

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

A preliminary look at the changes to planning policy of relevance to green spaces in Bristol under the NPPF. *Note paragraph numbers refer to the NPPF paragraphs.*

Paper for Bristol Parks Forum. April 2012

The **National Planning Policy Framework** has superseded a number of **planning guidance notes** but not the Town and Country Planning Act.

2. "Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

12. This National Planning Policy Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. It is highly desirable that local planning authorities should have an up-to-date plan in place.

For Bristol, the development plan is the Core Strategy adopted in June 2011. Many areas have not yet got a development plan in place so are less able to control where development happens until they have adopted their plan.

Further development plan documents are currently in consultation, the **Bristol Central Area Action Plan** and the **Site Allocations and Development Management** policies documents. All these will be at the highest level of planning policy.

Further 'supplementary' documents are expected to follow but these will have less 'weight' as they are 'guidance' rather than 'policy'.

The NPPF has set out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and defined sustainable development as follows:

"7. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

●● an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

●● a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

●● an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."

The revoked PPG (Planning Policy Guidance) s that are particularly relevant for Bristol parks and green spaces groups covered Green Belt (PPG 2), Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17).

PPG17 in particular applied. Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy were drawn up in line with the requirement in PPG17

Local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or subregional levels.

Because Bristol's strategies, Playing Pitch and P&GSS, are part of the evidence base for Bristol's Core Strategy they are still material considerations in planning decisions.

The planning elements in the NPPF that refer to green space considerations are as follows:
(Text extracted from NPPF document) –

8 Promoting healthy communities

73. Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

74. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- surplus to requirements; or
- replaced by equivalent or better
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision,

75. Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access.....

76. Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. NOTE There is still some debate about what this means in practice; it could mean that development plan must be prepared under the Localism Act provisions to show where development *should* happen in order to use this protection clause.

77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space.

Can only be used where a green space is

- close proximity to the community
- special to a local community and holds a particular local significance,
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

78. Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.

9 Protecting green belt land

83. Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. *NOTE Bristol has adopted its Core Strategy, which has designated the Green Belt.*

11 conserving and enhancing the natural environment

109. The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment

110. ... to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate (NOTE:- for development) land with the least environmental or amenity value,

111. ... encourage the effective use of land by re-using land .. previously developed (brownfield land),

112. ... take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land

113. ... set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged

114. LPA Local Plans, plan.. positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure; and

115.National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

116. Planning permission refused in these areas except in exceptional circumstances

117. To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity across local authority boundaries; **map local ecological networks**, including designated sites of importance for biodiversity, **wildlife corridors and stepping stones** that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;
- **promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks** and priority species populations, identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;
- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and
- ... Nature Improvement Areas

118. When determining planning applications, LPA should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity

119. The presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.

120. To prevent risks from pollution and land instability, new development (must be) appropriate for its location

121. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that:

- the site is suitable for its new use

122. In doing so, local planning authorities should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impact of the use, rather than the control of processes or emissions

123. Planning policies and decisions should aim to:

- **avoid noise**
- **identify and protect areas of tranquility**

124. Planning policies should contribute towards EU objectives for pollutants

125. planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution

