



DRAFT REPORT TO CABINET

DATE OF MEETING	14 July 2026
REPORT TITLE	Local Plan Scoping Consultation
LEAD MEMBER	Cllr James Moriarty (Portfolio Holder & Local Plan Task Group Chair)
LEAD OFFICER	Alex Fradley (Planning Policy Manager)
CONSULTEES	Assistant Director, Principal Planners, Senior Planner, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer, Principal Lawyer, Communication & Engagement Officer. Cllr Richard Blunt (Local Plan Task Group Vice Chair), Cllr Michael De Whalley (Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Biodiversity), and all Members of the Local Plan Task Group.
WARDS AFFECTED	n/a (not at this stage however please note a new Local Plan once adopted will cover the whole Borough).

KEY DECISION	NO – We have been directed by Government to produce a Local Plan. The process and timescales for plan-making are set in law. The Borough Council has published its Notice of Intention to prepare a new Local Plan and its Local Plan Timetable. Additionally, this is a Borough Council Corporate Priority.
DECISION MAKER	Cabinet
IS THE REPORT OPEN OR EXEMPT	OPEN

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	YES
HR IMPLICATIONS	NO
POLICY IMPLICATIONS	YES
STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS	YES
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	YES
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS	YES
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT COMPLETED	PRE-SCREENING FORM COMPLETED

SUMMARY OF REPORT
<p>The report seeks approval for the Local Plan Scoping Consultation to take place in accordance with the new local plan-making statutory regulations and timescales, as the Borough Council has been directed to by Government, and as set out by the Borough Council's Local Plan Timetable.</p> <p>The plan-making system is new, and a scoping consultation is a new preliminary stage of this process. Unlike most consultations this does not propose a draft policy, view, or position for people/consultation bodies to consider and provide feedback on. Instead, it seeks views on the scope (what the plan could cover) and how they would like to be engaged in the local plan-making process going forward.</p>



However, it should be noted that a significant degree of this is set by Government through legislation and policy. For example, the content cannot replicate or tweak any policy which is set nationally, engagement should be digital-first, and the consultation stages are prescribed by the legislation.

The Local Plan is not only a legal requirement but also a Borough Council Corporate Priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet resolves to:

- 1) Agree that the Local Plan Scoping Consultation takes place for 4 weeks, from 1 to 29 September 2026 (inclusive), to comply with the legislation, Government direction, and the Borough Council's Local Plan Timetable.
- 2) The final Scoping Consultation material be agreed by the Assistant Director for Planning under delegated powers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing.

REASON FOR DECISION

To comply with the new local plan-making legal requirements, Government Direction (they have written to the Borough Council), and the Borough Council's Local Plan Timetable. This enables early consultation on the scope and engagement for the Borough Council's Local Plan.



CORPORATE STRATEGY How does this proposal support our Corporate Priorities Our priorities Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2027 Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk	
Promote growth and prosperity to benefit West Norfolk	<p>This is the first statutory consultation in the new local plan-making process. Feedback will inform the scope of the Local Plan. It precedes the formal launch of the Local Plan, due to take place in Autumn 2026.</p> <p>The Local Plan will influence and guide housing and economic growth to meet local need, as well as seeking to protect the natural and historic environment. Not only is a new local plan a legal requirement but it also forms part of the Borough Council's Corporate Plan and priorities.</p>
Protect our Environment	As above
Efficient and effective delivery of our services	As above
Support our communities	As above

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the requirement for the Borough Council to carry out a preliminary Local Plan Scoping Consultation as part of the new local plan-making system. It covers why this must be done, when it must happen, what a scoping consultation is, the details of this, and seeks approval for the consultation to take place in accordance with the legislation, Government direction via letter to the Borough Council, and the Borough Council's Local Plan Timetable.

2. Background

2.1 With effect from 25 March 2026, the Government introduced a new legal system for the creation of local plans. The key headlines on content are that they must focus on site-specific land allocations to meet local needs, policies to support these allocations, and the setting of local standards for a small number of themes (e.g. affordable housing and water efficiency) that are not definitively prescribed by national planning policy. In addition, they must contain an overall vision and no more than 10 measurable outcomes. Previously, local plans could contain more general policies on development management matters. However, these are to be set at the national level as National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs) within the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), anticipated to come into force later this year. Local plan policies must not replicate or tweak matters which are covered by NDMPs.



- 2.2 In terms of timescale for a new Local Plan, it is specified in law that it must be completed within 30 months (with an additional 4 months for preparation at the start of the process). Within the 34-month period there are 3 statutory consultation stages. The first is the scoping consultation, followed secondly by a draft plan consultation, then thirdly a proposed plan consultation. In addition, there are 3 gateway checks (following each consultation) and a final examination. The first gateway is self-assessment. The second and third gateways, along with the examination, involve the Planning Inspectorate.
- 2.3 Government wrote to the Borough Council (BC), on 15 January 2026, confirming the need for a new local plan in the new system and the initial timescales. Failure to comply could lead to intervention from Government as recently seen at Three Rivers District: [Three Rivers District Council: Local Plan Intervention letter - GOV.UK](#)
- 2.4 Since then, [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#) have come into effect (from 25 March 2026). In accordance with Regulation 20, the BC must run the scoping consultation after it has given notice of intention to commence plan-making. The official start date for the new plan is no later than 30 June 2026. The scoping consultation should last for at least 21 days and must finish before we complete our Gateway 1 self-assessment summary (30 October 2026). [Regulation 20](#) relates to the scoping consultation and in summary involves preliminary consultation about what the local plan should contain and how the BC should engage with people/bodies in the preparation of the local plan.
- 2.5 The BC must invite certain bodies to make representations at each consultation stage. [Regulation 2](#) sets out that the following must be consulted: general consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider appropriate, and specific consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan. This will include statutory consultees (such as the Environment Agency), non-statutory consultees (such as Internal Drainage Boards), neighbouring authorities, parish councils, landowners, the development and planning sectors, housebuilders of different scales, and people who live and/or work within the Borough. Therefore, in effect, any person will be able to make a comment if they wish.
- 2.6 Draft guidance on [engaging the public when preparing a local plan](#) (April 2026) has been published and this states that the scoping consultation provides the local community and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to have their say at the very start of the plan-making process. We must ask for views on:
- what themes and topics to include in the local plan;
 - how to approach future local plan engagement; and
 - any other matters that the BC wishes to consult upon.



- 2.7 The feedback from the scoping consultation will inform the content of the Local Plan and the engagement strategy.
- 2.8 It should be noted that to a significant degree the scope and engagement of a Local Plan is set by Government through legislation and policy. For example, the content cannot replicate or tweak any policy which is set nationally, and engagement should be digital-first and the requirements of each consultation stage are prescribed by the legislation ([Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)).

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The BC has already published the Notice of Intention (NoI) and Local Plan Timetable. This specifies that the BC will carry out the Scoping Consultation for 4 weeks in September 2026. This fits with the requirements mentioned above, and avoids August, a month in which parish councils do not usually meet, and when public consultation should be avoided.
- 3.2 In terms of format this must be digital-first. We will be using an existing software solution known as StoryMaps. We have used this for the interactive version of the current Local Plan, and its sister software Survey123 for the Call for Sites. The interactive version of the current Local Plan gives a flavour of the presentation style and can be viewed [here](#).
- 3.3 This consultation, much like our earlier Call for Sites, will be publicised via a press release, our website, through social media (including Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and LinkedIn), and the local newspaper. Recognising that in-person events would also be useful to drive engagement and, given the timescale of the consultation and resources available, it is proposed to carry out three-in person drop-in sessions at King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton, as the main locations within the Borough for accessibility.
- 3.4 In addition, we have been working with the Communications Team in terms of consultation reach. Generally, responses to BC consultations are dominated by parish councils and the older generation (60 years +). By contrast, representation from younger people in education, those who are economically active and those in deprivation has been low. Therefore, we are engaging with these sectors in particular to get an understanding of how better to encourage their participation, and ensure their voices are heard in the new local plan. This will inform our consultation approach going forward.
- 3.5 Given the focus of new-style local plans on site-specific allocations, we also propose to publish an interactive map of the sites that we have received through the Call for Sites consultation (and, at a high-level, what uses they have been proposed for) and allow people to provide any comments. We also propose, to ensure we have the best selection of available sites to choose from, that we re-open the Call for Sites during the Scoping Consultation, inviting further sites to be submitted.



- 3.6 There is one further element of early plan making that the BC must carry out and this is a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping consultation. Again, this is set out in law ([The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)). The SEA sets the environmental base line and factors for which the Local Plan and its policies will be assessed against. At this scoping stage it is only for the three main environmental bodies to provide the BC with feedback. That is Natural England (NE), the Environment Agency (EA), and Historic England (HE), although any other parties may respond if they so wish. Feedback will inform the actual SEA, and this will then be consulted upon as part of the subsequent draft and proposed local plan consultations.
- 3.7 The intention is also, given the new plan-making system, to set out the process, what a local plan is, and the BC's role.
- 3.8 Following the conclusion of the Scoping Consultation, the feedback received will inform, where it can, the themes and topics that the Local Plan will cover, and the approach to engagement going forward. In addition, we must create a consultation summary (as is the case for all consultation stages). This will help inform the Gateway 1 self-assessment. Feedback will therefore inform the draft version of the Local Plan which Members and Officers will be preparing through the Local Plan Task Group (LPTG).
- 3.9 The Scoping Consultation is intended to be high-level and cover what people would like to be included and how they would like to be engaged. The specific questions to pose are not set out in legislation or guidance. To maximise engagement, especially from those underrepresented groups we have identified, we have composed the questions below. These use plain English and ask people about what they know (as opposed to 'what do you think we should consider in making our Local Plan'). We have limited it to a small number of focused questions to help reduce drop-out from question fatigue. Please note that as part of the consultation there will be a short introduction explaining what a local plan is.

Scope

1. What are your favourite things about where you live?
2. What do you not like about where you live?
3. What would make your area a better place to live?
4. The Government says we have to build more homes and sites for businesses in West Norfolk – if we have to build them anyway, where do you think we should put them? **Provide an interactive map to add pins to**
5. What would you like us to think about when planning for new homes?
6. Which of these should a new Local Plan cover? (please tick as many as you want) Options: New homes, Social housing, Parks and open spaces, Shops, Natural environment, Climate change, Historic buildings, Transport, Jobs, Healthcare provision, Something else (please say what it is)



7. Is there anything else you want us to think about as part of the new Local Plan?

Engagement

1. Local people are an important part of making a Local Plan. How would you like to be kept informed, and asked for your opinion? Email, Online newsletter, Website, Online events, In-person events, Social media (e.g. LinkedIn / Instagram / Facebook), YouTube, Podcast, Something else (please say what it is)
2. What might get in the way of you telling us what you think, and is there anything we could do to make it easier?
3. Is there anything else you want to say about how we can include local people in our work to make the new Local Plan?

Demographics

We'd like to ask a few questions about you. This information will help us to make sure we are getting opinions from a good range of people.

Which of these age groups are you in?

- 0-21
- 22-65
- 66+

Where does most of your income come from?

- Most of my income is from paid work
- Some of my income is from paid work and some from benefits
- Most or all of my income is from benefits
- I don't have an income of my own
- I am in full-time education or training
- I am mostly or fully retired

Can you live on your income?

- My income always or mostly covers all my living costs
- My income sometimes covers all my living costs
- My income never or hardly ever covers all my living costs

Tell us about your home

- I own my home
- I live with someone who owns my home (e.g. it is owned by a partner or parent)
- I live in temporary accommodation or don't have a regular address



- I rent my home

Please tell us your postcode: _____

One other thing: we'd love to tell you about the results – for us to do this, we'll need your email address: _____

[Please note that this information is only collected for the purposes of interpreting consultation feedback. Any personal data we collect will be managed and process in accordance with the requirements of the 2018 Data Protection Act and GDPR. Further information, including our data protection policy, is available to view [here](#).]

Sites

- We have published an interactive map of the sites submitted through the Call for Sites 2026. Do you have any comments you'd like to make?
- If you would like to submit a site for consideration as part of the Local Plan, please do so via this link (link to submission process and online form).

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping

- Alongside the Local Plan Scoping Consultation, under [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#), the BC will notify the three statutory consultation bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) of the Council's intention to undertake SEA of the Local Plan, in parallel with the plan-making process.
- At the scoping consultation stage, this will be supported by the SEA Scoping Report (Appendix 1).

4. Options Considered

4.1 There are no other options considered with regard to carrying out the consultation as the requirement, as part of the local-plan process, is set in law. The questions within the scope of the regulations proposed are set out above as the reasons for this approach.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no significant financial implications of the Scoping Consultation stage. The cost of the consultation can be met through the existing agreed Local Plan budget. Funds have been set aside to ensure that the Borough



Council can meet the streamlined 30-months timetable for preparing the new Local Plan, as required by the new system, which is set out in law.

6. HR Implications

6.1 None.

7. Policy Implications

7.1 The scoping consultation is designed to obtain views to inform the scope of the emerging Local Plan and an engagement strategy going forwards. It does not set out draft, preferred options, or reasonable alternatives for site allocations and policies.

8. Climate Change and Environmental Implications and considerations

8.1 The Local Plan will need to consider climate change and environmental implications/considerations as per the law and the NPPF. These will form an integral part of the new plan in the future.

9. Statutory and Legal Implications

9.1 The requirement to prepare a new local plan is set out in law, the NPPF and the Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)) has already written to the Borough Council (15 January 2026) to confirm that it needs to prepare a new Local Plan. The timetable and milestones within this are set out in law. The Borough Council has also published its Notice of Intention (NoI) and Local Plan Timetable.

10. Local Government Reorganisation Implications

10.1 Government has been clear that LGR and Devolution are not reasons to delay or stop local-plan preparation. Indeed, as stated above it is a legal requirement, and the MHCLG letter sets out a clear direction that the BC must start give notice of intention to start a new Local Plan by the end of June and formal preparation of the Local Plan by the end of October 2026.

11. Health and Safety Implications

11.1 The Scoping Consultation would be covered by the general policies and risk assessments of the Borough Council.

12. Consultees

12.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 set out that for the Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20) representations must be invited from general consultation bodies considered



appropriate and specific consultation bodies considered which may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan. However, anyone can make representations at this stage. Please see section 2.5 of this report for further detail.

13. Equality Impact Assessment

- 13.1 Please see the completed EIA pre-screening form included with this report.

14. Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 None associated with this stage of plan-making providing that the proposal is agreed. If it is not agreed, then there will be failure to meet one of the statutory deadlines in the new Local Plan system. Which as set out earlier in the report could well lead to Government intervention.

15. Conclusion

- 15.1 Legally the Borough Council is obliged to prepare a new Local Plan to the timescales set out in law. The Government (MHCLG) have already written to confirm this (letter, 15 January 2026). The Borough Council has published its Notice of Intention to prepare a Local Plan and its Local Plan timetable. The Scoping Consultation is the first formal consultation within the new plan-making process. This must be carried for a minimum of 21 days between the 30 June 2026 (Notice of Intention to prepare a new Local Plan) and 31 October 2026 (publication of Gateway 1).
- 15.2 The proposal is for the Borough Council to carry out the Local Plan Scoping Consultation for four weeks during September 2026 as detailed above.

LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – New Local Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023](#)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)
- [Draft National Planning Policy Framework for consultation](#)
- [Create or Update a Local Plan Guidance](#)



- **To follow** MHCLG Letter to Borough Council (“support for early starters”), 15 January 2026 – Appendix 1 of Governance Arrangements for the Plan-making Process report to Cabinet, 9 June 2026
- [Three Rivers District Council Intervention](#)
- **To follow** Local Plan webpage – including Nol and Timetable
- [Local Plan Interactive Plan](#)
- **To follow** Local Plan Scoping Consultation website/StoryMap

PRE SCREENING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

Name of policy/service/function	Planning Policy		
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	New	x	Existing
<p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.</p>	<p>The Borough Council is legally required to prepare a new local-plan in the new plan-making system. This is set out in law as are the timescales and milestones.</p> <p>The Local Plan Scoping Consultation is a new type of preliminary consultation (preceding the plan-making process) and is designed to gain views early on in the process on the scope of the Local Plan and how people would like to be engaged.</p>		
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only (<i>identify stakeholders consulted with</i>)	<p>Those consulted include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr James Moriarty (Portfolio Holder & Local Plan Tsk Group Chair) • All Members of the Local Plan Task Group • Principal Lawyer • Democratic Services • Assistant Director for Planning • Planning Policy Officers • Chief Executive Officer • Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer • Communication & Engagement Officer <p>This is the first consultation and will include statutory and non-statutory</p>		



	consultees. Anybody (consultation bodies or individuals) are entitled to respond.				
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> <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>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			X	
	Disability			X	
	Sex			X	
	Gender Re-assignment			X	
	Marriage/civil partnership			X	
	Pregnancy & maternity			X	
	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)					
<p>Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above: The consultation is open to anyone and everyone. It is designed to inform the development of the Local Plan at an early stage.</p>					
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?	No	The new Local Plan, if effectively prepared and implemented, should benefit all communities, in terms of delivering sustainable development.			
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	Please see above			



If 'yes' to questions 2 - 3 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:

Decision agreed by EWG member: Claire Dorgan

<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</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Actions: N/A</p>	
<p>5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Please provide brief summary: The Local Plan process and content is tightly defined by the Government. It will also be subject to independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The new Local Plan is intended to deliver benefits for all communities, in terms of sustainable development.</p>	
<p>Assessment completed by: Name</p>	<p>Alex Fradley</p>		
<p>Job title</p>	<p>Planning Policy Manager</p>		
<p>Date completed</p>	<p>29/04/2026</p>		
<p>Reviewed by EWG member</p>	<p>Claire Dorgan</p>	<p>Date</p>	<p>06/05/2026</p>
<p>✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)</p>			



**Appendix 1: New Local Plan Strategic
Environmental Assessment Scoping Report**

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