

Developers to get incentives to build new homes in towns and cities

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework mean developers of brownfield sites will no longer have to pay huge fees under the Community Infrastructure Levy



Planning Minister Nick Boles Photo: CLALE MOLDEN



By **Christopher Hope**, Senior Political Correspondent

6:00AM GMT 06 Mar 2014

Developers are to be given cash incentives to encourage them to build more homes in towns and cities instead of the countryside.

Developers of brownfield sites will no longer have to pay tens of thousands of pounds of fees under the Community Infrastructure Levy, under changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Companies which agree to build new homes on brownfield land will also not have to provide so many council homes in new housing schemes.

The changes come amid concerns that the NPPF has been used by builders to develop greenfield sites and ignore brownfield areas in urban communities because they are more profitable.

The reforms are being published today in new "planning practice guidance", which has been cut down from 7,000 pages to as few as 1,000.

In other changes, councils will be able to block developments in greenfield areas if local road and sewerage systems cannot cope with the extra homes.

Requirements described as "politically painful" forcing councils to give full details of where new homes will be built over 15 years will also be relaxed. Nick Boles, the planning minister, will set out the details in the House of Commons on Thursday. He said the changes showed the Government was acting in areas where the NPPF was not working as it should.

He told The Telegraph: "The NPPF has been in force for two years. We are making additions to planning guidance in some area where it is not working exactly as we intended. We want to use every inch of previously developed land to meet the housing need."

The reforms were welcomed by MPs and campaigners who have been critical of the NPPF in recent months. Simon Jenkins, the chairman of the National Trust, said: "We welcome it. There are huge swathes of urban England aching for redevelopment."

Nadhim Zahawi, a Conservative MP and a member of the Number 10 policy unit, said the changes "show that the Government is listening and is determined to make localism work. It is great news that the planning minister has listened to the calls to clarify the NPPF and is amending planning guidance to close many of the loopholes being exploited by rapacious developers. The strengthened focus on greenbelt protection, clarifications around brownfield first and the new focus on ensuring infrastructure is viable and delivered in time to make a difference will be welcomed by groups across the country."

Nick Herbert MP, a former Conservative Coalition minister, added: "These are welcome changes which show that Ministers have listened to local concerns about planning reforms. MPs have argued strongly about the problem of inadequate infrastructure to support development, and as recent flooding shows, these issues cannot be ignored. A focus on redeveloping brownfield sites, a more sensible approach on the 'duty to co-operate' between councils, and giving proper weight to emerging local plans so that they're not undermined by speculative development should all help to achieve a better balance between providing housing and protecting the countryside."

Neil Sinden, spokesman for the Campaign to Protect Rural England, said: "Any help that can unlock difficult to develop brownfield sites are very welcome. But we will be looking at the detail."