

Appendix 1: Overview of the new plan making system and regulatory requirements

This appendix accompanies the 9th March 2026 Cabinet Report ‘Potential Local Plan Review’ and provides further information on:

- 1) [Overview of the new Plan-making system](#)
A brief overview of the new plan making system along with relevant context for North Norfolk District Council.
 - 2) [Getting ready to prepare a new plan](#)
Details of the step-by-step process for getting ready to undertake a new plan.
 - 3) [Summary of the New Plan Making Regulations](#)
A detailed summary of the step-by-step process for plan-making, as anticipated via the emerging new plan-making regulations.
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1. Overview of the New Plan-Making System

1.1 Introduction

The government [published guidance](#) and a [Ministerial Statement](#) on 27th November 2025 confirming that a **new local plan-making system will come into force in early 2026**. This constitutes central government policy, pending the enactment of new plan-making regulations.

Key elements of the new plan-making system include:

- A new **30-month statutory plan-making cycle**, intended to speed up preparation and ensure universal coverage across England.
- A requirement for **shorter, clearer, more accessible Local Plans**.
- An expectation towards the use of **digital tools** to make the process faster and more efficient.
- New **plan-making regulations** detailing the procedural requirements, to be published early in 2026 (not currently laid before parliament).
- Early plan-makers must **have regard to the consultation draft of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** published in December 2025.

The system is designed to focus on clarity, consistency, and reducing the typical plan production period, which has historically taken many councils over seven years.

1.2 National Policy Underpinning the New System

The December 2025 consultation draft NPPF sets out major policy reforms relevant to new plans, covering:

- Plan-making and decision-making
- Housing supply

- Climate change and sustainable development
- Green Belt (not applicable to NNDC) and land use
- Design, economy, and transport.

The reforms also implement principles from the **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023**, which amend the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, including:

- **National Development Management Policies (NDMPs)**
- Replacement of the **Duty to Cooperate** with a flexible alignment policy
- Requirement for LPAs to prepare a **single Local Plan** (as NNDC already does) and to **keep it up to date**
- New duties around how planning data must be provided and processed, aligned to **new data standards** in support of a more digital, standardised plan-making system.

In addition, the reforms introduce new requirements in relation to plan-making from the Planning & Infrastructure Act 2025:

- **Spatial Development Strategies (SDS)**, prepared by new Strategic Planning Authorities (linked to Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of a mayoral area for Norfolk & Suffolk). It is not considered that a SDS would be adopted within the new plan-making system timeline but scoping and partnership working is taking place through the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework.

1.3 Implications for North Norfolk District Council (Post-Adoption)

By adopting its Local Plan on **17 December 2025**, the Council has completed its plan under the legacy system before the commencement of the new plan-making regime.

This places the Council in a stronger and more flexible position than authorities with emerging plans still at Regulation 18, 19, or examination stages, because:

- The plan is already in force and can guide development in the interim with full statutory weight.
- NNDC can prepare for its next plan under the new system from a clean starting point.
- The recent adoption of the Local Plan means that many policies may already be aligned to changing national policy or may not require significant update.

1.4 Commencing a New Local Plan

The Government encourages LPAs not intending to submit a plan under the existing system by December 2026 to begin plan-making under the new system **as soon as possible**, to ensure up-to-date plans are in place.

However, local planning authorities who submitted a plan for examination on or before 12 March 2025 (as applies to NNDC) with an emerging housing requirement that was meeting less than 80% of local housing need (as applies to NNDC, based on the [new standard method for calculating housing need](#)) will be required by regulations¹ to publish their 'Notice to

¹ As of 13 February 2026, these regulations have not yet been laid before Parliament.

Commence Plan-Making' by **30 June 2026** and their **Gateway 1 self-assessment** by **31 October 2026**.

Further details of this are summarised in Sections 2 & 3, and can be read in full using the [plan-making regulations explainer](#).

For NNDC:

- The current adopted plan provides security and statutory coverage for the short-medium term.
- The Council's next plan should start under the new system by 30 June 2026, pending formal enactment of new plan making regulations.
- Starting early will allow NNDC to align with:
 - The consultation draft NPPF (Dec 2025) or the approved NPPF.
 - Emerging regulations for the new 30-month process.
 - Requirements of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 and Planning & Infrastructure Act 2025.

1.5 Conclusion

North Norfolk District Council is in a favourable position following the adoption of its Local Plan on 17 December 2025. With the new plan-making system coming into force in early 2026, NNDC can now:

- Meet the examining inspector's request for early review and the Government's requirement for review by starting to prepare a new Local Plan by 30 June 2026 under the new 30-month system.
- Align with the new national policy framework and new local planning regulations from the outset.
- Benefit from a modernised, streamlined plan-making process supported by clear guidance and digital tools.

This approach will ensure NNDC remains compliant, forward-looking, and well-positioned to manage growth, infrastructure, and environmental considerations over the coming years.

2. Getting ready to prepare a new plan

The new system builds in preparation time and a requirement to demonstrate what preparatory work has been completed **before** starting the 30-month plan making process.

This period ends once the '**Gateway 1 Self Assessment**' is completed, and this marks the formal start of the 30-month timeline. For North Norfolk District Council, the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment must be completed by 31 October 2026.

Before starting the 30-month plan preparation process, the Council must:

- prepare and publish the first version local plan timetable in line with the data standards

- publish a [notice of intention](#) to commence a new plan at least 4 months before you intend to pass through Gateway 1 (by 30 June 2026)
- invite early engagement from stakeholders by running a scoping consultation

Getting ready for a new plan means making progress in the following five areas:

Step 1: Preparing and publishing a local plan timetable

A timetable showing how the Council will prepare and adopt a plan within a 30-month timetable must be published before or at the time of issuing a [notice of intention](#) to commence a new plan.

Step 2: Establishing project management and governance

By Gateway 1, it is recommended that the Council has put in place:

- a robust approach to manage, govern, resource and finance the preparation of the plan that is going to allow you to deliver the local plan timetable
- identified potential risks and have effective processes in place to monitor, manage and mitigate them
- involved all relevant teams and decision makers in designing, testing and signing off your approach

Step 3: Consulting and engaging on the plan

By Gateway 1, the Council must complete a scoping consultation addressing matters including what the plan should contain and how we will engage with stakeholders going forward. Regulations will detail the consultation bodies which must be invited to submit their views. It is recommended to also have in place:

- a strategy for engagement, having regard to government guidance and engaging with key decision makers
- clear processes to increase participation from a diverse range of stakeholders, using digital and traditional methods.

Step 4: Scoping the anticipated content of the plan

By Gateway 1, the Council should have:

- a clear understanding of the proposed scope of the new plan (the main areas or locally specific subject matters it will address, based on data from the existing local plan, as well as information gathering, baselining and early engagement)
- used [baselining](#) and engagement activities to [draft a vision](#), including identifying measurable outcomes to monitor progress towards that vision
- identified and scoped evidence needs and have a plan to deliver this
- an understanding of the likely levels of development required
- an understanding of the high-level and conceptual spatial options to deliver development needs as well as topics that may require specific policies

Step 5: Starting your Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

By Gateway 1, to have identified:

- relevant environmental protection objectives for your SEA at international, national or community level
- other relevant plans or programmes baseline information against which to assess the environmental impact of the plan, including the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be significantly affected, existing environmental problems and key receptors

Guidance on SEA will be available soon.

Readiness checker

A [readiness checker](#) has been devised to enable tracking of progress against the above recommendations, in a RAG status format.

It is recommended that progress is tracked frequently as any red status areas may indicate significant work is required before Gateway 1 can be passed.

Project Initiation

A Projection Initiation Document (PID) should be developed early on to help organise, plan and record the preparatory work for the plan in a structured way, and to be updated as needed.

As a minimum, we expect the PID to include detailed information about:

- the scope of the plan and relationship with other plans
- the strategy for engaging with communities and other key stakeholders
- detailed project planning to underpin the local plan timetable
- our governance and decision-making arrangements
- the resources and skills needed to oversee and deliver the plan
- how the Council will fund work on the plan
- details of key risks to delivering the plan and suitable mitigations

Any such PID will be prepared based on the Council's procedures for managing large projects. A [template](#), however is available.

Further information can be found at: [Getting ready to prepare a new plan - GOV.UK](#)

3. Summary of the New Plan-Making Regulations

The government has published guidance so that LPAs can see the direction of travel for the new plan making system, and an explanation as to what the new plan-making regulations will require for plan-making **once enacted**.

The [Rollout of the new local plan-making system - GOV.UK](#) provides the central government policy basis in relation to commencing local plan making for those LPAs with plans submitted under the 2024 NPPF transitional arrangements (as applies to North Norfolk District Council).

For North Norfolk District Council this guidance states that the Council must publish a notice of intention to commence plan-making by **30 June 2026** and publish the Gateway 1 self-assessment by **31 October 2026**.

3.1 Plan-making regulations explainer

The [plan-making regulations explainer](#) describes what the Government intends to set out in forthcoming regulations. As of 13th February 2026, these regulations have not yet been laid in parliament.

- The proposals may be subject to change prior to the regulations being introduced.
- When published, the regulations and any associated explanatory memorandum will supersede this document.

3.2 Context

- The plan-making reforms are intended to support achieving universal local plan coverage and a faster, clear and more accessible process for preparing plans.
- Commencement regulations for the new plan-making system in England are expected shortly.
- Regulations setting out the detailed process for preparing new-style plans are expected to come into effect early in 2026 (but as of 26 January 2026 these have not yet been laid before parliament). These regulations will supersede the Local Planning Regulations 2012, make consequential amendments to other regulations and set out transitional arrangements for those still preparing plans under the old system (the latter is not applicable to NNDC).

3.3 Local plan-making process

- The diagram below illustrates the sequence of the key local plan-making steps which will be required under Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“PCPA 2004”) (once amended by Schedule 7 to The Act) and the new regulations:



3.4 Preparation, form and content of local plans

- Regulations will require that local planning authorities begin formal preparation of a new local plan **within 5 years** of adopting their previous local plan.
- Local planning authorities who submitted a plan for examination on or before 12 March 2025 (applies to NNDC) with an emerging housing requirement that was meeting less than 80% of local housing need (applied to NNDC, based on the [new standard method for calculating housing need](#)) will be required by the new regulations to publish their 'Notice to Commence Plan-Making' by **30 June 2026** and their Gateway 1 self-assessment by **31 October 2026**.
- Publication of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary is the formal start of the plan-making process.
- A local plan must **contain a vision** for the future of the local planning authority's area, and **no more than ten measurable outcomes** to support that vision.
- It may also include **aims and objectives**, including how the authority proposes to achieve the vision for the area.
- The local plan must be published online in a searchable electronic format.

- If a local plan contains a policy that the local planning authority considers supersedes another policy in the development plan, then the local plan will be required to state this and identify the superseded policy. (Development plans can contain policies from several documents - Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Minerals and Waste Plans, etc. Sometimes new plans introduce policies that update older ones, contradict older ones, or cover the same content in a more recent way. This rule ensures there's no confusion about which policy takes precedence)

3.5 Step 1: Publish local plan timetable

- The Act replaces the existing requirement to adopt a Local Development Scheme with a new requirement to **prepare and maintain a local plan timetable**.
- The regulations will prescribe **plan-making milestones** which all LPAs will report against.
- The regulations will prescribe when LPAs **must revise their timetable**.
- Where necessary, LPAs must revise their timetable every month.
- The timetable must be available alongside the Notice of Intention to commence local plan preparation.
- It must be in **plain English format**, and in line with supporting planning data regulations and technical specifications. See [Local plan timetable | Planning Data](#)

3.6 Step 2: Publish a Notice of Intention to commence local plan preparation

- This notice must be published **at least four months** before publishing the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary (to give stakeholders advanced notice so they can understand when and how they can get involved).
- The notice must include:
 - details of the local planning authority which has prepared the notice, including the area to which their local plan will apply
 - where the local plan timetable is published
 - if the local plan is to be a joint plan, which other authorities are participating in its preparation

3.7 Notifications and consultation summaries

Notifications

- Specific persons will need to be notified of key events in the plan-making process, such as the publication of consultations and the publication of observations or advice following **Gateway 2** and **Gateway 3**.
- The Council will be required to notify stakeholders that have opted-in to be notified at one of the mandatory consultation or key stages in the plan-making process:
 - mandatory consultations
 - publication of gateway observations and advice
 - submission of the local plan for independent examination
 - publication of the recommendations and reasons of the examiner
 - adoption of the local plan

Consultation summaries

Consultation summaries must be published following each consultation period required under the regulations. Each summary must include:

- details of the bodies that were invited to make representations.
- how they were invited to make representations.
- a summary of the main issues raised in the representations received
- how the Council has, to date, had regard to the representations received.

A **summary of scoping** consultation must be published prior to the consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence.

A **summary of consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence** must be published prior to the seeking of observations and advice at **Gateway 2**.

A **summary of consultation on the proposed local plan** must be published prior to the seeking of observations and advice at **Gateway 3**.

3.8 Step 3: Scoping consultation

To provide meaningful early engagement in the plan-making process, representations must be invited on matters including what the plan should contain and how future engagement on the plan should be carried out. This must take place after or alongside publishing the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation. Representations must be invited from defined general and specific consultation bodies and representations can be made by any persons, including local residents.

The regulations will not specify a minimum consultation period for this stage, but it must conclude prior to the publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment summary.

3.9 Step 4: Gateway 1: Self-assessment of readiness for local plan preparation

LPA will be required to prepare and publish a self-assessment summary which sets out details of their readiness for local plan preparation. It will cover:

- project management and governance arrangements
- the timetable for the preparation of the plan
- consultation and engagement
- anticipated local plan content
- environmental assessments

The self-assessment summary must be published **no earlier than 4 months** after the publication of the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation and, in any event, must be after the conclusion of the scoping consultation.

The [Rollout of the new local plan-making system - GOV.UK](#) makes clear that LPA must complete Gateway 1 Self-Assessment by 31 October 2026 where:

- the plan was **submitted for examination on, or before 12 March 2025**

- the housing requirement in the plan as submitted for examination was **meeting less than 80 per cent of local housing need, calculated using the standard method in national planning practice guidance 2024**
- the plan as submitted did not relate to an area in which there was an operative **Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)**

As all of the above apply to North Norfolk District Council, the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment must be completed by **31 October 2026**.

Publishing the Gateway 1 self-assessment marks the start of the statutory 30-month plan-making timetable.

3.10 Step 5: Consultation of proposed local plan content and evidence

Between publication of the scoping consultation summary and the beginning of Gateway 2, the Council must, for a minimum six-week period, consult on their proposed local plan content and evidence.

The proposed local plan content and evidence relevant to this consultation will include:

- proposed vision and proposed measurable outcomes
- proposed aims and objectives
- a summary of the proposed approach in relation to planning policies
- a summary of the evidence intended to support the local plan
- any further supporting information considered to be appropriate

3.11 Map of proposed local plan policies

A map visually illustrating the geographical application of proposed local plan policies must be made available for the consultation on the proposed local plan. It must also be submitted for Gateway 3 and examination of the plan.

3.12 Step 6: Gateway 2: observations or advice from an appointed person

Prior to consulting on the proposed local plan, the Council must seek 'observations and advice' from the Gateway 2 assessor.

They must seek observations and advice in relation to progress towards preparing a sound plan, in line with the tests of soundness set out in the National Planning Policy Framework; meeting some of the Gateway 3 prescribed requirements; and what further work could be carried out by the Council.

The Council must submit to the Gateway 2 assessor the documents and information that it considers necessary to seek this feedback.

As soon as is reasonably practicable after receiving the observations and advice, the Council must publish them; notify any person who requested to be notified; and send a copy of the observations and advice to any body or person identified or referred to in them.

3.13 Step 7: Consultation on the proposed local plan

Between Gateways 2 and 3, the Council must consult on the proposed local plan submission documents, including (but not limited to):

- the proposed local plan
- the map of proposed local plan policies
- details of the evidence gathered to support the proposed local plan
- details relating to the scoping consultation and consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence, including a summary of the main issues raised by respondents and how those main issues have been addressed in the proposed local plan

3.14 Conformity with operative spatial development strategy

Where a local plan is being prepared within an area with an operative spatial development strategy (SDS), the Council would be required to consult the relevant spatial development strategy authority to seek their views about whether the proposed local plan is in general conformity with the strategy.

Note: It is not considered that a SDS would be operable in North Norfolk within the 30-month timetable for preparing a new-style Local Plan.

3.15 Step 8: Gateway 3: prescribed requirements assessment by an appointed person

The regulations will require the Council to seek 'observations and advice' from the Gateway 3 assessor on whether the prescribed requirements are met in relation to the proposed local plan. The proposed plan must meet the prescribed requirements (to be set out in the regulations) in order to pass Gateway 3.

The Council must submit a 'Statement of Compliance' to inform the Gateway 3 assessment. This will set out matters including how the proposed plan complies with the prescribed requirements.

A statement of soundness must also be submitted, detailing how the Council considers that its evidence demonstrates that the plan is sound. Soundness will be tested at the examination. The Council must also submit further documents, including:

- a statement setting out a summary of the consultation and engagement activities
- a summary of consultation on the proposed local plan
- an environmental report
- a statement setting out the practical arrangements demonstrating readiness for examination.

The Gateway 3 assessor must provide their conclusion on whether each prescribed requirement is met in writing, together with an explanation for each conclusion.

Following confirmation from the Gateway 3 assessor that the prescribed requirements have been met, the Council must make available both a statement confirming that Gateway 3 has been completed and the Gateway 3 submission documents as they were submitted to the Gateway 3 assessor.

Where a Gateway 3 assessor concludes that the proposed local plan does not meet one or more of the prescribed requirements, the Council will be required to repeat Gateway 3.

3.16 Step 9: Examination

When the Gateway 3 assessor concludes that the proposed local plan meets the prescribed requirements, it must then be submitted for independent examination.

The regulations will set out the documents that must be submitted to accompany the local plan, including:

- the map of proposed local plan policies
- a Gateway 3 completion statement
- a summary of the consultation and engagement activities carried out
- a summary of consultation on the proposed local plan
- a statement of compliance
- a statement of soundness
- an environmental report

Prior to the opening of an examination hearing, the Council must make available the date, time and place of where the hearing is to be held and notify any person who requested to be notified.

The purpose of the examination is to determine whether it is reasonable to conclude that the local plan is sound, in line with the tests of soundness set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Where the appointed examiner identifies that further work is required for the plan to be sound, and decides that the examination is to be paused, the regulations will set out that the maximum length of the pause is 6 months.

The Council must publish the recommendations and reasons received from the examiner as soon as is reasonably practicable after receipt and notify any person who requested to be notified.

3.17 Step 10: Adoption, withdrawal or revocation of a local plan

When adopting a local plan, as soon as reasonably practicable after adoption, the Council must make available:

- the local plan
- an adoption statement

A copy of the adoption statement must be sent to any person who requested to be notified of adoption of the plan.

The regulations will set out the steps the Council must take on withdrawal or revocation of a local plan.

After a local plan has been submitted for examination, the Council may only withdraw the plan if the examiner recommends that they do so or if the Secretary of State directs that the plan is to be withdrawn.

Resources:

[Rollout of the new local plan-making system - GOV.UK](#)

[Getting ready to prepare a new plan - GOV.UK](#)

[Planning to Plan in the New Plan-Making System | Local Government Association](#)

[Local Plan Project Initiation Document \(PID\) Template and Guidance | Local Government Association](#)

[Gathering baselining information to inform a local plan - GOV.UK](#)

[Preparing a local plan vision - GOV.UK](#)

[Plan-making regulations explainer - GOV.UK](#)

[Giving notice of your plan-making - GOV.UK](#)

[Create or update a local plan using the new system - GOV.UK](#)

[Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#)

[Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 \(Part 3, Chapter 1\)](#)

[Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 \(Part 3, Chapter 2\)](#)

[Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK](#)