

Activity 4A: Policy Development – Climate Change Adaptation

The issue

It is widely accepted amongst the scientific community that significant climate change is unavoidable, particularly given the slow progress towards global emissions reduction agreement. We must therefore adapt to the change as well as trying to mitigate it.

Building regulations only require the consideration of current weather conditions. This leads to the possibility of a building not being able to function adequately in the climate that is expected within the first major refurbishment cycle (of around 30 years). More severe conditions will need to be endured in the years that are further into the future but still within the projected life of building currently under design and construction.

NPPF guidance

99. Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to 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.

What would a policy seek to achieve?

What would be the local focus on the NPPF guidance?

Which of the effects of climate change should be included? (Frameworks exist highlighting the impacts but examples are higher summer temperatures causing overheating, more variable rainfall causing flooding, drought-flood cycles causing subsidence, sea level rise).

Should developers need to prove they can cope with 2050 temperatures or have a plan for adapting a building?

Would the policy suit being flexible or can a more rigid policy be implemented?

Flexible policies can accommodate more building types but are also open to interpretation.

What issues or elements of sustainability could a policy conflict with?

Adaptation strategies might rely on energy intensive comfort cooling.

Buildings or sites designed to be flood resistant might need sacrificial biodiversity areas

How could the policy be made implementable?

Initial ideas to promote discussion:

- Developers required to submit an overheating report showing comfortable internal conditions in 2030
- Developers required to submit an adaptation report using an accepted framework of risks
- Developers required to submit an adaptation plan showing how the building will cope in the future
- Site drainage/attenuation capability needs to take 50 year climate change into account
- How could the policy be evidenced?