



What is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and how is it relevant to Somerset communities and wildlife?

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The latest version of the NPPF was published in July 2021.

This planning document sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. As such the NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan for an area (including Local and Neighbourhood Plans), and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The Framework should be read as a whole (including its footnotes and annexes).

The NPPF does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects which are determined in accordance with other legislation and relevant national policy statements.

The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Three interdependent objectives are described to achieve sustainable development which are:-

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and which includes ensuring a sufficient number and range of homes to meet the needs of present and future generations
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including improving biodiversity, mitigating and adapting to climate change

The NPPF covers all aspects of planning including housing, the economy, promoting healthy and safe communities, sustainable transport, achieving well designed places, climate change and conserving and enhancing the natural environment. It states that the natural environment should be enhanced by minimizing impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks.

Measures to protect habitats and biodiversity are described including the need to identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife, ecological networks, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them. The NPPF also states that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure net measurable gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

With respect to planning decisions a number of principles are described when considering wildlife and which seek to avoid harm to biodiversity resulting from development. Other principles relate to protected wildlife sites (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, SSSI's) and the loss of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodlands and veteran trees.

In conclusion, the NPPF is an important planning document which must be taken into account by developers and planning decision makers. Plans and decisions made in accordance with the NPPF will be more robust and difficult to challenge. Furthermore individuals and communities can use the NPPF to challenge new development to ensure the best outcomes for local communities and wildlife.

[The following is a link to the full version of the NPPF](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432424/nppf-2019.pdf)