

[Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#) and [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#)

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This guidance has been updated see [previous version](#)

Where plans are being prepared under the transitional arrangements set out in Annex 1 to the revised [National Planning Policy Framework](#), the policies in the [previous version of the framework published in 2012](#) will continue to apply, as will any previous guidance which has been superseded since the new framework was published in July 2018. If you'd like an email alert when changes are made to planning guidance please [subscribe](#).

Noise

When is noise relevant to planning?

Noise needs to be considered when development may create additional noise, or would be sensitive to the prevailing acoustic environment (including any anticipated changes to that environment from activities that are permitted but not yet commenced). When preparing plans, or taking decisions about new development, there may also be opportunities to make improvements to the acoustic environment. Good acoustic design needs to be considered early in

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What are the observed effect levels?

- x Significant observed adverse effect level: This is the level of noise exposure above which significant adverse effects on health and quality of life occur.
- x Lowest observed adverse effect level: this is the level of noise exposure above which adverse effects on health and quality of life can be detected.
- x No observed effect level: this is the level of noise exposure below which no effect at all on health or quality of life can be detected.

As the exposure increases further, it crosses the 'lowest observed adverse effect' level boundary above which the noise starts to cause small changes in behaviour and attitude, for example, having to turn up the volume on the television or needing to speak more loudly to be heard. The noise therefore starts to have an adverse effect and consideration needs to be given to mitigating and minimising those effects (taking account of the economic and social benefits being derived from the activity causing the noise).

Increasing noise exposure will at some point cause the 'significant observed adverse effect' level boundary to be crossed. Above this level the noise causes a material change in behaviour such as keeping windows closed for most of the time or avoiding certain activities during periods when the noise is present. If the exposure is predicted to be above this level the planning process should be used to avoid this effect occurring, for example through the choice of sites at the plan-making stage, or by use of appropriate mitigation such as by altering the design and layout. While such decisions must be made taking account of the economic and social benefit of the activity causing or affected by the noise, it is undesirable for such exposure to be caused.

At the highest extreme, noise exposure would cause extensive and sustained adverse changes in behaviour and / or health without an ability to mitigate the effect of the noise. The impacts on health and quality of life are such that regardless of the benefits of the activity causing the noise, this situation should be avoided.

This table summarises the noise exposure hierarchy, based on the likely average response of those affected.

[Noise exposure hierarchy table](#)

PDF, 135 KB, 1 page

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kept closed most of the time (and the effect this may have on living conditions). In both cases a suitable alternative means of ventilation is likely to be necessary. Further information on ventilation can be found in the [Building Regulations](#).

- x In cases where existing noise sensitive locations already experience high noise levels, a development that is expected to cause even a small increase in the overall noise level may

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Can planning policies include noise standards?

Plans may include specific standards to apply to various forms of proposed development and locations in their area. Care should be taken, however, to avoid these being applied as rigid thresholds, as specific circumstances may justify some variation being allowed.

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What factors are relevant if seeking to identify areas of tranquillity?

For an area to justify being protected for its tranquillity, it is likely to be relatively undisturbed by noise from human sources that undermine the intrinsic character of the area. It may, for example, provide a sense of peace and quiet or a positive soundscape where natural sounds such as birdsong or flowing water are more prominent than background noise, e.g. from transport.

Consideration may be given to how existing areas of tranquility could be further enhanced through specific improvements in soundscape, landscape design (e.g. through the provision of green infrastructure) and/or access.

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How can the risk of conflict between new development and existing businesses or facilities be addressed?

Development proposed in the vicinity of existing businesses, community facilities or other activities may need to put suitable mitigation measures in place to avoid those activities having a

significant adverse effect on residents or users of the proposed scheme.

In these circumstances the applicant (or 'agent of change') will need to clearly identify the effects of existing businesses that may cause a nuisance (including noise, but also dust, odours, vibration and other sources of pollution) and the likelihood that they could have a significant adverse effect on new residents/users. In doing so, the agent of change will need to take into account not only the current activities that may cause a nuisance, but also those activities that businesses or other facilities are permitted to carry out, even if they are not occurring at the time of the application being made.

The agent of change will also need to define clearly the mitigation being proposed to address any potential significant adverse effects that are identified. Adopting this approach may not prevent all complaints from the new residents/users about noise or other effects, but can help to achieve a satisfactory living or working environment, and help to mitigate the risk of a statutory nuisance being found if the new development is used as designed (for example, keeping windows closed and using alternative ventilation systems when the noise or other effects are occurring).

It can be helpful for developers to provide information to prospective purchasers or occupants about mitigation measures that have been put in place, to raise awareness and reduce the risk of post-purchase/occupancy complaints.

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How can planning address the adverse effects of noise sources, including where the 'agent of change' needs to put mitigation in place?

This will depend on the type of development being considered the type of noise involved and the nature of the proposed location. In general, for developments that are likely to generate noise, there are 4 broad types of mitigation:

- x engineering: reducing the noise generated at source and/or containing the noise generated;
- x layout: where possible, optimising the distance between the source and noise-sensitive receptors and/or incorporating good design to minimise noise transmission through the use of screening by natural or purpose built barriers, or other buildings;
- x using planning conditions/obligations to restrict activities allowed on the site at certain times and/or specifying permissible noise levels differentiating as appropriate between different times of day, such as evenings and late at night, and;
- x mitigating the impact on areas likely to be affected by noise including through noise insulation when the impact is on a building.

Noise impacts may be partially offset if residents have access to one or more of:

- x a relatively quiet facade (containing windows to habitable rooms) as part of their dwelling;
- x a relatively quiet external amenity space for their sole use, (e.g. a garden or balcony). Although the existence of a garden or [REDACTED] will be [REDACTED] result in significant adverse effects;
- x a relatively quiet, protected, nearby external amenity space for [REDACTED] the amenity of their dwellings; and/or
- x a relatively quiet, protected, external publically accessible amenity space (e.g. a public park or a local green space designated because of its tranquillity) [REDACTED]

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 30-012-20190722

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How can local authorities and airport operators mitigate the environmental impacts of airport expansion?

The management of environmental effects associated with the development of airports and airfields is considered in detail in the [Aviation Policy Framework](#). Planning authorities and airport operators are encouraged to work together to develop mitigation measures that are proportionate to the scale of the impact. Development that would increase air movements may require an Environmental Impact Assessment (where it meets the relevant threshold in Schedule 2 to The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017). It may be appropriate to consider, as part of any proposed mitigation strategy, how operational measures, siting and design of new taxiways, apron and runways, and ground-level noise attenuation measures could reduce noise impacts of expansion or increased utilisation to a minimum.

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 30-013-20190722

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How can local communities have a say in decisions that could result in new noise arising from aviation?

The Civil Aviation Authority has produced guidance on the regulatory process for [changing airspace design](#). The process is separate from the planning process, and gives local communities the opportunity to consider and comment on proposed changes that could affect them. Local communities also have a statutory right to contribute their views at each step in the planning process, including where development of an airport or airfield is proposed within an emerging plan or a planning application is submitted to a local authority. Depending on their nature

impacts from that expansion, and not to revisit the underlying principle of aviation use (where the latter has already been established). As part of this process, applicants are required to engage and consult with local communities, local authorities and others from the outset. [Further information on this process](#).

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What other information is available to assist in the management of noise?

The management of the noise associated with particular development types is considered in the following documents:

- x Mineral extraction – [National planning practice guidance for minerals](#);
- x Aircraft noise – [Aviation policy framework](#);
- x Wind turbines – [National planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy](#) including [ETSU R 97](#);
- x The [National policy statements for energy, renewable energy, ports, hazardous waste and waste water](#).
- x The [Noise Action Plans for Roads, Railways and Agglomerations](#); and
- x Use of Planning Conditions – [Planning Practice Guidance on Use of Planning Conditions](#).

The following documents published by other organisations may be of assistance:

- x [BS 8233:2014](#)– Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings (British Standards Institute 2014);
- x [Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment](#) (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2014);
- x Prh/Link 4, nta1 MAsse2.2 (ons) JEMC & 4 Tm6549.72 4572 BT/Link & Artifact

Some of these documents contain numerical criteria. These values are not to be regarded as fixed thresholds and as outcomes that have to be achieved in every circumstance.

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Does this Guidance apply to developments that fall under the Permitted Development Regime?

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