

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**LOCAL PLAN TASK GROUP**

Minutes from the Meeting of the Local Plan Task Group held on Tuesday, 19th May, 2026 at 10.00 am in the Meeting Room 1-3 - First Floor, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn PE30 1EX

PRESENT: Councillor J Moriarty (Chair)
Councillors R Blunt, C J Crofts (sub), M de Whalley, S Everett (remotely on Teams), S Lintern, T Parish and S Sandell

Officers:

Alex Fradley, Planning Policy Manager
Michael Burton, Principal Planner
Luke Brown, Senior Policy Planner
Henry Anthony, Graduate Planner

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Spikings (Councillor Crofts substitute).

2 NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the previous meeting held on 211 April 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

6 MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

Councillor Everett was present under Standing Order 34B.

7 **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)**

There was no Chair' correspondence.

8 **NEW LOCAL PLAN: DRAFT SWOT ANALYSIS, VISION, AND 10 MEASURABLE OUTCOMES - DISCUSSION - HENRY ANTHONY**

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The Graduate Planner presented a draft SWOT analysis for the new local plan, inviting feedback from The Task Group.

Strengths of the Borough: The team had identified strengths such as a rich natural, historic, and cultural environment, robust retail provision, vibrant coastal tourism, local civic pride, proactive regeneration, and key employment sites including Palm Paper, RAF Marham, British Sugar Plant, Construction College at Bircham Newton, College of West Anglia, and King's Lynn Port. Councillor Blunt and other Councillors suggested including the Borough Council as a major employer and the agricultural economy as further strengths.

Opportunities for Development: Opportunities discussed included creating a sustainable area for living, working, and visiting, expanding green infrastructure, diversifying housing types and tenures, improving transport corridors, regenerating town centres, enhancing rural connectivity, climate change mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, and broadening tourism and economic resilience. Officers clarified that the local plan was seen as an opportunity to address those areas, with input from regeneration and open space teams.

Weaknesses Identified: Weaknesses highlighted were a shortfall of affordable housing, limited public transport and connectivity, health inequalities, development constraints (including flood risk), limited employment pools, difficulty attracting skilled workers, tourism concentration in coastal areas, loss of community facilities, inflated house prices, and digital 'not spots'. Councillors Crofts, Sandell, Parish, and Everett raised concerns about terminology, affordable housing uptake, tourism promotion, and digital access.

It was agreed to clarify that the use of "affordable housing" in measurable outcomes and that it was meant as per the planning definition set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan. .

Threats to the Area: Threats included economic viability issues, widespread flood risk, demographic imbalances, loss of economic hubs, limited public funding, failure to deliver housing, traffic congestion, closure of community facilities, decline of town centres, climate change impacts, skill and labour shortages, environmental

impacts from recreation, and threats to community resilience. Additional threats discussed were loss of rural identity, energy infrastructure inadequacies, derelict properties, and the impact of large solar farms on agricultural land.

Terminology and Public Engagement: The team emphasised the importance of using clear, non-technical language in public consultations, ensuring terms like 'economic containment' were explained, and making engagement accessible to all demographics. Councillors highlighted the need for balance between growth and sustainability, and the importance of involving parish councils and local communities in identifying green spaces and heritage assets. It was also agreed to replace the term "working class" with more appropriate terminology such as "key workers" or a more inclusive phrase.

It was also agreed to review and amend American spellings in all draft documents before publication to ensure British English was used throughout.

The Task Group adjourned for a comfort break at 11.20 am and reconvened at 11.30 am.

Drafting Vision and Measurable Outcomes: The Graduate Planner outlined the process for drafting the vision and ten measurable outcomes for the new local plan, with Councillors Crofts, Parish, Lintern, Sandell, de Whalley, and Blunt providing feedback on the wording, measurability, and relevance of outcomes, and raising concerns about affordable housing terminology, settlement hierarchy, and the practicalities of delivering targets.

Measurable Outcomes Overview: The team presented ten draft measurable outcomes, including providing diverse housing choice, directing growth to sustainable locations, promoting economic growth, ensuring high quality and sustainable design, promoting healthier communities, protecting heritage and character, enhancing biodiversity, supporting net zero carbon transition, ensuring infrastructure funding, and delivering around 8000 new homes.

Feedback on Outcome Wording: Councillors suggested revising outcome wording to avoid repetition, merge similar objectives, and clarify terms such as 'affordable' and 'accessible' housing. Councillor Sandell noted that 'affordable' was not truly affordable in West Norfolk, and Councillor Lintern questioned the use of 'deliver' for new homes, given factors outside council control.

Settlement Hierarchy Concerns: Councillors Parish and Sandell raised concerns about the settlement hierarchy leading to saturation in certain villages, with Docking cited as an example of infrastructure strain due to rapid development. The need to recognise saturation levels and balance growth across communities was emphasised.

Measurability and Control: Officers explained that outcomes must be quantifiable, such as new homes delivered or affordable homes provided, and that some outcomes (e.g., high quality design) required specific indicators. The process included benchmarking and monitoring over the plan period, with government requirements for measurable objectives.

Active Travel and Green Space Metrics: Councillor de Whalley advocated for including active travel links and green space provision as measurable outcomes, suggesting metrics such as kilometres of travel routes and hectares of green space. Officers confirmed these were currently measured and would continue to be included in the plan.

9

NEW LOCAL PLAN: TIMETABLE - LUKE BROWN

The Senior Policy Planner presented the report and outlined the strict 30-month timetable for the new local plan, including key milestones, gateway reviews, evidence base preparation, and the statutory notice of intention, with Councillors de Whalley, Crofts, Parish, and Blunt discussing collaboration with neighbouring authorities, potential implications of local government reorganisation (LGR) and devolution, and the challenges of meeting deadlines.

Timetable and Key Milestones: The process included a four-month pre-notification period starting 30 June, scoping consultation in September, gateway reviews at October 2026, November 2027, and October 2028, and final plan adoption by May 2029. The team had advertised for a local plan support officer to help ensure milestones were met and would publish a digital timetable with monthly updates.

Evidence Base Preparation: Officers explained that the evidence base must be rebuilt from scratch due to the previous plan's evidence base now being of a certain age. This would include requiring new studies on open space, climate change, renewable energy, and infrastructure. Collaborative work with internal and external consultants was ongoing, with around 30 work streams in progress.

Collaboration and LGR Implications: Councillors discussed the impact of LGR and devolution on the plan, with Breckland preparing a local plan under the legacy system. Officers confirmed ongoing collaboration with Norfolk authorities on strategic housing, growth options, and nature recovery, and clarified that plan-making must continue regardless of LGR or devolution outcomes.

It was agreed to keep the new Local Plan Timetable as a standing item on the agenda.

NEW LOCAL PLAN: NOTICE OF INTENTION & SCOPING CONSULTATION - MICHAEL BURTON

Notice of Intention and Scoping Consultation: The Principal Planner outlined the statutory notice of intention, to be published by 30 June, including a digital web page and map of the plan area. The scoping consultation would likely run from 1–29 September, focusing on two main questions: what should be included in the plan and how stakeholders wish to be engaged, supported by an interactive online questionnaire and in-person events.

Contingency and Timetable Rigidity: Councillor de Whalley raised concerns about avoiding slippage in the timetable, with officers confirming there was no room for delay due to legal requirements. The process was tightly regulated, and any changes in government policy or devolution would be managed as they arose.

Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy: The Task Group discussed strategies for engaging the public and parish councils in the local plan process, including digital and in-person consultations, storyboards, and consistent messaging, with Councillors Parish, Lintern, Sandell, and Blunt raising concerns about accessibility, political neutrality, and the timing of information sharing.

Digital and In-Person Engagement: It was explained that the government required digital engagement for the new planning system, but officers would also look to hold three in-person events with storyboards and drop-in sessions at locations such as King's Lynn Library, Downham Market and Hunstanton to maximise in-person accessibility.

Role of Councillors and Parish Councils: Councillors expressed interest in hosting local meetings and sharing information with parish councils, but officers cautioned against pre-empting official consultations to ensure consistent messaging and avoid overwhelming resources.

Ensuring Consistency and Neutrality: Officers emphasised the importance of maintaining a consistent, non-political message across all engagement activities, with support focused on promoting the consultation and assisting those wishing to participate.

Timing and Information Sharing: Officers advised against sharing slides or storyboards with parish councils before scheduled June meetings, to prevent premature questions ensuring all stakeholders received information at the appropriate stage in the process.

NEW LOCAL PLAN: CALL FOR SITES - ALEX FRADLEY

Call for Sites and Site Assessment Methodology: The Planning Policy Manager described the extensive call for sites process, which received over 750 submissions, and explained the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) methodology for site analysis. The Task Group discussed public consultation, infrastructure requirements, site viability, and the use of AI for site analysis and comment summarisation.

Call for Sites Process: The call for sites ran for 17 weeks, with proactive promotion via posters, social media, press releases, QR codes, and direct contact with landowners and previous applicants. An online portal was used for submissions, allowing for efficient data collection and mapping.

Site Assessment and Consultation: Sites would be assessed using the HELAA methodology, developed in collaboration with all the Norfolk authorities, considering factors such as transport, flood risk, heritage, and viability. The process included sieving out heavily constrained sites, followed by strategic environmental assessment and consultation with relevant authorities.

Public Engagement and Commenting: All submitted sites would be published online during the scoping consultation, allowing the public to comment on specific sites. Further opportunities for site submission and feedback would be available during the draft plan consultation in 2027.

Infrastructure and Site Requirements: Councillors discussed the need for infrastructure provision alongside housing, with officers confirming that site policies could require contributions to schools, health facilities, roads, and open space. An infrastructure calculator was being developed to estimate requirements based on site size and feedback from service providers.

AI-Assisted Analysis: Officers were exploring the use of AI to assist with site analysis and comment summarisation, helping to manage large volumes of data and to focus attention on key issues. Final decisions would remain with officers, ensuring human oversight and robust evidence-based selection.

Settlement Boundaries and Hierarchy Review: Officers confirmed ongoing work to review settlement boundaries and hierarchy, with Councillors Crofts and Lintern enquiring about the timing and methodology. Officers explained the importance of these reviews for policy development under the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Settlement Boundary Review: Officers had devised a methodology for reviewing settlement boundaries, conducting both desktop and field assessments for every settlement, and would bring findings to the Task Group for consideration.

Policy Implications: The new draft NPPF broadly sets out what could be done inside and outside development boundaries, making the review critical for future site allocations and policy development.

12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting has been arranged for **Tuesday, 16 June 2026** at **10.00 am** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, King's Lynn**.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm