

The New Plan Making System

Local Plan Task Group - 21/04/2026

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**New
changes to
the plan
making
system have
now been
introduced**

The changes have been introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, new planning-system regulations, and the emerging National Planning Policy Framework 2025/26.

They're aiming to ensure more LPAs have up to date local plans, making the process more focused and streamlined, and to enable greater consistency in both plan-making and decision-taking at a national and local level.

Do it once, do it well, and at the right level. Guidance for all the stages and templates needed are not yet available.



The New Local Plan

- The Council is now required to prepare a new Local Plan under the new Plan Making System. Confirmed by the NPPF transitional arrangements, a letter from MHCLG to the BC, and the MHCLG website.
- This will include:
 - A Vision – to 2043
 - 10 measurable objectives
 - A Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy
 - Site Allocations and their policies
 - It will only include policies for local designations or standards.
 - A Policies Map
- Most decision-making policies will form part of the emerging NPPF as National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs)

New Local Plan 30- Month Timeline

- **Faster Adoption** – LPAs will be required to prepare and adopt new local plans within a 30-month period with statutory deadlines. All authorities must prepare a Project Initiation Document (PID) and a Local Plan Timetable. Publish these and keep them up to date.
- Authorities, like the BCKLWN, will need to start preparing a plan in the new system no later than 30 June 2026 If they fall under the transitional arrangements set out in the NPPF (2024). The process is likely to have some standard templates and approaches that the Council is required to follow.
- A 4-month ‘pre-notification period’ between 30 June and 31 October enables authorities to undertake early work and formal notification of the start.
- Formal 30-month process starts after Gateway 1 (31 October 2026).
- **Standardised Process** – the process includes early engagement (scoping consultation) and 3 new ‘Gateway Assessments’ which are now required prior to submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination (by PINS).



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Gateways

Mandatory milestones to support LPAs to maintain plan preparation progress

Three- Gateway System

Gateway 1: LPA self assessment

- First of the mandatory gateways that support LPAs to adopt a plan within 30 months. The 30-month plan preparation process starts on the date you pass through Gateway 1
- LPAs carry out a self-assessment of their readiness to prepare their plan
- You must pass through Gateway 1:
 - no later than 5 years after adopting your existing plan
 - at least 4 months after you gave notice of your plan-making, or the day after your scoping consultation ends, whichever comes later

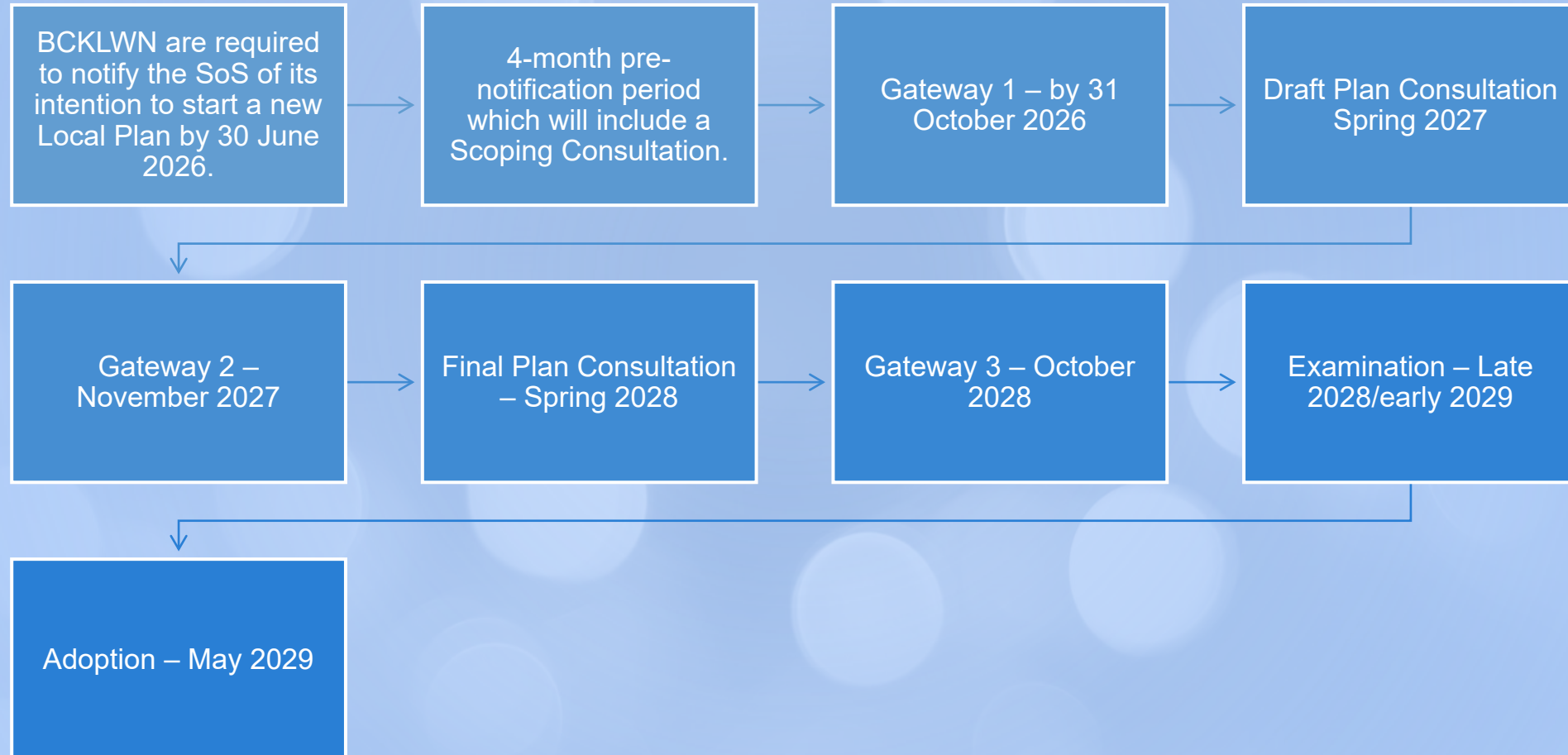
Gateway 2: progress assessment

- Purpose: to check that the LPA is moving towards the preparation of a sound plan and consider whether the LPA is making progress towards meeting the 'prescribed requirements' set out in regulations.
- PINS will appoint a 'gateway assessor' to engage with the LPA and carry out the assessment with the LPA – similar to a Advisory Visit. An outcome report will be provided once the assessment is completed.
- The LPA may discuss up to 5 soundness issues with the gateway assessor.
- The assessment will take 4-6 weeks to complete. It is expected that LPAs will pass through this gateway only once to maintain their 30-month timetable.

Gateway 3: examination submission 'stop/go'

- The final stage that determines whether a LPA may submit their local plan for examination.
- PINS will appoint a 'gateway assessor' to determine whether the LPA has met the prescribed requirements as set out in regulations.
- This stage does not focus or comment on matters of soundness – this will remain for the Examination of the plan to consider
- The assessment will take 4-6 weeks. The LPA only provides the required documentation; it does not participate in the assessment like it did for Gateway 2.
- If the LPA has met the prescribed requirements, the LPA can proceed to Examination. If not, the LPA will have to address any deficiencies and redo Gateway 3.

What does this mean for the BCKLWN – our proposed timetable





What work are we currently undertaking?



Work on spatial options for the direction of growth, as well as an early review of settlement boundaries, and the settlement hierarchy



Work on an entirely new evidence base



Carrying out a 'Call for Sites' consultation



Preparing a timetable and a PID



Investing in digital communications and AI technology



Working with key infrastructure & service providers to understand important issues



Working with other departments to help streamline internal processes.

Next Steps

- ToR for LPTG to reflect new plan-making system.
- Overall Political Governance to ensure agreement and sign off that meet the new legal plan-making timeframe & milestones.
- Cabinet to seek approval to start the Local Plan process.
- We are then required to formally notify the Secretary of State of our intention to start the Local Plan process by the 30 June 2026/
- Cabinet to agree the forthcoming Scoping Consultation.
- Undertake Scoping Consultation between July and September 2026.
- Gateway Way 1 Pass and publication by 31 October 2026.

Our Emerging Evidence Base

- Infrastructure Capacity Constraints and Opportunity Assessment (for every settlement)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1. Including Water Cycle Study, Surface Water Management Plan, & Coastal Change Management Areas approach.
- Local Housing Need Assessment
- Settlement Hierarchy and Growth Options Scoping
- SFRA & associated studies Level 2 (including sequential test approach)
- Open Space Audit Assessment
- Landscape Character Assessment
- Whole Plan Viability & CIL Review
- Employment Land Review
- Retail and Town Centre Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping & Assessment
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Update
- Renewable Energy Assessment
- Heritage Local List
- Green Infrastructure (GI) Study
- Approach to Design
- Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Methodology
- Housing Need Capacity Study
- New Settlement / Strategic Extension Study

Housing Need Assessment

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a new **Housing Need Assessment**. This is a comprehensive, data-driven analysis that estimates the minimum number of homes required in a specific area, covering both current housing gaps and future demand. It assesses the appropriate mix of housing tenures (rented/owned) and sizes needed for the community, including affordable and specialized housing for elderly or disabled residents.

Why is it needed?

- Informs local planning policy on the necessary housing types, tenures and affordability.
- Any policies within the Plan should be effective and try to address local accommodation issues.
- The Assessment can also help inform the level of affordable housing provision and the types of affordable housing required to meet local need.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study Level 1 and Level 2.

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a new **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study**. This is a comprehensive assessment identifies the level of flood risk across the Borough. It also identifies key areas where flooding could have significant adverse issues. The Water Cycle Study seeks to assess issues related to water quality, efficiency and water recycling. It will also review the existing Coastal Change Management Area.

Why is it needed?

- Informs local planning policy on the location of development and mitigation required to accommodate growth.
- Any policies within the Plan should be effective and try to address local water related issues.
- The Assessment can also help inform the level infrastructure required to support anticipated growth.

Landscape Character Assessment

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a new Landscape Character Assessment. This assessment seeks to assess all the different landscape policy areas across the Borough. It will help inform the Plan of those areas where there are sensitive landscape areas. These areas will likely impact the location and design of development across the Borough.

Why is it needed?

- Informs local planning policy on the location of development and areas where further investigation is required.
- Any policies within the Plan should be effective and try to address local character issues.
- The Assessment can also help inform the design principles in those areas where the greatest impact is likely to be made.

Renewable Energy Study

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a Renewable Energy and Opportunities Assessment. This assessment seeks to identify where there are opportunities for large scale renewable energy schemes against capacity in the electricity network and the impact on the local landscape and communities.

Why is it needed?

- Informs local planning policy on the location of renewable energy development.
- Addresses the inconsistency of information regarding the benefit of renewable energy development across the Borough.
- Identify areas where renewable energy development will have the maximum opportunity.
- Will help inform planning decisions.

Open Space Audit

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on an Open Space Audit. This will assess all the Borough's public open spaces for their quality, quantity and accessibility. A R.A.G system will score each individual space against a set of criteria.

Why is it needed?

- To provide an up to date analysis of all public spaces across the Borough.
- Provide a set of local standards for open space to help inform where future investment goes across the Borough.
- Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Will help inform planning decisions.

Green infrastructure Strategy

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a new Green infrastructure Strategy. This Strategy will identify all the green infrastructure assets (such as rivers, rights of way, hedgerows, woodlands and beaches) to identify where improvements and connections could be established through planning.

• Why is it needed?

- To provide an up to date analysis of all green infrastructure assets across the Borough.
- Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Will help inform planning decisions.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a new Habitat Regulations Assessment. This is a requirement for the plan making process and provides a checks and balance on how the decisions within the new Local Plan could impact (positively or negatively) the natural environment.

Why is it needed?

- To provide a detailed analysis of how future development could impact the natural environment.
- It will identify necessary mitigation measures to help address any impacts.
- Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Will help inform planning decisions.

Infrastructure Capacity, Constraints and Opportunities Study

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on an Infrastructure Capacity and Opportunities Study. This seeks to identify infrastructure constraints – where there are current and/ or future infrastructure capacity issues. It will also identify where there are opportunities to improve infrastructure through development. This aims to target those areas where issues remain and opportunities exist.

Why is it needed?

- To help understand the current situation in terms of infrastructure provision and capacity across the Borough.
- It will identify necessary mitigation measures to help address any impacts to infrastructure.
- Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Will help inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Whole Plan Viability Assessment

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a Whole plan Viability Assessment. This will assess all the costs associated with development to ensure that what is planned is considered deliverable. This will account for land value, construction costs and infrastructure development.
- A review of the current CIL charging schedule will also be prepared alongside this work.

Why is it needed?

- To ensure the development planned across the Borough is deliverable.
- To ensure CIL remains a viable charge in the Borough.
- It will Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Will help inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Employment Land Review

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a review of its Employment Land and the types of employment across the Borough. This will help inform the Local Plan whether any further employment land is required to support the plan for growth. It is likely that the review will also assess whether there is scope for new forms of employment options such as AI/ Data Centres within the area.

Why is it needed?

- To ensure the development planned across the Borough is supported with an appropriate level of new jobs
- To ensure the plan maximises the potential for new growth industries over the plan period.
- It will inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Help inform future planning decisions.

Retail and Town Centre Review

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on a review of its retail areas. This includes the need for any new retail provision over the plan period, but also how to diversify the existing retail core within town centres to help improve the viability of our key towns.

Why is it needed?

- To ensure the development planned across the Borough is support with an appropriate level of new jobs
- To ensure the plan maximises the potential the diversification of existing retail centres.
- It will Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Help inform future planning decisions.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Review

What is it?

- The Council is undertaking work on the review of its Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment. This will ensure that there is sufficient land and allocations to accommodate any update in local accommodation need for the community.

Why is it needed?

- To ensure the plan accommodates the required needs for Gypsies and Travellers.
- Ensure the Council can demonstrate a 5-year supply of sites.
- It will Inform the development of future allocated sites.
- Help inform future planning decisions.

Work with the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF)

What is it?

- Housing Capacity Study
- New Settlement / Strategic Extension Study
- Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Methodology
- New version of the NSPF

Why is it needed?

- To find out early if each LPA can meet their Local Housing Need.
- Is there the potential for this approach to help meet the LHN in Norfolk.
- Standard method for assessing sites across Norfolk
- To demonstrate positive, collaborative and work to meet the duty to collaborate element of the local plan 'Soundness Test'.