

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL 29 October 2026

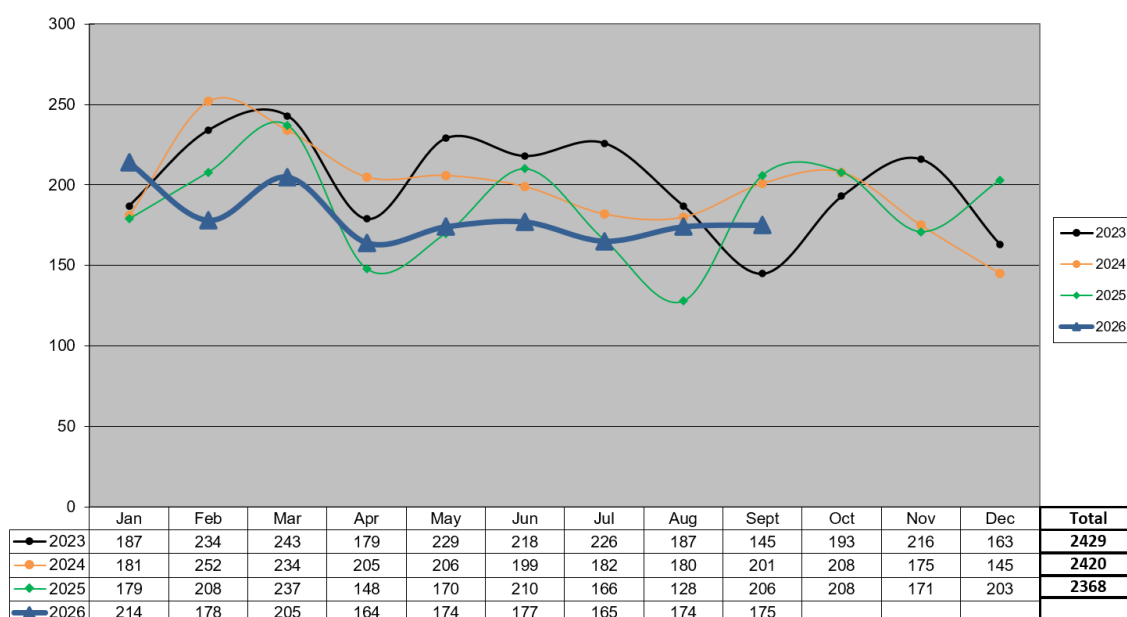
COUNCILLOR JIM MORIARTY - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING & LICENSING

MY THANKS TO OFFICERS FOR THEIR WORK TOWARDS COMPILING THIS REPORT

Planning and Discharge of Conditions applications received

Application numbers at the end of September are down slightly compared to the same period last year, 26 applications.

Planning and discharge of condition applications received



Major and Minor dwelling applications and householder applications received comparison

	1/10/23 – 30/9/24	1/10/24 – 30/9/25	1/10/25 – 30/9/26
No. of Major dwelling applications rec'd	17	23	23
No. of Minor dwelling applications rec'd	228	273	275
No. of Householder applications rec'd	604	564	536
Total	849	860	834

*Minor dwelling applications = up to 10 units

*Major dwelling applications = over 10 units

2025/26 performance for determining planning applications 1/10/25 – 30/9/26

	National target	Performance
Major	60%	94%
Non – Major	70%	91%

Appeal Performance – appeal decisions made by The Planning Inspectorate between 1/10/25 – 30/9/26. This measure is different to the ‘quality of decision’ measure.

	Officer delegated		Committee overturns		Total	
Appeals	Dismissed	Allowed	Dismissed	Allowed	Dismissed	Allowed
Planning	38	7	2	5	40	12
	84%	16%	29%	71%	77%	23%
Enforcement	4	3				
	57%	43%				

Quality of decisions

This measure calculates the percentage of the total number of decisions made by the Local Planning Authority on applications that are then overturned at Appeal.

The Assessment period for this measure is two years up to and including the most recent quarter plus 9 months. Therefore, performance at the end of August 2026 is calculated as follows:

Planning applications determined by the Local Planning Authority between 01/1/2024 to 31/12/2025 (not the date the Local Planning Authority receives the appeal decision from the Inspectorate) plus 9 months to allow appeals to be determined by the Planning Inspectorate = 30/9/2026.

The threshold for designation for both Major and Non-Major is 10% - this is the figure that should not be exceeded, otherwise there is a risk of the Authority being designated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

MAJOR		
No. of Decisions Issued	No. Allowed on Appeal	% Overturned
111	1	0.90%

NON-MAJOR		
No. of Decisions Issued	No. Allowed on Appeal	% Overturned
2541	21	0.83%

Revenue income for financial year 2026/27 (Planning and Discharge income)

Figures are based on a full year projected income budget of £1,453,750.

Projected	Actual	Variance with projected
April 26 – September 2026	April 26 – September 2026	
£726,875	£896,447	+£169,572

Planning Enforcement Service Performance

KPI - 85% of new enforcement cases actioned within 12 weeks of receipt

2025		2026	
August	91.5%	January	91.2%
September	94.6%	February	87.0%
October	87.5%	March	100%
November	88.2%	April	97.9%
December	94.1%	May	91.8%
June	87.3%	June	87.3%
		July	86.7%
		August	80.5%
		September	74.6%

Set out below is a breakdown in relation to cases received and closed for the period 1/10/25 – 30/9/26 and the current 'live' cases.

- Number of cases received incl. high hedge 585
- Total number of cases closed 588
- Total number of current 'live' cases 310

Next Local Plan

Local Plan Timetable

Provided below is an illustration of our Next Local Plan timetable. The next formal step is the publication of our Gateway 1 self-assessment. Overall, we are currently working towards the creation of a whole Draft Local Plan and for this to be published for a full public consultation next year:



Further details about the Next Local Plan can, including the full timetable can be viewed online [here](#).

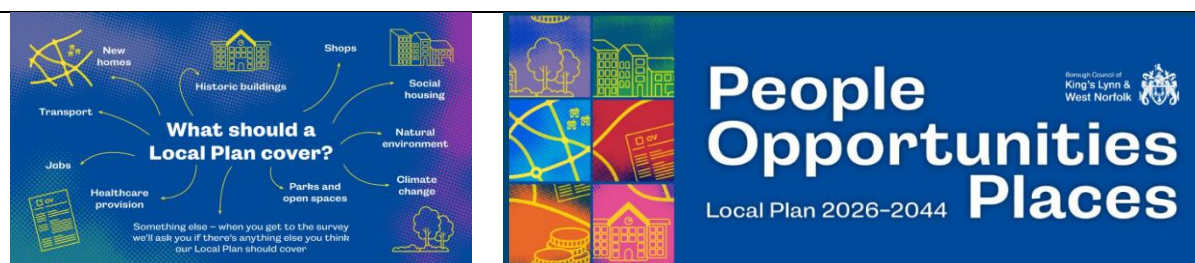
Local Plan Progress

I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all Members to view the presentation and recording of the last Local Plan Task Group which provides the details of this and the initial feedback from the Scoping Consultation, available [here](#). Below is a flavour:

- We have an adopted Local Plan (2025) with an interactive version and policies map
- We have a healthy 5-year housing land supply
- We have passed the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) with a 100% score
- Governance Arrangements agreed and in place for the next Local Plan
- Local Plan Task Group (LPTG) Terms of Reference (ToR) revised, agreed, and in place
- Members all briefed
- Parish / Town Council's briefed
- Planning Policy Team resourced with a Policy Manager, 2 Principals, 1 Senior Planner, a Project Support Officer, and 2 Graduate Planners
- Majority of the evidence base procured and underway or in the process of
- Many more of the in-housework well advanced
- Esri software in place and a bespoke Artificial Intelligence (AI) product to assist with appraisals
- Some funding secured from MHCLG
- Call for sites completed with some 800+ sites
- Overall, we have 50+ workstreams live currently
- Built excellent working relationships and joint working with other departments, and with other Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) especially across Norfolk through the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF)
- The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) have requested that officers present to other LPAs as they have been impressed
- A number of LPAs want to meet with officers as they too have been impressed
- Raised the profile of the Local Plan massively
- Received a thank you letter from MHCLG
- **And this all before the 30-month time scale actually starts!**

Local Plan Scoping Consultation





We ran our Scoping Consultation during September. The focus was on what people think should be considered when preparing our Next Local Plan and how they would like to be engaged. We also offered the opportunity to comment on the sites we have received so far, and to submit further sites for consideration.

We held 12 events over 15 days including, 4 online drop-in sessions, 2 at the College of West Anglia, 2 at the Food Bank, 2 at King's Lynn, 1 at Downham Market, and 1 at Hunstanton.

The response was **phenomenal** with more than 300 responses to the online survey, we spoke with nearly 300 people in person, received more than 450 emails and had more than 1,500 comments on the interactive site map.

I would like to thank every person who took the time to engage with us, as well as the officer team who went to great lengths to give people the opportunity to take part. We'll use these views as part of the evidence base for drafting our Next Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Planning Update

As of October 2026, there are 25 "made" (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans in place, covering 28 parishes. This includes the Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan Review 2022-2038, passed at referendum on 24 September 2026, with 100% of votes cast in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan, and adopted on 6 October 2026. This replaces the first Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026, made (adopted) in October 2017

A date has now been set for the Docking Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2039; 26 November 2026. If passed at referendum, the Docking Neighbourhood Plan will be "made" by early December 2026. Further details are set out below:

Neighbourhood plans that have reached submission stage (Regulation 15) and are expected to proceed to referendum during 2026-2027 financial year

	Current position
Docking Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2039	Submitted by Docking Parish Council for independent examination, 14 August 2025 . "Regulation 16" consultation, 29 September – 10 November 2025; examination autumn 2025 – August 2026; referendum, 26 November 2026; adoption by early December 2026
Shouldham Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2040	Submitted by Shouldham Parish Council for independent examination, 9 October 2026 . "Regulation 16" consultation, December 2026/ January 2027; examination winter/ spring 2027; referendum summer 2027

Other Emerging Neighbourhood Plans

	Current position
Dersingham	Neighbourhood Area first designated October 2017. During 2025-2026 moves to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan have been revived (since autumn 2025). Possible Regulation 14 consultation by mid-2027.
Great Massingham	Neighbourhood Area first designated June 2021. During 2025-2026 moves to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan have been revived (since summer 2025). Possible Regulation 14 consultation by spring/summer-2027.
Ingoldisthorpe	Various draft evidence documents under preparation (e.g. Design Codes, Housing Needs Assessment) prepared, 2024-2025; possible Regulation 14 consultation by autumn 2027
Pentney	1 st draft Plan (Regulation 14) consultation March-May 2023, following which Plan has been significantly amended (e.g. due to adoption of Local Plan 2021-2040). Preliminary 1 st draft Plan and draft Strategic Environmental Assessment/ Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report signed off February 2026, allowing plan to proceed to Regulation 14. New Regulation 14 consultation anticipated winter/spring 2027.
In addition, several other Parishes are designated Neighbourhood Areas, but progress with plan-making is unknown, or at an early stage	New Neighbourhood Plans: Burnham Overy; Outwell; Tilney St Lawrence; West Dereham Neighbourhood Plan reviews: Hunstanton; North Runcton & West Winch; Sedgeford

Overall, the Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan Review 2022-2038 is the first neighbourhood plan passed at referendum and adopted during the 2026-2027 financial year. It is anticipated that the Docking Neighbourhood Plan will also be adopted by December 2026.

The Shouldham Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2040 was submitted on 9 October 2026, and it is anticipated this will go to referendum during the 2027-2028 financial year. Other active emerging Neighbourhood Plans (Dersingham; Great Massingham; Ingoldisthorpe; Pentney) may come forward to referendum during the 2027-2028 financial year. Hunstanton Town Council and North Runcton, West Winch and Sedgeford Parish Councils are also all pursuing reviews of their Neighbourhood Plans. However, the timeframes for these are entirely dependent on the scope and extent of any review.

Despite financial support for developing Neighbourhood Plans, previously provided by Locality, having been withdrawn (reported to the Council on 31 July 2025), Neighbourhood

Plans continue to come forward. Withdrawal of Locality funding may impact the ability of some communities to progress their planning work, and alternative support mechanisms may need to be considered, going forward. However, in the short-term Neighbourhood Planning remains popular.

The revised NPPF was published on 17 August 2026 ([National Planning Policy Framework.pdf](#)). This reiterates the Government's commitment to neighbourhood planning. Policies PM17 (Examining neighbourhood plans) and decision-making policy S6 (Neighbourhood plans and the presumption [in favour of sustainable development]) explain how it is expected that neighbourhood plans will continue to be examined and used in decision-making, respectively.

Development Management update

New Planning Scheme of Delegation

The new National Scheme of Delegation for Planning is coming into force on the 31 October 2026. Local authorities must comply with the new legislative requirements, otherwise they risk unlawful decisions from occurring, which could be subject to judicial review, with the associated financial and reputational risks that brings.

A report was considered by Cabinet on 13th October 2026 <https://democracy.west-norfolk.gov.uk/documents/s86845/National%20Planning%20Scheme%20of%20Delegation.pdf> which sets out the steps necessary to bring it into force through amending the council's current constitution, as well as setting up internal processes to ensure decision-making is not stalled, and there is as smooth a transfer to the new system as possible.

In summary the revised arrangements will:

- Delegate to officers all planning applications and functions that are required to be determined under Schedule 1 of the Regulations.
- Establish a presumption of officer determination for Schedule 2 applications, unless they are referred to Planning Committee in accordance with the Regulations.
- Designate the Assistant Director for Environment and Planning as the Council's Nominated Officer for the purposes of the Regulations, with appropriate provision for substitutes.
- Designate the Chair of the Planning Committee as the Council's Nominated Member, with appropriate provision for substitutes.
- Introduce a formal referral process for Local Members for the 'Gateway Test', through which the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member may determine whether a Schedule 2 application raises issues of sufficient economic, social, environmental or planning significance to warrant determination by Planning Committee.
- Remove and replace any existing local schemes that are inconsistent with the requirements of the National Scheme of Delegation.
- Introduce a further triage system to ensure the nominated officer and member are not overwhelmed, given the potential number of schedule 2 applications in accordance with the national guidance.

Training will be provided to all Members on 29th October 2026 on the new Planning Scheme of Delegation and in particular the Member Referral Request process including proforma and guidance.

Staffing

Lynette Fawkes (Principal Conservation Officer) is officially leaving the authority on 30th October 2026. Interviews for her replacement were held on 14th October 2026 and the post

was offered and the successful candidate accepted on 16th October 2026, subject to the usual pre-employment checks and notice period.

Clare Malcomson (Senior Planner) and Phoebe Pigott (Graduate Planner) left the authority in September 2026. The vacancies have been advertised and candidates selected for interview which take place 4th & 5th November 2026.

Nature Restoration Fund

On 18 December 2025, the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (“the Act”) came into force, marking an important milestone in the government’s long term growth strategy. Designed to reduce delays and costs, the Act aims to accelerate construction and development across the UK by removing perceived barriers in the planning process. The Act establishes the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF). The NRF will be delivered through Environmental Development Plans (EDPs).

Environmental Delivery Plans

Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) are now being developed by Natural England in collaboration with partners. The overwhelming majority of EDPs are expected to be voluntary, providing an action plan (up to 10 years) which will establish the conservation measures needed to address the impact of development on a protected site or on a named protected species. EDPs will be prepared using the best available data, and they will only be used where the science gives confidence that the conservation measures can achieve the required “Overall Improvement Test.”

Conservation measures within an EDP must be evidence-based and geographically targeted. All EDPs will be subject to public consultation (The Norfolk EDP is out for consultation now until 27 October) and will then need to be approved by the Secretary of State. Once an EDP is in place in a specific area, developers can choose to meet their environmental obligations for the environmental features covered by that EDP by paying a levy, which Natural England will then use to deliver the conservation measures set out in the plan. Where EDPs are not in place, for example where there are irreplaceable habitats, or developers choose not to use them, existing Habitats and other Regulations will continue to apply. EDPs will have regard to wider strategic plans and measures, such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

The measures in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill set out the detailed operation of the Nature Restoration Fund but, at its core, there are 5 key phases:

1. **Framing the EDP** – EDPs will define the environmental impacts they cover, such as nutrient pollution or the impact development might have on a protected species. EDPs will be spatially specific with clear maps setting out where development is covered by an EDP and what scale of development the EDP can support.
2. **Designing the measures** – EDPs will set out the suite of conservation measures that will be deployed to more than address the impact of development across a given area. For example, an EDP covering nutrient pollution will set out how the combined effect of the conservation measures will go beyond the current expectations of nutrient neutrality and lead to an improvement in water quality.
3. **Setting the levy rate** – A simple charging schedule, sufficient to cover the costs of the conservation measures, will be payable by developers to meet the relevant legal obligation associated with the impacts addressed by the EDP.

4. **Consultation and approval** – in developing an EDP, Natural England will benefit from views captured through consultation before the EDP is submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. When considering the EDP, the Secretary of State will be bound by a new legal test to ensure that the conservation measures outweigh the negative effect of development.
5. **Delivering on the EDP**– once the EDP is in place, Natural England will have the necessary powers to use funds collected to implement the conservation measures. They will then monitor the impact of the measures to ensure they are working as expected and make any amendments to the EDP that may be necessary.

Norfolk is in the first set of 16 EDPs to come forward. The Environment Development Plan - Nutrient Pollution - Norfolk is at the consultation stage which will close on 27 October 2026. Consultation available here: [Nutrient Pollution – draft Norfolk Environmental Delivery Plan consultation - Defra Consultations](#). The government released the first set of information and guidance on how EDP will work on 1 September 2026 on:

- [Environmental Delivery Plans](#) – which set out a programme of conservation measures to address specific impacts of development in a defined area.
- [Using the nature restoration levy](#) to discharge specific environmental obligations.
- The [enforcement actions to be taken](#) for missed or late nature restoration levy payments and the appeals process for developers.

You will be aware that there is an established Nutrient Market within Norfolk which operates in a similar way - developers pay for credits to offset their nutrient obligations. This independent market will still continue to operate as it currently does but will of course now be in competition with the EDP option. The Norfolk EDP is voluntary so the developer will have the choice to go down the traditional Habitat Regulation Route or the EDP route. The advantage for developers of using the EDP route is that the Units are likely to be cheaper than those currently on the market and purchase of Units will be a condition of consent. This differs from the current way of operating as Units must be purchased before determination. Where there is more than one impact it could be more cost effective to use the traditional route in which nutrient mitigation could be stacked to help offset other obligations i.e. BNG.

The new regime is most closely aligned with the Norfolk District Level Licencing scheme for Great Crested Newts as it will operate in a similar way once the EDP is approved.

LICENSING

- Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026. Whilst there is no news on the introduction date for the Local Authority licensing regime (premises and people), some measures are being introduced as follows -
 1. From 29 October 2026 –The age of sale for all vaping and nicotine products will be 18, with offences covering under-age sales, proxy purchasing, free distribution and substantial discounting. Ban on vending machines.
 2. From 1 January 2027 - Tobacco retailers will have to display a notice reading: 'It is illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009'.
 3. FPN's for non-compliance – Trading Standards

- One of the New Combined Driver licence applications refused by Members of The Licensing & Appeals Board on 27th August has submitted an Appeal to Magistrates' Court. No hearing date has been set as yet.
- Hannah Shackcloth joined the Licensing team from Planning Enforcement on 28th September, replacing Johanna Riches (who moved to Clean Up).
- The Institute of Licensing has introduced a five-year strategic plan to enhance professional standards within licensing and work towards securing Royal Charter status, bringing the profession in line with bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.
- Home Office alcohol licensing statistics (2025/26) published on 1st October: England and Wales had 968,400 personal licences, 227,300 premises licences and 149,600 TENs (up 2%), with premises licence reviews increasing by around 30%. Further information and full report available here - [Alcohol licensing, England and Wales, April 2025 to March 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- New gaming machine standards: From June 2027, new Category B gaming machines will be required to provide players with gambling management tools and session information, support operators in identifying gambling harm, and introduce safer game design measures, including banning misleading celebrations of losses and features that speed up play, following recommendations from the 2023 Gambling Act Review White Paper.
- UKHospitality high street blueprint: UKHospitality has called for licensing and planning reform, including full implementation of the Licensing Reform Taskforce recommendations, arguing that a more flexible, growth-focused regulatory framework would support hospitality-led regeneration, encourage investment, boost local economies and help revitalise town and city centres.
- Hospitality tax burden: New analysis commissioned by the British Retail Consortium found that hospitality businesses face the highest effective tax burden of any major UK sector, paying 82p in business taxes for every £1 of pre-tax profit, prompting industry calls for business rates reform and tax reductions to support investment, job creation and high street regeneration.