

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Transport Planning for Developments

Key points:

- Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans still required.
- Sustainable transport still to be prioritised.
- Significant impacts must be mitigated to an acceptable degree.
- Highway safety now explicitly referenced as a reason for refusal.
- Severity test is now referenced in paragraph 109 and is limited to road network impacts.
- Application requirements strengthened through the removal of the *'where practical'* reference.
- Requirement for EV parking spaces strengthened.
- Still no definition of *'severe'*.

Summary:

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) was published on the 24th July 2018 to replace the previous NPPF published in 2012 (NPPF 2012).

The *'presumption in favour of sustainable development'* remains central to the document, for both plan-making and decision-taking. The requirement for developments which generate significant amounts of movement to be supported by a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement and Travel Plan also remains unchanged, although NPPF 2018 no longer refers to a Travel Plan as a *'key tool'* for facilitating the use of sustainable transport modes.

Paragraphs 108 to 110 of NPPF 2018 will be of particular importance to our clients, as they consider how planning decisions will be made in relation to transport. The content of these paragraphs is comparable to paragraph 32 of NPPF 2012, however paragraph 108 of NPPF 2018 states it must be ensured that:

'any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree'

This provides additional clarity compared to NPPF 2012 in that impacts on the transport network now explicitly relate to highway safety as well as capacity and congestion. However, it also introduces the concept that impacts must be mitigated to an ‘*acceptable degree*’, although this is not explicitly defined.

Further to this, NPPF 2018 paragraph 109 states that:

‘Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe’. (our underlining)

By comparison, NPPF 2012 stated that:

‘Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe’. (our underlining)

NPPF 2018 therefore now includes ‘highway safety’ as a reason for refusal and the severity test is now limited to impacts on the ‘road network’. It will be for Authorities and Inspectors to decide what constitutes an unacceptable or severe impact.

Further context regarding application requirements is provided in paragraph 110 of NPPF 2018. Whilst these provisions are similar to those in paragraph 35 of NPPF 2012, the reference to them being provided ‘*where practical*’ has been removed, suggesting an increased weight to these requirements.

Walking, cycling and public transport accessibility continue to be themes running through the documents, requiring priority to be given to pedestrian and cycle movements, as well as access to high quality public transport.

The concept that rural locations should be treated differently to urban locations in sustainable transport terms also continues to be recognised. NPPF 2018 states at paragraph 84 that in rural areas, sites to meet local needs may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, in locations not well served by public transport. In these circumstances, it should be ensured that:

‘development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport)’

Both NPPF documents have very similar requirements for the setting of local parking standards, with the specific need to *'ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles'* (NPPF 2018 paragraph 105) replacing the more general need to *'reduce the use of high-emission vehicles'* (NPPF 2012 paragraph 39). NPPF 2018 also states that the importance of adequate overnight lorry parking facilities should be recognised, which was not a requirement of NPPF 2012.

Also in relation to parking, NPPF 2018 at paragraph 106 specifies that maximum parking standards should only be set when *'there is clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport'*.

Overall, the importance of sustainable modes, land use planning, parking provision and highways impact remains key to NPPF 2018. However, there has been a slight change in emphasis to the remit of the severity test with the inclusion of highway safety, but with other impacts restricted to those associated with the road network. There is still no definition however of what is classed to be 'severe', or indeed 'unacceptable'.