

UK Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025: National Flood Forum Position Statement

Our Position

The **National Flood Forum (NFF)** recognises the need to accelerate housing and infrastructure delivery but believes the **UK Planning and Infrastructure Act must not weaken flood-risk protections** at a time of escalating climate impacts. Planning reform that prioritises speed over safety risks increasing exposure to flooding for new and existing communities.

We are concerned that measures to streamline decision-making could **downgrade flood risk, Surface Water management, and community resilience**, particularly if they weaken Flood Risk Assessments, the Sequential and Exception Tests, or local authority oversight.

We believe the Act must **embed flood risk and climate resilience as core planning objectives**, prevent development in areas of current or future flood risk, **mandate Sustainable Drainage Systems through full implementation of Schedule 3**, and ensure communities have a meaningful voice in planning decisions. Housing delivery and flood safety are not competing priorities—both must be delivered together to protect people, places, and long-term public trust.

Key Concerns of the Act

1. Increased Risk of Inappropriate Development

Streamlined planning processes may increase pressure to approve development in areas of **current or future flood risk**, undermining national policy intended to steer growth away from unsafe locations.

2. Weakening of Flood Risk Safeguards

Any reduction in the robustness of:

- Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs)
- The Sequential and Exception Tests
- Requirements to assess cumulative and downstream impacts

would significantly undermine flood risk management and public confidence in the planning system.

3. Failure to Mandate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The continued failure to implement **Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010** in England remains a critical gap. Without mandatory SuDS:

- Surface water flood risk continues to increase
- Sewer networks remain under pressure
- New developments often exacerbate flooding in surrounding communities

Planning reform must include **statutory, enforceable requirements for SuDS** in all new development.

4. Impact on Existing Communities

Poorly designed or sited developments can:

- Increase surface water runoff
- Overwhelm drainage infrastructure
- Transfer flood risk to neighbouring homes

The planning system must protect **existing communities**, not expose them to additional risk.

5. Reduced Community Voice and Transparency

Accelerated planning processes risk further **excluding communities** from decisions that directly affect their safety, wellbeing, and long-term security. Flood-affected communities possess vital local knowledge that must inform planning outcomes.

National Flood Forums Call to Action

The National Flood Forum urges Government to ensure the UK Planning and Infrastructure Act:

- 1. Explicitly embeds flood risk and climate resilience** as core objectives of planning reform
- 2. Prevents development in areas of current or future flood risk**, unless risk can be demonstrably and sustainably managed
- 3. Mandates Sustainable Drainage Systems**, through full implementation of Schedule 3 in England
- 4. Strengthens Flood Risk Assessment standards**, including future climate projections and cumulative impacts
- 5. Protects and enhances community engagement**, ensuring local knowledge informs planning decisions
- 6. Provides Local Authorities with the powers, resources, and capacity** needed to enforce flood-risk protections effectively

Conclusion

The UK Planning and Infrastructure Act presents a critical opportunity. Done well, it could support the delivery of new homes **without compromising safety**. Done poorly, it risks locking communities into **avoidable flood risk for generations**.

We believe housing delivery and flood resilience are not competing priorities. With strong safeguards, clear standards, and meaningful community involvement, the planning system can deliver **homes that are safe, sustainable, insurable, and resilient in a changing climate**.

The National Flood Forum stands ready to work with Government, Parliament, local authorities, and communities to ensure planning reform genuinely protects people and places from flooding.

Supporting and representing flood risk communities.

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