

Government response to petition on 15 minute cities

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they can be applied.

While the 15-minute cities concept is not a national planning policy, the principles of creating places that are accessible for everyone are clearly stated in the NPPF. It encourages transport issues to be considered at the earliest stages of plan-making, including opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use, and so that patterns of movement, streets and parking contribute to making high quality places. It outlines that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through infrastructure delivery, ensuring key services are located close to development and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. It also states that plan-making should support an appropriate mix of uses across an area. The NPPF is also clear that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, for example, through street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods.

Local plans are not subject to referendums, but local planning authorities are legally required to consult with communities and businesses in developing their local plan policies. They are adopted following this consultation process and examination for soundness by the Planning Inspectorate.

Statutory planning policies for each area are set out in the local development plan. Policies prepared by local planning authorities are set out in local plans and these undergo community consultation and independent examination before coming into force. Where local policies are prepared by communities themselves, through neighbourhood planning, local support must be confirmed via a referendum.

However, we know that current levels of engagement can sometimes fall below our ambitions.

That is why through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, we will be increasing opportunities for the community to get involved in planning for their area, to ensure that development is brought forward in a way that works best for local people.

15-minute cities aim to provide people with more choice about how and where they travel, not to restrict movement. It is for a local authority to determine whether or not this is a concept they wish to propose for their local area and/or include in their Local Plan or hold a referendum on such issues. The government believe there are sufficient mechanisms already in place for local authorities to do this and has no plans to make this mandatory.

In the event that local authorities wanted to make changes to the operation and layout of the existing road network, these too are already the subject of various legal requirements on local authorities to consult with their communities, for example through the Traffic Regulation Order making process.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities