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National Planning Policy Framework

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14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Paragraphs 152 to 173

152. The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Planning for climate change

153. Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures [53](#). Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making

provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.

154. New development should be planned for in ways that:

- (a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure; and
- (b) can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. Any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings should reflect the government's policy for national technical standards.

155. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

- (a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);
- (b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and
- (c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

156. Local planning authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside areas identified in local plans or other strategic policies that are being taken forward through neighbourhood planning.

157. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

- (a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and
- (b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.

158. When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- (a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

(b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable [54](#) . Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

Planning and flood risk

159. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

160. Strategic policies should be informed by a strategic flood risk assessment, and should manage flood risk from all sources. They should consider cumulative impacts in, or affecting, local areas susceptible to flooding, and take account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management authorities, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards.

161. All plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development – taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property. They should do this, and manage any residual risk, by:

(a) applying the sequential test and then, if necessary, the exception test as set out below;

(b) safeguarding land from development that is required, or likely to be required, for current or future flood management;

(c) using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management); and

(d) where climate change is expected to increase flood risk so that some existing development may not be sustainable in the long-term, seeking opportunities to relocate development, including housing, to more sustainable locations.

162. The aim of the sequential test is to steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. The strategic flood risk assessment will provide the basis for applying this test. The sequential approach should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding.

163. If it is not possible for development to be located in areas with a lower risk of flooding (taking into account wider sustainable development objectives), the exception test may have to be applied. The need for the exception test will depend

on the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed, in line with the Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification set out in Annex 3.

164. The application of the exception test should be informed by a strategic or site-specific flood risk assessment, depending on whether it is being applied during plan production or at the application stage. To pass the exception test it should be demonstrated that:

(a) the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk; and

(b) the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

165. Both elements of the exception test should be satisfied for development to be allocated or permitted.

166. Where planning applications come forward on sites allocated in the development plan through the sequential test, applicants need not apply the sequential test again. However, the exception test may need to be reapplied if relevant aspects of the proposal had not been considered when the test was applied at the plan-making stage, or if more recent information about existing or potential flood risk should be taken into account.

167. When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment [55](#). Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

(a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;

(b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment;

(c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;

(d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and

(e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

168. Applications for some minor development and changes of use [56](#) should not be subject to the sequential or exception tests but should still meet the requirements for site-specific flood risk assessments set out in [footnote 55](#).

169. Major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. The systems used should:

- (a) take account of advice from the lead local flood authority;
- (b) have appropriate proposed minimum operational standards;
- (c) have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development; and
- (d) where possible, provide multifunctional benefits.

Coastal change

170. In coastal areas, planning policies and decisions should take account of the [UK Marine Policy Statement](#) and [marine plans](#). Integrated Coastal Zone Management should be pursued across local authority and land/sea boundaries, to ensure effective alignment of the terrestrial and marine planning regimes.

171. Plans should reduce risk from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas and not exacerbating the impacts of physical changes to the coast. They should identify as a Coastal Change Management Area any area likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast, and:

- (a) be clear as to what development will be appropriate in such areas and in what circumstances; and
- (b) make provision for development and infrastructure that needs to be relocated away from Coastal Change Management Areas.

172. Development in a Coastal Change Management Area will be appropriate only where it is demonstrated that:

- (a) it will be safe over its planned lifetime and not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change;
- (b) the character of the coast including designations is not compromised;
- (c) the development provides wider sustainability benefits; and
- (d) the development does not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast [57](#).

173. Local planning authorities should limit the planned lifetime of development in a Coastal Change Management Area through temporary permission and restoration conditions, where this is necessary to reduce a potentially unacceptable level of future risk to people and the development.

Footnotes

(53) In line with the objectives and provisions of the [Climate Change Act 2008](#). ↩

(54) Except for applications for the repowering of existing wind turbines, a proposed wind energy development involving one or more turbines should not be considered acceptable unless it is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the development plan; and, following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing. ↩

(55) A site-specific flood risk assessment should be provided for all development in Flood Zones 2 and 3. In Flood Zone 1, an assessment should accompany all proposals involving: sites of 1 hectare or more; land which has been identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems; land identified in a strategic flood risk assessment as being at increased flood risk in future; or land that may be subject to other sources of flooding, where its development would introduce a more vulnerable use. ↩

(56) This includes householder development, small non-residential extensions (with a footprint of less than 250m²) and changes of use; except for changes of use to a caravan, camping or chalet site, or to a mobile home or park home site, where the sequential and exception tests should be applied as appropriate. ↩

(57) As required by the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#). ↩

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