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A man in a dark suit and a yellow hard hat stands on a rocky cliff edge, looking out over a vast, green, hilly landscape. He is holding a large set of white blueprints. A black briefcase sits on the ground next to him. In the background, a winding asphalt road curves through the green hills. The overall scene suggests a professional, possibly a planner or architect, reviewing plans in a natural setting.

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Government proposes devolution deal

Devolution has been a hot topic since the victory of the Labour government in the general election. But what does devolution mean for planning?

All strategic authorities will have a duty to develop a spatial development strategy which will apportion housing targets across local areas. Call-in powers will be granted to mayors to enable them to override local planning decisions in certain circumstances.

Five councils in Hampshire and Dorset have already submitted applications this month asking to be part of a devolution deal. Proponents of devolution argue that it will bring more money and power to local areas.

New combined authorities would have its own staff with the aim of tackling the bureaucracy so often associated with the planning process.

You can read the English Devolution White Paper [here](#).

Source: GOV.UK

Confidentiality clarified: Meira rules on treatment of pre-planning application process

The recent case of *Meira v Information Commissioner* [2025] has determined the confidential treatment of the pre-planning application process.

In the case, Meira made an information request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to the local authority, the London Borough of Lambeth Council (**Council**), in connection with a pre-planning application for a parcel of land adjacent to their property.

The Council refused to provide the requested information on the basis of the exceptions in the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The Council specifically relied on regulation 12(5)(d) which addressed the confidentiality of proceedings. Meira argued that the pre-planning application was not a “proceeding” for the purposes of regulation 12(5)(d) and as held in the prior decided *Jopling v Information Commissioner* [2024].

The Court dismissed the appeal brought by Meira. It held that there was no definition of “proceedings” within the Regulations and it had been given broad scope. Regulation 12(5)(d) provided that a local authority could refuse to disclose information should its disclosure adversely affect the confidentiality of proceedings if this confidentiality was provided by law.

The Council were therefore entitled to refuse to disclose details of the pre-planning application process.

You can read the case digest [here](#).

Source: BAILII

Go ahead given to Gove's decision: High Court approve office replacement of ITV Studio

The redevelopment of the former ITV Studios building on the South Bank in London has received the green light following a judicial review in the High Court.

Community campaigners, Save Our South Bank (**SOSB**), challenged the 25-storey planning scheme, which was approved by then-housing secretary Michael Gove in February.

SOSB argued that the proposed redevelopment would be “ugly, overbearing and overly dominant for its prominent position on South Bank”. The planning inspector considered the proposed development’s tallest block to be appropriate in meeting the townscape, heritage and further tests in the development plan. Gove agreed and approved the scheme.

The High Court judgment overruled the objections raised by SOSB on the basis that Gove “did not lose sight of his finding that there would be some conflict with the local plan”.

The decision marks another turning point in the recent trend towards redevelopment as highlighted in December’s Planning and Property Bulletin with the M&S Marble Arch case.

Source: [Architects’ Journal](#)

Proposed national planning reforms for farmers

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed, recently spoke at the Oxford Farming Conference announcing a consultation on national planning reforms for farmers.

The reforms will aim to enable farmers to diversify their holdings by ensuring permitted development rights “work for farms so they can convert larger barns into a farm shop, a holiday let, or sports facility”.

The announcement follows the protests by farmers in November 2024 following the introduction of inheritance tax measures for agricultural holdings.

Please click here to read the [full speech](#).

Source: GOV.UK



A ~~short~~ lengthy update on the revised NPPF

As briefly mentioned in the December edition of the Property and Planning Bulletin, the updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 12 December 2024.

We provided a short snapshot of the main changes with promises of a deep dive in the New Year.

So here it is. We have put the spotlight on the chapters with the most changes in the following breakdown.

Paragraph 2 – Achieving sustainable development

The test for disapplying the “tilted balance” – the policy that changes the balancing exercise which local authorities use when deciding whether to grant planning permission – has changed. The previous test of “clear reason for refusal” has now changed to a “strong reason for refusal”.

Paragraph 3 – Plan-making

There is an emphasis on the duty of local authorities to cooperate in plan-making with the introduction of a more demanding new test. Where there are relationships between local authorities, they should “make sure” that their plans “align as fully as possible” and that a “consistent approach” is taken to the delivery of major infrastructure.

Paragraph 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

The new government’s promise of delivering a supply of 1.5million new homes has seen a change to the standard method. The standard method identifies the minimum number of houses a local authority should aim to provide.

The change to the standard method aims for higher overall delivery by starting with a different baseline of need. The urban uplift has also been removed, which is likely to mean less housing provided in urban areas.

Paragraph 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy

Planning policies are now required to “pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics.”

Paragraph 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities

Local authorities are directed to refuse applications for fast food restaurants and takeaways near schools or locations where there is evidence that a concentration of these may have an adverse effect on local health, pollution or anti-social behaviour.

Paragraph 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Local authorities should try to develop different kinds of infrastructure by taking a “vision-led” approach to transport planning.

Paragraph 11 – Making effective use of land

Planning policies and decisions are now required to “give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused”.

Paragraph 12 – Achieving well-designed places

The word “beautiful” has most notably been removed from the title although this does not mean that the design of development is no longer important. There is a specific requirement that planning applicants should provide sufficient information to “demonstrate how their proposals will meet their design expectations set out in local and national policy”.

Paragraph 13 – Protecting Green Belt land

There has been a noticeable shift towards favouring development. Local authorities are required to review their Green Belt boundaries if they cannot meet the identified need for “homes, commercial or other development through other means”.

Scenarios have been provided where development on the Green Belt would not be considered inappropriate.

Development on the Grey Belt would not be considered inappropriate in scenarios where:

- a** the development would use grey belt land and not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan
- b** there is a demonstrated unmet need for the type of development proposed

c the development would be in a sustainable location

d where applicable the proposed development meets the “Golden Rules” requirements.

Paragraph 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

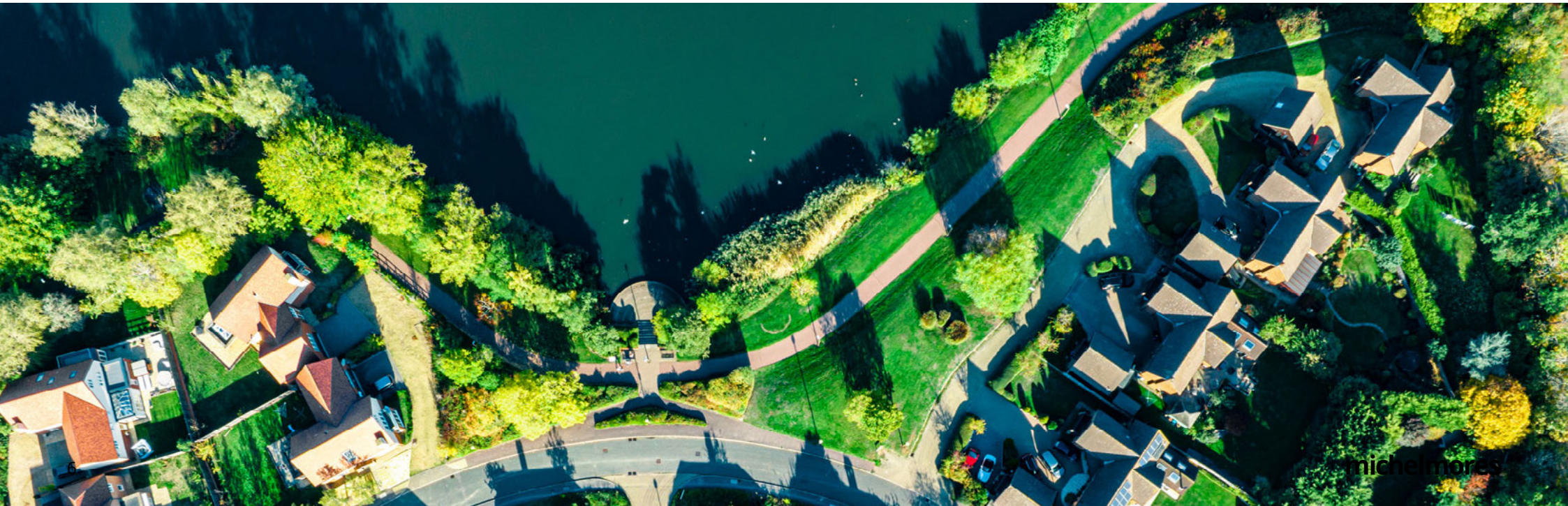
The update states that plans should consider the risk of drought from rising temperatures and recognises the importance of climate mitigation when deciding on planning applications.

The spotlight has been put on flood risk. The sequential test is now not required in situations where “a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes, land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would at risk of flooding from any source, now and in the future...”

Paragraph 15 – conserving and enhancing the natural environment

There has been a small amendment to include reference to “incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.”

Please [click here](#) to read the full revised NPPF.



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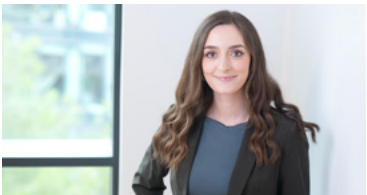
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