strongly supports the acknowledgement within Policy HE6(3) that enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed within listed buildings is

considered an “important public benefit” when being weighed against any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset.

144. In December 2021 the WPA prepared a paper which considered the challenges faced in planning terms in retrofitting historic buildings in Westminster, the authority which has the highest number of listed buildings.<sup>15</sup> Enabling building upgrades not only adapts them to meet changing needs, thereby aiding in their conservation and use, they also improve their climate resilience and sustainability. The report outlined a number of recommendations, for property owners as well as for applicants, policy and decision makers – of these was a recommendation for there to be more emphasis placed upon the importance of sustainability improvements when making planning decisions. The acknowledgement within the NPPF therefore that such works are “important public benefits” is most helpful.

145. It will be important for the NPPF to clarify that the list of “important public benefits” as set out in Policy HE6(3) is not exhaustive, so that other benefits are not effectively ‘downgraded’ in consideration by LPAs. Other public benefits, such as supporting economic growth, job creation, placemaking etc. may also be acknowledged and considered “important” in the context of the NPPF and the Government’s economic growth mission. We suggest some alternative wording for Policy HE6(3) as follows:

*“Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits will include, **but are not limited to**, securing the long-term re-use of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.”*

**191) Do you have any other comments on the revisions to the heritage chapter?**

146. We would like to comment on Policy HE7: Decisions on non-designated heritage assets (for which there is not a specific consultation question), specifically part (2).

147. Para 216 in the current NPPF (2024) directs decision-makers to take into account the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, requiring for a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

148. Draft Policy HE7(2), conversely, moves towards a presumption against development, with the test being that proposals causing harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of non-designated heritage assets **only** being supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits. We consider that this is a higher policy bar and one which takes away from Officers’ ability to effectively weigh any harm or loss in the planning balance, notwithstanding public benefit. Given the wide-ranging definition of a ‘non-designated heritage asset’ (as set out in Policy HE1), a higher policy test potentially has significant implications in restricting development coming forward. Whilst non-designated heritage assets should of course be a consideration in any planning decision, the weight with which decision-makers assess any harm or loss has to be proportionate to their non-statutory status. We therefore suggest that Policy HE6 simply retain the wording as exists in para 216 of the current NPPF (2026).

<sup>15</sup> WPA, [Zero Carbon Westminster: A focus on retrofit in historic buildings](#), December 2021

**Annex B - Viability: Standardised inputs in viability assessment**

**200) Would you support the use of growth testing for strategic, multi-phase schemes? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please explain your answer.**

149. Strongly disagree.
150. Growth assumptions can play a useful role as a testing tool but should not be relied upon as primary justification for setting policy requirements or determining present-day contribution levels.
151. Their appropriate function is to assess how future market improvement may influence development outcomes over time, thereby informing the potential use of review mechanisms that capture actual viability improvements when, and if, they materialise.
152. Growth modelling is inherently uncertain. It represents a forecast of future market conditions and is therefore susceptible to both overly optimistic and overly pessimistic assumptions. Setting policy requirements on the basis that anticipated growth will occur risks embedding speculative assumptions into present-day decision-making. In practical terms, this may result in policies requiring levels of contribution that are only achievable once forecast growth is realised, thereby delaying scheme commencement until market conditions align with those projections.
153. Established viability practice generally sets contributions based on what a scheme can viably deliver at the time of assessment, with mechanisms available to secure additional contributions should viability improve during delivery. Importantly, however, there is typically no equivalent mechanism allowing agreed contributions to reduce if viability subsequently worsens, particularly on strategic or multi-phase developments. As a result, where current obligations are established using growth forecasts that do not materialise, schemes may become unbalanced with no effective “release valve” to maintain deliverability.
154. This risk is particularly acute for large strategic allocations and phased developments, which are often central to Local Plan delivery. Reliance on projected growth to justify contribution levels may introduce significant delivery risk, as developers and investors may defer commencement of schemes or phases until anticipated market improvements are realised. Such an outcome would undermine the objective of accelerating delivery and infrastructure provision.
155. Growth assumptions are, therefore, most appropriately used to understand whether a site may become increasingly viable over the plan period and to inform expectations regarding future value capture. They can support the inclusion of sites within a Local Plan and justify the application of review mechanisms that secure additional contributions where viability demonstrably improves. However, baseline policy requirements should remain grounded in present-day viability to ensure schemes can proceed, with reviews providing the mechanism to crystallise genuine uplift rather than relying on speculative forecasts.

**202) Do you agree greater specificity, including single figures, which local planning authorities could choose to diverge from where there is evidence for doing so, would improve speed and certainty? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree. a) Please explain your answer. If you agree, the government welcomes views on the appropriate figure – for example, whether 17.5% would be an appropriate reflection of the industry standard for most market for sale housing.**

156. Strongly disagree.
157. The LPA does not agree specificity of assumptions will result in accurate assessment of realistic viability and ensure delivery of development is maintained. It is important to maintain an appropriate connection between viability in planning and real market outcomes. However, flexibility through guidance ranges where assumptions would not be challenge would be helpful and will reduce the opportunity for disagreement and protracted discussion. If an applicant wanted to step outside the guidance ranges evidence would be needed.
158. National Planning Practice Guidance recognises that risk associated with development is represented by profit return. However, over the last few years, local authorities, particularly the GLA have imposed generic acceptable returns to development, irrespective of the individual scheme risks. Residential development has often been considered against a return of 17.5% which sits in the middle of the range in the planning practice guidance 15-20% for plan making. The argument being that the average scheme should be sit in the median of the range and less risky development at 15% and high risk at 20%. At plan making stage for generic simplicity single figures are often used in test as testing multiple variations of risk exponentially increases testing. It is not appropriate to specify any single figure for applied assumptions, however provision of expected range where challenge is unnecessary might be beneficial. However, this should be balanced with caution that assumptions, particularly return reflect the associated risk.
159. By increasing specificity of assessment in viability in planning, it will simplify the testing for plan making, however, it will have the opposite effect of making the viability assessment less effective and less reflective of reality. This detachment in purpose to reality will inevitably result in greater uncertainty in delivery and demand for application-level assessment because the applied assumptions are just too generic. This ultimately could lead to confusion as to why development financial outcomes vary significantly to viability in planning leading to suspicious of outcomes or intent. This is not useful and will drive a great distance in perspective between developers and planning decision makers.
160. It is better for Policy to guide and place greater weight on professional guidance from the RICS to ensure professionals produce reasonable and appropriate outcomes.
161. In response to the question of whether 17.5% represents an appropriate industry standard for most market-led development, it would not be appropriate to prescribe a single figure nationally. Risk and return are intrinsically linked and vary materially between schemes. A range-based approach, supported by evidence and professional judgement, would better reflect the diversity of development contexts while maintaining consistency and certainty.

**203) Are there any site types, tenures, or development models to which alternative, lower figures to 15-20% of Gross Development Value might reasonably apply? a) Please explain your answer. The government is particularly interested in views on whether clarifying an appropriate profit of 6% on Gross Development Value for affordable housing tenures would make viability assessments more transparent and speed up decision-making.**

162. Strongly disagree.
163. Greater specificity in viability assumptions, including the use of single figures, is unlikely to improve speed or certainty if it results in assessments that are detached from market reality. Development is delivered in live, complex market environments, not in standardised models. A “paint by numbers” approach to viability risks oversimplifying inherently variable commercial conditions and may ultimately increase areas of dispute rather than reduce them.

164. Viability in planning must remain grounded in real-world development economics. While consistency and clarity are important, overly prescriptive national figures would not accurately reflect variations in site risk, delivery complexity, funding structures, location, or market exposure. Attempting to standardise inherently variable inputs risks creating an artificial separation between planning viability and actual development performance. Where that separation emerges, schemes are more likely to require application-stage reassessment because the generic assumptions simply do not reflect the commercial realities of delivery.
165. The treatment of developer return provides a clear example. National Planning Practice Guidance recognises that return reflects risk, typically referencing a range (for example 15–20% for plan-making purposes). In practice, some authorities have applied a single mid-point figure—often 17.5%—on the basis that this represents an “average” scheme. However, risk is not uniform. Regeneration schemes, phased developments, constrained urban sites, and straightforward greenfield sites carry materially different risk profiles. Fixing a single return across all contexts assumes homogeneity that does not exist in practice.
166. At plan-making stage, simplification may be administratively convenient, as modelling multiple risk scenarios increases complexity. However, convenience should not outweigh accuracy. Specifying a single national figure risks embedding an assumption that may be inappropriate for many schemes. This would either suppress viable delivery where risk is higher, or inflate returns where risk is lower, thereby distorting outcomes.
167. A more effective approach would be to provide clear guidance ranges within which assumptions would not ordinarily be challenged. This would reduce unnecessary debate while retaining flexibility. Where an applicant sought to depart from those ranges, proportionate evidence could be required. Such an approach maintains connection to market reality while discouraging speculative or opportunistic inputs.
168. Excessive prescription also risks unintended consequences. If planning viability diverges materially from actual development economics, it may create confusion or mistrust when financial outcomes differ from appraisal outputs. This disconnect can foster misunderstanding between decision-makers and developers, ultimately increasing rather than reducing contention.
169. Policy should therefore guide rather than fix assumptions, placing weight on recognised professional standards and methodologies, including those promoted by RICS. Professional judgement—properly evidenced and transparently applied—remains essential to ensuring viability assessments reflect the real environments in which development occurs.

**222) Do you agree with the proposal to extend the Permission in Principle application route to medium development?**

**Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.**

**a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

170. Strongly agree.

171. There are significant headwinds which currently discourage housing development, both within and outside the planning system. The question of whether a particular land use would be approved on a given site is among the more significant of these. The Permission in Principle route helps to reduce the factors discouraging development by splitting the process into two parts.

172. The LPA therefore strongly agrees with the extension of the Permission in Principle application route to medium development and with the principle of creating a medium development category, as long as the process and application documentation requirements are proportionate to the nature of the category. This change could help to unlock a substantial number of additional housing developments in both urban and suburban settings, by making it clear where the principle of residential development is acceptable, removing a significant area of doubt before investment in the subsequent Technical Considerations application is made. This could make a significant contribution to meeting the Government's ambitious housing targets.

173. There are various sectors of development such as offices and other work spaces which, similarly to housing, perform a vitally important contribution to driving growth in the economy. The LPA's view is that the ability to use the Permission-in-Principle route and medium development should be extended also to non-residential development, providing up to 5,000 sqm gross floorspace.

***223) Do you have views about whether there should be changes to the regulatory procedures for these applications, including whether there should be a requirement for a short planning statement?***

174. The LPA suggests that the provision of Planning Statements with medium development, if such developments are brought into the Permission-in-principle route, should be encouraged, but not made mandatory. This would have the benefit of both allowing applicants to demonstrate the specific circumstances which would support the case in favour of the development of such sites, acknowledging they are likely to be more complex than minor developments. It would also mean however that those applicants who are not familiar with the planning system, such as SMEs, are not excluded from utilising this application route in the simpler way it was originally intended to function.