

# Neighbourhood *Planning*



*January*

## Local Plan Update

### Progress with work on the new Local Plan

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) are progressing with preparation of a new Local Plan to replace the existing Local Plan (Part One and Part Two). The Plan will cover the whole borough and will set a vision for at least the next 15 years.

It will set out the amount of new housing and employment development required and where this new housing and employment will go. The Plan will also cover other types of development such as retail, leisure, minerals and waste.

Consultation was undertaken on the Issues and Options document from 4 July to 29 August 2025. During the consultation period over 16,500 comments were received from more than 2,700 different respondents. We are currently in the process of reviewing the comments and preparing updated policies and site allocations.

### Next steps

The Local Development Scheme indicates that statutory public consultation (6 weeks) prior to submission of the Local Plan for examination will take place in Autumn 2026, with the aim of submitting the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination by 31 December 2026.

Information on progress with the new Local Plan can be viewed at: [Local Plan Issues and Options \(Regulation 18\)](#)

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## Other updates

### Planning and Infrastructure Act

The Planning and Infrastructure Act received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. The Act aims to streamline the planning process, enhance infrastructure delivery and promote sustainable development, particularly in terms of house building. Further information is available at: [Landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill becomes law - GOV.UK](#)

The changes introduced by the Act include the introduction of a system of strategic planning (known as spatial development strategies) that will operate at a sub-regional level. This could be undertaken at a Cheshire and Warrington level if a Mayoral Combined Authority is established through devolution proposals.

### Current National Planning Policy Framework Consultation

On 16 December 2025 the Government published a draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Consultation on the draft NPPF runs until 10 March 2026.

The draft includes major changes to the NPPF, including national decision-making policies (NDMPs) and revising approaches to housing, Green Belt and plan-making. Neighbourhood Planning remains part of the proposed restructured plan-making system and made neighbourhood plans will still form part of the statutory development plan. However, there will be a shift in what neighbourhood plans can influence and what they should contain.

Policy PM5 in the draft NPPF identifies that neighbourhood plans allow local communities to plan positively for their areas by identifying and addressing community priorities that can be met or supported through the planning system. It identifies that “they should do this by:

- a. Allocating land to meet the development needs of their designated area, where it is appropriate to do so; and
- b. Setting out policies which address particular local issues, these should relate to site-specific matters or, where appropriate, may cover wider issues such as the provision of infrastructure and community facilities, regeneration opportunities, design requirements (including design codes), local environmental improvements and the conservation of local heritage assets.”

Policy PM6 also states that “neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than provided for in other parts of the development plan for the area.” It is made clear in policy PM6 that plan-makers should avoid unnecessary duplication of other parts of the development plan and should not duplicate, substantively restate or modify the content of national decision-making policies unless directed by other policies in the NPPF. This is a significant change and will have major impacts on the scope and content of any neighbourhood plans prepared under the new NPPF.

Policy PM17 refers to the need for neighbourhood plans to meet certain basic conditions and other legal requirements before they can come into force. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 referred to changes

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to the basic conditions, but the additional legislation relating to this change has not yet been introduced. As such, the basic conditions currently remain the same.

The proposed national decision-making policies are set out in Chapter 3 of the draft NPPF and cover issues such as: preparing/determining planning proposals; sustainable development; principle of development within/outside settlements; climate change; meeting the need for homes; providing affordable homes; exception sites; isolated homes in the countryside; meeting the need for business land and premises; rural business development; town centres and uses outside town centres; renewable and low carbon energy development; making effective use of land; achieving appropriate densities; residential extensions; Green Belt; design; access and parking; public rights of way; community facilities; Local Green Space; flood risk; natural environment, trees and landscapes; biodiversity; and heritage assets.

In relation to the determination of planning applications and presumption in favour of sustainable development, policy S6 identifies that "for development proposals involving the provision of housing, the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects where a proposal would conflict with a neighbourhood plan, provided the following apply:

- a. The neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and
- b. The neighbourhood plan contains allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see policy HO2)."

Policy S6 is worded differently to paragraph 14 in the existing NPPF but sets out similar points – apart from the fact that the current NPPF refers to the need for the neighbourhood plan to include policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement, rather than just allocations.

In relation to the presumption in favour of sustainable development whilst a plan (Local Plan or neighbourhood plan) is being prepared – proposed NPPF policy DM4 states that "development proposals should not be refused on the grounds of being premature, other than in the limited circumstances where both:

- a. The development proposal is so substantial, or its cumulative effect alongside other development proposals would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging plan; and
- b. The emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area. An emerging plan is unlikely to be in an advanced stage if a draft spatial development strategy, local plan, minerals and waste plan or supplementary plan has yet to be submitted for examination; or, in the case of a neighbourhood plan, the local planning authority publicity period on the draft plan has not ended."

Policy DM4 is worded slightly differently to the relevant sections (paragraphs 50 and 51) of the current NPPF, but they both set out very similar information regarding prematurity.

Proposed NPPF policy HO2 refers to housing requirement figures for neighbourhood planning areas. This is similar to paragraphs 69-70 of the current NPPF but also sets out that local planning authorities should avoid setting housing requirements figures for neighbourhood planning areas at nil, unless specific criteria are met.

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The draft NPPF also proposes other changes, such as expectations for higher density developments around railway stations and a change to the approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

It is not clear at this stage how long it will take for Government to review the consultation responses, amend the NPPF and for the new NPPF to be put in place. However, the draft states that neighbourhood plans that have been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 on or before the date of publication of the new NPPF should be prepared in accordance with the version of the NPPF published in December 2024. Any neighbourhood plans that are not submitted by then must comply with the new Framework. This means that any neighbourhood plans currently under preparation may need significant amendments if they are not submitted before the new NPPF is published.

We encourage you to read the proposed draft NPPF and submit comments to government. The proposed NPPF and explanation of the changes can be viewed at: [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#) Comments can be submitted to Government online or via email or in writing.

Groups at early stages of neighbourhood plan preparation may wish to wait for clarity on the final NPPF to avoid producing draft policies that need significant amendments. It is also recommended that any groups involved in drafting or reviewing neighbourhood plan policies aim to focus on place-specific detail and avoid duplicating the generic development management policies set out in the draft NPPF. For neighbourhood plans that are close to submission, they may be considered under the current NPPF (depending on timings), but once the new NPPF is published, any neighbourhood plan policies that are inconsistent with NPPF policies would be given very little weight in planning decisions.

**Contact:** For more information on neighbourhood planning in Cheshire West and Chester contact the Planning Policy team at Cheshire West and Chester Council:

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