BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

LOCAL PLAN TASK GROUP

Minutes from the Meeting of the Local Plan Task Group held on Thursday, 1st October, 2026 at 11.30 am in the Meeting Room 1-3 - First Floor, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn PE30 1EX

PRESENT: Councillors J Moriarty (Chair), R Blunt, C J Crofts, M de Whalley, A Moore, T Parish and S Sandell

PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34A: Councillor C Rose

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Alex Fradley, Planning Policy Manager
Michael Burton, Principal Planner
Luke Brown, Principal Policy Planner
Henry Anthony, Graduate Planner
Sandra Homcenko, Assistant Planner (Remotely)
Michael Hadley, Local Plan Support Officer (Remotely)
Claire Dorgan, Senior Planner (Remotely)
Phillipa Sillis, Communications and Engagement Officer (Remotely)

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Everett and Lintern.

2 **NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes from the previous meeting held on 16th June 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

There was no matters arising.

4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business to consider.

6 MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

Councillor Rose was present under Standing Order 34a.

7 CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)

There was no Chair's correspondence.

8 LETTER FROM MHCLG

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The Planning Policy Manager presented an update on progress with the preparation of the next Local Plan and reported that the Council had received a positive letter from MHCLG recognising the progress being made. Members were advised that work continued across a wide range of evidence gathering, site assessment, governance and digital planning activities.

The Task Group was informed that the current Local Plan had been adopted in March 2025 and that interactive digital versions of the Plan and Policies Map were available. It was noted that the Council could currently demonstrate a housing land supply of 6.9 years for plan-making purposes and 6.2 years for decision-making purposes and had achieved a Housing Delivery Test score of 100%.

Members were advised that governance arrangements for the preparation of the next Local Plan had been established, the Terms of Reference for the Local Plan Task Group had been reviewed and agreed, and briefing sessions had been delivered to Members and parish and town councils. It was also reported that funding had been secured from MHCLG to support the work programme.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that more than 50 workstreams were currently underway. The majority of the evidence base studies had been commissioned or were in progress, including the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Open Space Assessment, Landscape Character Assessment, Renewable Energy Study, Green Infrastructure Study, Local Housing Need Assessment, New Settlement Study, Housing Capacity Study, Economic Evidence Base, Design Study, Whole Plan Viability Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment. In addition, significant in-housework on settlement boundary reviews, infrastructure capacity, settlement hierarchy and growth options was progressing.

The Task Group was informed that the Call for Sites exercise had generated over 800 submissions over 750 during the first Call for Sites, January – May 2026, and over 40 sites during the Scoping Consultation, 1-29 September. Site visits had been almost completed,

and officers would be progressing Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal work. Members were advised that technical assessments, statutory consultee responses, consultation feedback and digital tools, including AI-assisted analysis, would be used to inform future site appraisal recommendations to the Task Group.

In relation to staffing, Members noted the recent promotion of Luke Brown to Principal Planner, the progress being made by two graduate planners towards RTPI accreditation, the appointment of a Local Plan Support Officer (project manager), and the forthcoming secondment of a Senior Planner from the Development Management Team to the Policy Team.

The Planning Policy Manager highlighted the strong collaborative working arrangements that had been established with colleagues across the Council, Norfolk planning authorities, statutory consultees and the Planning Advisory Service. The Council's approach to digital planning had been showcased to other authorities and had received positive feedback, with several councils requesting further engagement. Members were also advised that the work undertaken had helped to raise the profile of the Local Plan process and had attracted praise from senior officers, Members and MHCLG.

9 **HOUSING DELIVERY TEST (HDT) RESULTS**

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The Principal Planner presented the Housing Delivery Test results and advised the Task Group that the Council had achieved a Housing Delivery Test score of 100% for 2025. Members were informed that this represented an improvement on the 2024 result of 93% and demonstrated that the Council was meeting its housing delivery requirements.

In response to a question from Councillor Blunt, the Task Group was advised by the Planning Policy Manager that the Housing Delivery Test measured the number of homes completed over the previous three years against the applicable housing requirement. It was reported that strong delivery levels had contributed to the improved result, with 708 homes completed during the previous financial year against a target of 554 dwellings. Significant contributions had been made by larger housing allocations at Downham Market, Knights Hill and South Wootton.

Members noted that a Housing Delivery Test result below 95% would require the preparation of an Action Plan, while a result below 75% could result in the presumption in favour of sustainable development

being applied. The Principal Planner explained that, as a result of achieving a score of 100%, no further action was required.

The Task Group was informed that the Council would continue to be assessed against the housing requirement contained within the adopted Local Plan, equating to approximately 554 dwellings per annum, until at least the 2028/29 monitoring year. It was noted that the higher housing requirement of around 1,000 dwellings per year was expected to apply following the adoption of the next Local Plan, and this was what the basis of the Local Plan would likely be.

During discussion, it was agreed that officers would provide Councillor Parish with additional information on the number of completed homes delivered through Borough Council initiated projects, including schemes that had been progressed where delivery had not been brought forward by the market.

10 **SCOPING CONSULTATION - INITIAL REFLECTIONS AND RESULTS**

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The Local Plan Support Officer presented a summary of the recent Local Plan Scoping Consultation and advised the Task Group that the consultation had generated a strong level of public engagement. Members were informed that the consultation had attracted more than 300 survey responses, approximately 450 email submissions, over 16,000 views of the interactive mapping system and in excess of 1,500 comments on submitted sites.

The Task Group was advised that the consultation had been supported by a dedicated plain-English website structured around the themes of people, opportunity and places. The website had provided information on the purpose of the Local Plan, the plan-making process, potential development locations, consultation questions, frequently asked questions and access to the online survey. Members noted that both online and paper response options had been made available.

It was reported that twelve public engagement events had been held over a fifteen-day period, including sessions at the College of West Anglia, King's Lynn Food Banks, Hunstanton Town Hall, Downham Market Town Hall and online events. The Communications and Engagement Officer highlighted the value and importance of the sessions held at these places. Attendance across the programme of events had been approximately 280 people in person.

Members noted that responses had been received from parish and town councils, residents, landowners and other interested parties. In addition to consultation responses, over 40 further sites had been submitted for consideration through the ongoing Call for Sites process.

Councillors Sandell and Blunt commented on the success of the engagement throughout the consultation.

The Task Group was informed by Officers that the consultation had been undertaken in accordance with key principles of early engagement, the provision of sufficient information, adequate time for responses and the careful consideration of comments received. The Planning Policy Manager advised that a lessons-learned exercise would be undertaken following the consultation and that a wider consultation and engagement strategy would be prepared to inform future stages of the Local Plan process. Potential improvements included shorter engagement events, more targeted sessions in locations affected by significant growth proposals and additional on-line drop-in sessions to assist residents in using the Council's digital consultation tools.

Members were advised that the Call for Sites process remained open for additional submissions during the Scoping Consultation. However, the Planning Policy Manager explained that ongoing comments on sites outside formal consultation periods would not be encouraged in order to avoid confusion and manage the workload. It was noted that submitted sites would remain publicly available and that future draft-plan consultations would clearly identify which sites were proposed for allocation, which were not being taken forward, together with the supporting evidence and site assessment information.

In response to a question from Councillor de Whalley regarding consultation responses, Officers informed the Task Group that respondents had not been required to register or provide email addresses when submitting comments. Officers explained that this approach had encouraged participation and accessibility, although it meant that individual acknowledgements could not be issued. Members were assured that all comments received had been retained and would be considered as part of the plan-making process.

11 LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE

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The Local Plan Support Officer presented an update on the Local Plan Timetable and advised the Task Group that a revised 16-step programme had been prepared. Members were informed that Gateway One was scheduled for 30th October and would mark the commencement of the formal 30-month plan-making period under the new system.

The Task Group was advised that the Gateway One readiness self-assessment would review a range of matters, including the project timetable, project management and governance arrangements, consultation and engagement strategy, legal requirements, funding and

staffing resources, decision-making responsibilities, escalation procedures and the management of evidence and delivery risks.

In response to the Chair, Councillor Moriarty, the Local Plan Support Officer informed Members that a summary of the findings of the recent Scoping Consultation were due to be published during November. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the report would provide a high-level summary of the key themes emerging from the consultation and set out how the feedback received would inform preparation of the Local Plan. The report would not include a detailed schedule of individual comments and responses.

The Task Group noted that the Local Plan Timetable would continue to be updated on a monthly basis and published on the Council's website in both PDF and CSV formats. The Local Plan Support Officer advised that no significant changes had been made to the programme during September, although the Draft Plan consultation period had been moved from early April to mid-May and from mid-May to the end of June respectively, following the local elections.

In response to a question from Councillor Sandell, the Planning Policy Manager provided clarification on the relationship between neighbourhood plans and the emerging Local Plan. The Planning Policy Manager explained that locally specific policies contained within neighbourhood plans, including policies relating to matters such as second homes, would be taken into consideration as part of the plan-making process.

Members noted that neighbourhood plans could not be relied upon in isolation to meet the Borough's overall housing requirement, as the preparation of neighbourhood plans was not mandatory and some plans could become out of date over time. The Council would therefore need to demonstrate how housing requirements would be met across the Borough through site allocations, windfall assumptions and other appropriate mechanisms.

The Task Group was advised by the Principal Policy Planner that locally designated constraints and features identified through neighbourhood plans, including Local Green Spaces, heritage assets and settlement breaks, had been incorporated into the site assessment methodology and would form part of the appraisal process. Members were advised that neighbourhood plans would form an important part of the evidence base and would be considered during the site assessment process and in the preparation of planning policies.

The Planning Policy Manager encouraged parish and town councils with adopted neighbourhood plans to consider reviewing and updating their plans alongside the preparation of the new Local Plan. Members were informed that officers had already commenced discussions with a number of parish councils regarding this process.

Members were advised by the Planning Policy Manager that the next meeting of the Task Group was anticipated to take place during the week commencing 16 November, or the following week. It was reported that Officers intended to present information on strategic growth options, the revised settlement hierarchy, proposed settlement boundaries and the Local Housing Need Assessment. Supporting documentation would be circulated in advance of the meeting where Member consideration and decisions were required.

In response to Councillor de Whalley, the Planning Policy Manager agreed that a draft interactive policies map would be published alongside the draft Local Plan Consultation and that this would include parish boundaries similar to how the current adopted Local Plan interactive policy maps had.

The Task Group took part in an interactive exercise with officers, during which consultation maps were used to enable Members to indicate where they considered development should take place within the borough.

The Task Group took a break at 1:15pm and reconvened at 1:45pm.

12 **INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY & OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT**

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The Principal Policy Planner presented the emerging Infrastructure Capacity and Opportunities Assessment and explained that the work would identify existing infrastructure constraints, assess the implications of future growth, establish mitigation requirements and help determine where development could support infrastructure improvements.

The Task Group was advised that the assessment would inform the preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan by identifying the impact of planned growth, the mitigation required, delivery mechanisms and potential funding sources. It was explained that, whilst the Council was not responsible for resolving all existing infrastructure issues, it had an important role in identifying constraints and working with relevant infrastructure providers and agencies.

Members were informed that infrastructure assets were being assessed using a Red, Amber and Green (RAG) methodology. Existing capacity issues were categorised as red, infrastructure with available capacity but potential future pressures were categorised as amber, and infrastructure with no significant capacity concerns was categorised as green. A second stage of assessment would consider opportunities that could alter the initial findings.

The Principal Policy Planner advised that officers had been engaging with infrastructure and service providers to establish existing capacity levels, planned investment programmes, future requirements and delivery mechanisms. The assessment covered a broad range of infrastructure, including education, healthcare, transport, bus services, walking and cycling networks, sports facilities, utilities, water and sewerage infrastructure, broadband, community facilities and affordable housing provision.

Members noted that the assessment would also examine how development could create opportunities to secure new or improved infrastructure, including schools, healthcare facilities, highways improvements, public transport services, green infrastructure, car parking, village halls and sports facilities.

The Task Group considered education and healthcare provision across the Borough. Members were advised that Norfolk County Council had provided information on primary and secondary school capacity, catchment areas and planned investment. Schools had been assessed using the RAG methodology, with some schools experiencing capacity pressures whilst others, particularly in rural locations, retained surplus capacity.

The Principal Policy Planner explained that housing mix and development patterns had influenced school capacity issues, with dispersed infill development and a lack of suitable family housing contributing to underused schools in some areas and oversubscription in others. It was noted that future allocations could help better align housing growth with available school capacity.

Councillor Blunt and Councillor Moore raised concerns regarding parking and highway safety around schools. The Principal Policy Planner advised that the site assessment process could consider opportunities to provide school parking, safer walking routes and cycle links where appropriate.

The Task Group was informed that officers had obtained information on GP practice capacity and patient lists and were continuing discussions with NHS organisations and integrated care bodies. Some parts of the Borough were experiencing significant healthcare capacity pressures, whilst others retained available capacity. Members noted that the infrastructure assessment was intended to identify areas where investment and discussions with providers would be required, rather than automatically preventing future growth.

In response to a question from the Chair, Councillor Moriarty regarding dental provision, the Principal Policy Planner advised that dentistry had not yet been assessed in detail due to the significant role of private sector provision but agreed that the matter could be explored further.

The Principal Policy Planner then updated the Task Group on flood risk and water management. Members were informed that updated flood risk, water cycle and coastal evidence was being commissioned to ensure that site selection and growth strategies reflected current flood risks, climate change projections, drainage capacity and coastal change.

The Task Group was advised that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment would consider flooding from all sources, coastal change, climate change projections and surface water issues. A Surface Water Management Plan, Water Cycle Study and review of the Coastal Change Management Area would also contribute to the evidence base.

Members noted that the sequential approach to flood risk assessment would continue to direct development towards areas of lower flood risk wherever possible, with the exception test applied where necessary. Watlington was provided as an example where development would generally be directed towards areas within Flood Zone 1 rather than Flood Zones 2 or 3.

Members also received an update on transport and sustainable travel. The Principal Policy Planner advised that a comprehensive transport assessment was being prepared to examine both strategic routes and rural roads, alongside opportunities to support highways improvements, public transport services and active travel networks through planned growth.

The Principal Policy Planner explained that the assessment would include traffic modelling and updated baseline information for strategic and rural routes. Known pressure points included the A47, the A149 around King’s Lynn and the A10 around Downham Market.

In response to questions from Members, the Principal Policy Planner advised that planned allocations could provide the scale and certainty required to secure infrastructure funding and developer contributions, whereas smaller windfall developments were generally unable to generate sufficient investment for major infrastructure projects.

The Task Group noted that bus operators had indicated that viable bus services required sufficient development scale and, in many cases, initial subsidy support. The Chair, Councillor Moriarty and Councillor Sandell emphasised the importance of ensuring that services operated at practical commuting and daytime hours.

The Principal Policy Planner highlighted work which was underway on a new Green Infrastructure Assessment, which would identify opportunities for walking and cycling connections, including safe routes to schools and links between existing and future development. It was noted that current design standards generally favoured segregated footways and cycleways on medium and larger developments.

In response to questions from Members, officers confirmed that traffic modelling would seek to assess not only the effects of housing and employment growth, but also seasonal congestion associated with visitor and tourist activity.

The Task Group then considered community facilities and affordable housing provision. Members were advised that assessments were being undertaken of village halls, community centres, sports facilities, cemeteries and affordable housing needs in order to identify existing deficiencies and future opportunities.

Members were informed that existing studies covering sports pitches and indoor facilities were being updated and extended to cover the full Local Plan period. Facilities for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, tennis, bowls, swimming and multi-use games areas were all being assessed.

The Task Group agreed to extend the meeting to 3:15pm.

Councillor Sandell left the meeting at 3pm.

In response to Councillor Rose, the Task Group was advised by the Principal Policy Planner that cemetery provision formed part of the Open Space Assessment and that work was being undertaken to identify any future capacity issues. Where a need was identified, development allocations could potentially provide land for cemetery use.

In relation to affordable housing, officers reported that affordable homes represented less than ten per cent of the housing stock in many villages and were absent from some communities. Housing needs evidence would be used to identify where future growth could assist in meeting local affordable housing requirements.

Following a question from Councillor Rose regarding community parking facilities, the Senior Policy Planner advised that development allocations could potentially provide land for community car parks and that Community Infrastructure Levy funding might also support such schemes, subject to relevant approvals.

Officers reported that the Council was working closely with Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards, which would continue to provide technical input and local knowledge throughout the plan-making process.
The Task Group was informed that officers met regularly with Anglian Water and were supplying information on housing growth, employment land, site submissions and consultation outcomes to assist with infrastructure planning. A Water Cycle Study was being prepared and would incorporate the latest information on sewage treatment capacity.

The Principal Policy Planner concluded by updating Members on utilities and broadband infrastructure. Officers had continued

discussions with utility providers regarding gas, water, sewerage and broadband capacity and were testing future infrastructure requirements against potential growth scenarios.

Members were advised that utility providers were assessing gas network capacity in relation to future development proposals and that officers were awaiting further feedback. Broadband providers were also working with the Council to identify areas of poor connectivity and coordinate future investment with planned growth locations.

Following a request from Councillor Crofts, the Chair, Councillor Moriarty agreed to investigate the status of a Borough Council-owned site in Stoke Ferry that had previously been considered for self-build development and report back on whether the site could be brought forward in the future.

The Principal Policy Planner explained that village halls and community centres were being reviewed in terms of their condition, accessibility, facilities and capacity. Many rural facilities had been identified as having limitations, creating potential opportunities for improvements through developer contributions.

13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To be arranged for the week commencing 16th November or the following week.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm