

The five year land supply is an assessment of the number of homes realistically likely to be built over the next five years. The target must be made up of:

- Five years' worth of development at the annual rate set in the local plan;
- All of the shortfall from the beginning of the plan period; and
- A buffer supply, should housing not be delivered as planned.

The five year land supply must be assessed and published annually. Site surveys are carried out in April every year and the information is normally published in the annual monitoring report in December.

Implications for planning decisions

Paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies a key objective which is 'to boost significantly the supply of housing'. It also states that local planning authorities must identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements.

Paragraph 49 says that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. This is the 'trigger' for the second part of Paragraph 14, which states that where relevant parts of the development plan are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless:

- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted. (these include policies protecting the AONB, designated heritage assets, national and international nature conservation sites).

Without a five-year housing land supply, therefore, it is harder to refuse planning permission for housing development, even if the proposal conflicts with the local plan. The local plan will still be the starting point for decisions, but national policy is a very important material consideration and without a five year supply, development plan policies cannot necessarily be given the same weight. The fact that a site is outside a settlement boundary, for example, will not be sufficient reason to refuse permission.

Where there are specific designations as listed in the Framework, we need to balance the potential harm against the benefit of increasing the housing supply. Elsewhere, we can only refuse permission if the harm 'significantly and demonstrably' outweighs the benefit. We will still be able to negotiate on matters like design and planning obligations, but can only refuse on these grounds if we can demonstrate significant harm.