

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES/NO	
	Discretionary/	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES/NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES/NO	
Lead Member: Cllr James Moriarty E-mail cllr.James.Moriarty@West-Norfolk.gov.uk			Other Cabinet Members consulted:		
			Other Members consulted: Cllr Richard Blunt		
Lead Officer: Michael Burton (Principal Planner) E-mail: Michael.burton@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 616573			Other Officers consulted: Stuart Ashworth (Assistant Director), Alex Fradley (Planning Policy Manager), Luke Brown (Senior Planner, Planning Policy)		
Financial Implications YES/NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equality Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES/NO	Environmental Considerations YES/NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 23rd April 2026

CHANGES TO LOCAL PLAN TASK GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Summary

The Local Plan Task Group (LPTG) was first constituted by Cabinet on 7 June 2011, as the Local Development Framework (LDF) Task Group. The LDF Task Group was re-named the LPTG in September 2016, following adoption of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMP).

However, the Terms of Reference (ToR) have remained unchanged since the initial establishment of the Task Group in 2011. Many changes to the planning system have taken place in the last 15 years; such that it is necessary to review the LPTG ToR, to reflect the current requirements of the planning system. A revised ToR is proposed, for Cabinet approval.

Recommendation

Cabinet Resolution:

To adopt the revised Local Plan Task Group Terms of Reference (Annex 1 to this report).

Reason for Decision

To recognise the requirements and statutory obligations of the new planning system, as introduced through the 2023 Levelling-Up and Regeneration, and 2025 Planning and Infrastructure Acts.

1 Background

The Local Plan Task Group (LPTG) was first constituted by Cabinet on 7 June 2011, as the Local Development Framework (LDF) Task Group ([Meeting of Cabinet on Tuesday, 7th June, 2011](#)). This coincided with adoption of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy and commencement of preparation of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMP). The initial Terms of Reference (ToR) included appointment of 9 Members, apportioned in accordance with the political make-up of the Council.

The LDF Task Group was re-named the Local Plan Task Group (LPTG) in September 2016. This coincided with adoption of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) Plan in 2016. Minor changes to the ToR were agreed at the time of re-naming, reflecting imminent adoption of the SADMP and the need to promptly undertake a Local Plan review (SADMP Policy DM2A). Otherwise, the LPTG has continued under its initial ToR since 2011, although changes to Member representation have also taken place to reflect personnel changes and the political make-up of the Borough Council through subsequent local elections.

Significant changes to the planning system have taken place in the last 15 years, since the LPTG was established, including:

- 2011 Localism Act (as amended) and associated Regulations, which introduced Neighbourhood Planning;
- 2015 Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding and 2016 Housing and Planning Acts (as amended) and associated Regulations, which introduced a legal requirement for local authorities to provide sufficient land supply to meet the need for Custom and Self-Build (CSB) housebuilding (as defined by the CSB Register);
- 2023 Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act (LURA), which introduced significant changes to the planning system, including statutory deadlines for accelerated plan-making and national development management/ decision-making policies;
- 2025 Planning and Infrastructure Act (P&IA), which introduced new powers for plan-making, with reference to utilities, National Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), planning fees and delegation of decision making.

Current Terms of Reference

Current ToR for the LPTG are set out below ([Local Plan Task Group](#)):

1. *Oversee the process of preparation of the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan Review 2016 – 2036) replacing the adopted King's Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy (2011) and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 reporting to Cabinet:*

- a. *Recommend approval of a Local Development Scheme (LDS). Monitor its progress. Recommend the approval of updates as necessary.*
 - b. *Oversee initial strategy formulation/and evidence gathering processes.*
 - c. *Oversee Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) processes.*
 - d. *Oversee preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and recommend its adoption.*
 - e. *Recommend approval of the various published stages of the Local Plan process.*
 - f. *Recommend approval of any pre-deposit Local Plan consultation documents.*
 - g. *Consider comments made at public consultation stages and recommend responses and changes to draft Development Plan Documents (DPD).*
 - h. *Recommend approval of submission versions of DPDs.*
 - i. *From the submission stage onwards consider all duly made objections and supporting representations and recommend responses.*
 - j. *Recommend the final adoption and publication of the Local Plan to full Council.*
 - k. *Recommend approval of annual monitoring reports.*
 - l. *Oversee the preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) as appropriate.*
2. *Receive and consider progress reports from the Corporate LDF Officer Group.*
 3. *Oversee the Local Plan budget.*
 4. *Recommend responses to National, Norfolk County Council and neighbouring Local Planning Authorities consultations and related matters.*

Implications of changes to the planning system

The new planning system as introduced through the 2023 LURA and 2025 P&IA, introduces many significant changes, particularly regarding plan-making. These represent the most significant changes to the system for over 20 years; notably:

- Statutory deadlines/ milestones for preparing a Local Plan (30 months, from start, to publication of Inspectors' Reports);
- Replacement of Local Development Scheme with a project plan;
- Removal of statutory requirement to prepare an SCI;
- Replacement of Supplementary Planning Documents with Supplementary Plans; the latter requiring independent examination;

- Removal of statutory “Duty to Cooperate”;
- Use of digital technology in plan-making;
- Removal of requirement to undertake Sustainability Appraisal (although Strategic Environmental Assessment will remain a statutory obligation).

Accordingly, many criteria within the current ToR are, in practice, rendered obsolete by the new system. This therefore requires a comprehensive review of the ToR for the LPTG, to ensure this remains relevant and effective, going forward.

Proposed new Terms of Reference

Giving due consideration to the new legislation (2023 LURA/ 2025 P&IA), officers have reviewed the current ToR, to ensure these are “fit for purpose”. This is necessary to allow for the Local Plan and other development plan documents (e.g. Supplementary Plans) to progress efficiently, in accordance with requirements of the new legislation.

These revised/ new ToR include removal of several obsolete criteria from the current version. For comparison and clarity, a tracked change version (showing proposed changes and deletions to the ToR) is included in Annex 1 to this report, including a full explanation for each change.

The proposed new ToR are set out in Annex 2 to this report.

2 Options Considered

Consideration was given as to whether it is necessary to review and update the ToR for the LPTG. This was not considered a reasonable alternative option, given that many criteria are rendered redundant by the new planning system, which introduces new legal obligations such as strict statutory deadlines/ milestones that it is necessary to adhere to.

3 Policy Implications

The proposed changes to the LPTG ToR are needed to support efficient and effective plan-making, under the new planning system (as introduced through the 2023 LURA and 2025 P&IA).

They are necessary to ensure the Borough Council can undertake plan-making in accordance with the statutory requirements. These are ultimately about positive planning; i.e. delivering a new Local Plan under the reformed system for plan-making.

When adopted, the new Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan 2021-2040. This will provide the necessary statutory spatial planning framework for nearly 20 years ahead, up to the mid-2040s.

The LPTG was first set up by Cabinet in 2011. It is answerable to Cabinet in an advisory role and has no direct decision-making powers.

4 Financial Implications

There are no current financial implications. Preparation of a new Local Plan is a statutory obligation and ensuring efficient and appropriate arrangements and procedures in place is necessary to achieve this outcome.

5 Personnel Implications

There are no personnel implications.

6 Environmental Considerations

There are no direct environmental considerations. However, delivery of an effective Local Plan in accordance with the necessary legal requirements ought to achieve positive environmental outcomes.

7 Statutory Considerations

The preparation and adoption of an up-to-date Local Plan within a 30 month timetable is a statutory obligation, under the 2023 Levelling-Up and Regeneration and 2025 Planning & Infrastructure Acts, and associated secondary legislation (Regulations).

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

The EIA Pre-Screening process has revealed no negative impacts arising from the proposed changes to the LPTG ToR. The completed Pre-Screening EIA form is attached.

9 Risk Management Implications

Preparation of a Local Plan in accordance with the statutory timetable is about fulfilling the Borough Council's legal functions. There could be risks of sanctions upon the Council if we fail to meet our legal obligations.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None.

11 Background Papers

Annex 1: Changes to Local Plan Task Group Terms of Reference, shown as tracked changes and explanatory notes/ text

Annex 2: Proposed Local Plan Task Group Terms of Reference

Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Local Plan Task Group – amendments to Terms of Reference				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	New		Existing	X	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	<p>The Local Plan Task Group (LPTG) acts as a conduit between Cabinet and Planning Policy Officers, allowing ideas to be shared, analysed and discussed in a public forum.</p> <p>The role of the LPTG is to ensure public engagement and transparency in the plan-making process. There are statutory deadlines and milestones that need to be met at all stages in preparation of the Local Plan.</p> <p>Legal obligations for plan-making are set out through the 2023 Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act, 2025 Planning & Infrastructure Act, and associated Regulations.</p> <p>Other key legislation that plan-making needs to accord with, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 Data Protection Act; • 2017 Habitat Regulations (as amended); • 2010 Equality Act; • 2004 Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations; • 1998 Human Rights Act, 				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only (<i>identify stakeholders consulted with</i>)	The LPTG is a key component in preparing the Local Plan. The proposed changes to the Terms of Reference are purely internal and constitutional, but are essential to ensure the Local Plan can be prepared in a timely and efficient manner and (critically) fulfil statutory deadlines and milestones.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			X	
	Disability			X	
	Sex			X	
	Gender Re-assignment			X	
	Marriage/civil partnership			X	
	Pregnancy & maternity			X	

<p><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund</i></p>	Race			X	
	Religion or belief			X	
	Sexual orientation			X	
	Armed forces community			X	
	Care leavers			X	
	Health inequalities*			X	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			X	

Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:

Preparation of the Local Plan is a legal obligation upon the Borough Council. The plan-making process is covered by a range of primary and secondary legislation, including the 1998 Human Rights Act and 2010 Equality Act. The Local Plan is intended to address all aspects (economic, environmental and social) of sustainable development and deliver benefits for all communities and groups. To pass examination, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the Local Plan fulfils our legal obligations re the Human Rights and Equality Acts.

Amendments to the LPTG ToR are necessary to ensure successful delivery of a new Local Plan within the statutory timeframe.

Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	Yes/ No	<p>The new Local Plan, if effectively prepared and implemented, should benefit all communities, in terms of delivering sustainable development.</p> <p>Amendments to the LPTG ToR are necessary to ensure successful delivery of a new Local Plan within the statutory timeframe.</p>
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes/ No	<p>The new Local Plan, if effectively prepared and implemented, should benefit all communities, in terms of delivering sustainable development.</p> <p>Amendments to the LPTG ToR are necessary to ensure successful delivery of a new Local Plan within the statutory timeframe.</p>
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes/ No	<p>Actions: n/a – No negative impacts identified</p>
		<p>Actions agreed by EWG member: N/A</p>

If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:

Decision agreed by EWG member: N/A

5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?

Yes/ No

Please provide brief summary:

The new Local Plan is intended to deliver benefits for all communities, in terms of sustainable development. It is noted that secondary benefits for people could be achieved, through effective governance arrangements, to ensure effective and timely delivery of the Plan.

Assessment completed by:
Name

Michael Burton

Job title

Principal Planner (Planning Policy)

Date completed

9 April 2026

Reviewed by EWG member

Claire Dorgan

Date

17/02/2026

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)

Annex 1: Changes to Local Plan Task Group Terms of Reference, shown as tracked changes and explanatory notes/ text

1. ~~Oversee the process of~~ **for** preparation of the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan ~~Review 2016—2036~~ replacing the adopted King's Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy (2011) and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 **Local Plan (2021-2040)**, reporting to Cabinet:
 - a. ~~Recommend approval of a Local Development Scheme (LDS). Monitor its progress. Recommend the approval of updates as necessary.~~ **Agree to the overall timetable in accordance with the new plan-making system.** *[NB: The new system sets a 30 month (+4) which isn't negotiable. The LDS will be replaced by a local plan timetable which needs to be updated each month at least or more frequently if/ when milestones are reached. This is operational.]*
 - b. ~~Oversee~~ **Consider** initial **vision, aims and objectives, spatial** strategy formulation/~~and evidence gathering processes~~ **including site allocations and policies. Consider iteration following consultation and gateway stages.**
 - c. ~~Oversee Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) processes.~~ *[NB: SA no longer part of the process and SEA is part of the initial formulation process and will form part of the consultation package]*
 - d. ~~Oversee preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and recommend its adoption.~~ *[NB: Statements of Community Involvement no longer form part of the new local plan-making system. The SCI is replaced by Project Inception Document (PID) which is prepared by officers and signed off by senior officers and the portfolio holder. Engagement is then tested against this at the gateway checks and examination.]*
 - e. **c. Recommend approval of the various published key consultation stages of the Local Plan process.**
 - f. **d. Recommend approval of any pre-deposit submission version of the Local Plan consultation documents.**
 - g. **e. Consider comments made at public feedback from** consultation stages **prior to submission** and recommend **consider** responses and changes to **the** draft Development Plan Documents (DPD) **Local Plan.**
 - h. ~~Recommend approval of submission versions of DPDs.~~
 - i. ~~From the submission stage onwards consider all duly made objections and supporting representations and recommend responses.~~ *[NB: Proposed for removal as considering post-submission representations is not a role for the Task Group. This is a matter for officers, as previously the need to get separate approval from the Task Group has led to avoidable delays. The Local Plan 2021-2040 inspectors emphasized this during the examination (2022-2025).]*

- ~~j.~~ f. Recommend the final adoption and publication of the Local Plan to full Council.
 - ~~k.~~ Recommend approval of annual monitoring reports. *[NB: publication of annual Authority Monitoring Reports is a purely operational matter]*
 - ~~l.~~ g. Oversee the preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) **Plans**, as appropriate.
- ~~2.~~ Receive and consider progress reports from the Corporate LDF Officer Group. *[NB: The Corporate LDF Officer Group is long defunct. It is likely this is a legacy of the Core Strategy (pre-2011) days.]*
- ~~3.~~ Oversee the Local Plan budget. *[NB: the Local Plan budget is purely/ solely an operational matter]*
4. **2. Recommend Consider** responses to National, Norfolk County Council and neighbouring Local Planning Authorities consultations and related matters, **where these have implications for plan-making.** *[NB: Some flexibility needed, as there is probably insufficient time/ resources to respond to every consultation; furthermore, in some cases this will not be necessary.]*

Annex 2: Proposed Local Plan Task Group Terms of Reference

1. Oversee the process for preparation of the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan, replacing the adopted King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan (2021 -2040), reporting to Cabinet:
 - a. Agree to the overall timetable in accordance with the new plan-making system.
 - b. Consider initial vision, aims and objectives, spatial strategy formulation including site allocations and policies. Consider iteration following consultation and gateway stages.
 - c. Recommend approval of the key consultation stages of the Local Plan preparation process.
 - d. Recommend approval of submission version of the Local Plan.
 - e. Consider feedback from consultation stages prior to submission and consider responses and changes to the draft Local Plan.
 - f. Recommend the final adoption and publication of the Local Plan to full Council.
 - g. Oversee the preparation and adoption of Supplementary Plans (SPs) as appropriate.
2. Consider responses to National- consultations, where these have implications for plan-making.