



**Town and Country
Planning Association**
Sustainable Workplaces
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The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP and Matthew Pennycook MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Minister of State for Housing
and Planning
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Sent by email and copied to Joanna Averley, Chief Planner

23 February 2026

Dear Secretary of State and Minister of State

The signatories of this open letter are a group of local authorities, businesses and NGOs committed to a common goal of ensuring that new development fully contributes to achieving the government's statutory carbon targets.

Whilst we recognise that the upcoming Future Homes Standard will be a step forward in the carbon performance of new homes, a better standard that achieves 'Net Zero in operation' is possible and can be delivered in the UK (subject to viability). This is already being achieved, with no impact on the delivery of new homes, across Cornwall, Bath and North East Somerset and Central Lincolnshire.

The draft NPPF, published for consultation in December, seeks to unduly curtail local authorities' ability to require net zero standards for new homes. The proposed Policy PM13, which seeks to limit standards set in local plans, is an unnecessary blocker to the innovations already being delivered to decarbonise the construction industry.

To support the acceleration to net zero, building regulations must be seen as a floor to increase standards across all new buildings, and not a ceiling. The planning system is ideally placed to support more ambitious innovation, with the checks and balances of development plan examinations ensuring that local policy requirements are evidenced, deliverable and viable.

Contrary to the assertion made in the consultation document, there is no significant variation in local standards. Instead, local planning authorities are using one industry supported approach based on energy-based metrics to drive down energy use in the operation of buildings. We are also not aware of any evidence that local standards prevent the deployment of energy efficiency technologies at scale. In fact, local standards are helping the gradual penetration of energy efficiency technologies in the housing market.

We work to challenge, inspire, and support people to create healthy, sustainable and resilient places that are fair for everyone.

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Local planning authorities seeking to set net zero standards for new buildings do so based on sound evidence, and to secure a series of wider benefits. These include:

- Reducing energy bills to address the cost of living crisis and end fuel poverty,
- Reducing energy demand, unlocking development in grid constrained areas and reducing the land required for renewables,
- Net zero standards have public support, and reduce opposition to new development,
- Providing a strong market for innovation in net zero construction industries, much of which is led by SMEs.

As a recent high court case has demonstrated, even if the Planning and Energy Act 2008 were amended to restrict local authorities from setting energy efficiency standards for new homes, this would not remove or override the climate obligations placed upon them by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The risk is therefore that current proposals will create a contradictory legal framework and slow down the plan making process.¹

The NPPF, as drafted, seeks to stifle the delivery of net zero homes in England, just as our neighbours in Scotland and Europe are seeking mandatory Passivhaus equivalent standards for all new homes. There is no reason this cannot be done in England.

We strongly urge you to reconsider the policy approach proposed in the draft NPPF to make it clear that until building regulations universally achieve net zero buildings,² local planning authorities may adopt standards in local plans which support national climate change targets, including those that go beyond current and future building regulations, so long as such policy is robustly evidenced and viable.

We are also concerned that no Environmental Assessment of the impact of this policy change has been made available and encourage you to publish this urgently so that it can be reviewed within the NPPF consultation window.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Howie

Chief Executive of the Town and Country Planning Association **on behalf of the following organisations and local authorities who are co-signatories to this letter:**

Angela Jones, President and Hannah Bartram, Chief Executive, **ADEPT**

Councillor Paul Harvey, Leader of the Council, **Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council**

Councillor Kevin Guy, Leader of the Council, Councillor Sarah Warren, Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Bath and North East Somerset and Councillor Matthew McCabe,

¹ *R (Rights: Community: Action Ltd) v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government* [2025]

² Defined as buildings that address total energy use in a building and align with climate targets.

Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, **Bath and North East Somerset Council**

Richard Hebditch, Coordinator, **Better Planning Coalition**

Sue Riddlestone OBE, Chief Executive and Co-Founder, **Bioregional**

Councillor David Barker, Chair of the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee, **Birmingham City Council**

Emma Goodings, Director of Place and Chief Planner, **Brentwood Borough Council** and **Rochford District Council**

Councillor Jane Scullion Leader of the Council and Councillor Scott Patient, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Climate Action and Housing, **Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council**

Dr Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, **Campaign for National Parks**

Councillor Mel Dawkins, Cabinet member for Environment and Climate Change, **Canterbury City Council**

Councillor Tracey Wye, Executive Member for Sustainability and Climate Resilience, **Central Bedfordshire Council**

Philip Hylton, Local Plans Manager, **Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee**

Janine Michael, Chief Executive, **Centre for Sustainable Energy**

Councillor Rose Moore, Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford, **Chelmsford City Council**

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council, **Cheltenham Borough Council**

Councillor Ian Middleton, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, **Cherwell District Council**

Councillor Jenny Kent, Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Emergency, **City of York**

Isaac Beevor, Partnerships Director, **Climate Emergency UK**

Cllr Andrea Luxford-Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Sustainable Development, **Colchester City Council**

Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Digital, **Cotswold District Council**

Nick Ireland, Council Leader, **Dorset Council**

Rachel Smith-Lyte, Deputy Cabinet Member for the Environment, **East Suffolk Council**

Thomas Lefevre, Director, **Etude**

Amy Powell, Associate and Paul Slater, Associate Director, **Edgars Limited**

Professor Jules Pretty OBE, Chair, **Essex Climate Action Commission**

Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Regeneration and Councillor Peter Schwier, Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling, **Essex County Council**

Graham Thomas, Chair, **Essex Planning Officers Association**

Councillor Adrian Birch, Leader of the Council, **Forest of Dean District Council**

Mike Chlids, Head of Science, Policy and Research, **Friends of the Earth**

Councillor Jeremy Hilton, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, **Gloucester City Council**

Councillor Lisa Spivey, Leader of the Council, **Gloucestershire County Council**

Laura Broderick, Programme Director, **Good Homes Alliance**

Peter Alsop, Director for Planning and Garden Town, **Harlow Council**

Councillor Glenn Haffenden, Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Housing and Councillor Julia Hilton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Shaping Places, **Hastings Borough Council**

Councillor Grainne Rason, Cabinet Lead for Climate Emergency, Environment & Water Quality, and Matt Goodwin, Chief Executive, **Havant Borough Council**

Louisa Bowles, Partner, **Hawkins\Brown**

Toby Johnson, Managing Director, **Haworth Tompkins**

Councillor Jean Todd, Executive Member for Climate Change and Environment, **High Peak Borough Council**

Sophia Ceneda, Associate and Sustainability Lead, **Howells**

Councillor Sam Riches, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Councillor Sue Tyldesley, Cabinet Member for Planning, **Lancaster City Council**

Jo McCafferty, Director, **Levitt Bernstein**

Councillor Emily O'Brien, Cabinet Member for Nature, Climate & Food Systems and Councillor Dr. Wendy Maples, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Well-Being, **Lewes District Council**

Councillor Katherine Dunne, Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment & Transport, **London Borough of Hounslow**

Jacob Heitland, Director of Climate Action, **London Borough of Newham**

Sripriya Sudhakar, Director of Planning and Building Control, **London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Clare Murray, **London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI)**

Councillor Annemieke Waite, Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, **North Somerset Council**

Councillor Sam Lux, Executive Member for Climate and Energy, **Nottingham City Council**

Rosie Bard, Associate Director, **Orms Architects**

Jon Bootland, Chief Executive, **Passivhaus Trust**

Councillor Chris Penberthy, Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities and Councillor Tom Briars-Delve, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, **Plymouth City Council**

Naomi Luhde-Thompson, Director, **Rights Community Action**

Councillor Sarah Bogle, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Growth and Skills, **Southampton City Council**

Councillor Louise Harris, Cabinet Member for the Climate & Nature Emergency, and Cllr Chris Willmore, Cabinet Member for the Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure, **South Gloucestershire Council**

Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson, Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, and Councillor Dr Ali Gordon-Creed, Climate Emergency and Environment, **South Oxfordshire District Council**

Tim Oruye, Head of Policy and Programmes, **South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils**

Councillor Kath Unsworth, Cabinet Member for the Environment, **South Ribble Borough Council**

Councillor Chloe Turner, Leader of the Council, **Stroud District Council**

Councillor Tim Gibson, Council Leader, **Swale Borough Council**

Guy Guiver, Corporate Director (Planning and Community), **Tendring District Council**

Councillor Richard Stanley, Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Economic Development, **Tewkesbury Borough Council**

Jon Tankard, Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change, **Three Rivers District Council**

Councillor J Kent, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Art, Culture and Heritage, **Thurrock Council**

Dean Hermitage, Strategic Director, **Uttlesford District Council**

Christopher Hammond, Chief Executive, **UK100**

Kirsty Girvan, Senior Policy Officer, **UK Green Building Council**

Councillor Andy Foulsham, Cabinet Member for Policy, Programmes and IT, **Vale of White Horse District Council**

Councillor Andy Graham, **West Oxfordshire District Council**

Michael Woodford, Director, **White Arkitekter**

Richard Benwell, Chief Executive, **Wildlife and Countryside Link**

Councillor Paul Semple, Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate and Waste, **Wiltshire Council**

Councillor Jackie Porter, Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan, **Winchester City Council**