

Milly Southworth

From: Nic Phillips <Nic.Phillips@cornwall.gov.uk> on behalf of positiveplanning <positiveplanning@cornwall.gov.uk>
Sent: 29 January 2026 11:46
Subject: Planning News for Local Councils and Agents - latest quarterly newsletter now published

Information Classification: PUBLIC

Dear Clerks and Planning contacts

We're pleased to let you know that our latest quarterly planning newsletter is now available at: [Planning News for Local Councils and Agents](#) – Winter 2026.

You can find this and past newsletters, plus the Neighbourhood Planning newsletter at [Planning news - Cornwall Council](#).

Please cascade to your local councillors. We always send these emails to all clerks and those on our planning contact list but if you wish to receive notification of these newsletters direct to your own local council inbox as well, please contact positiveplanning@cornwall.gov.uk in the first instance.

Kind regards

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www.cornwall.gov.uk 'Onen hag oll'

Please note that I work part-time. My normal working days are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays.

To keep up-to-date with changes in Planning, please check [Planning and Building Control - Cornwall Council](#) and [What's new in planning - Cornwall Council](#)

Please let us know if you need any particular assistance from us, such as facilities to help mobility, vision or hearing, or information in a different format.

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Briefing note

New Plan-making system launch

November 2025

This note has been written to provide an explanation regarding announcements made by Mathew Pennycook MP on the 27th of November regarding implementation plans for the new plan-making system.

The explanatory content published on GOV.uk is currently only draft and feedback is invited until March 2026. This is not a formal consultation but responses will shape final guidance.

Formal regulations for plan-making will follow early next year. This note will be supplemented as further detail is published by Government.

What are the important changes?

As previously announced, the new system developed by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will see the following changes:

- A 30-month local plan process and end-to-end framework for creating and adopting local plans. Only two years of that process is plan preparation – 6 months is reserved for Examination in Public.
- A three-gateway system with checkpoints at Gateway 1 (scope and strategic priorities), Gateway 2 (draft plan), and Gateway 3 (readiness for examination)
- Plans will be digital with standardised data formats
- Plans will be based around a vision and 10 monitoring points – these need to be agreed through engagement at the start of the process.
- The plan-making process will be supported at a higher level by **Spatial Development Strategies (SDS)**, but further detail on the required geographic coverage, responsible body and process for these will be published separately
- The Duty to Cooperate is abolished and will be replaced a 'strategic alignment process' that is yet to be defined.
- The requirement for a Statement of Community Involvement is replaced by an expectation of increased engagement through a process to be agreed with consultees at the beginning of the process.

- Environmental assessments continue, with Environmental Outcome Reports expected in the future. In practice this may mean changes during the time a plan is being prepared.
- National development policies will no longer be statutory, but will be expected to guide the content of the plan.
- Authorities must start a new plan by October 2026/April 2027, but may start as soon as the new system is implemented without the phased starts previously proposed.

Dedicated guidance and tools to support plan-makers will be provided over the coming weeks. New regulations will soon be laid to underpin this approach with an anticipated start date of January/February 2026.

What does this mean for plan making in Cornwall?

- **Accelerated Timelines:** The work programme for the plan must meet the 30-month deadline. For an authority as large as Cornwall this will be a particularly challenging timetable within which to develop a large number of allocations to meet the new housing requirement.
- **Digital Skills:** Plans will be map-based and digital-first, so GIS and digital engagement tools become critical.
- **Early Engagement:** community and stakeholder involvement will need to be front-loaded to meet gateway requirements.
- **Strategic Thinking:** The changes to create a Spatial Development Strategy and the removal of the 'duty to cooperate' mean that careful consideration must be given to comply with the new alignment policies for cross-boundary issues. It is not yet clear what the boundary will be for this in Cornwall, but it potentially will apply only to Cornwall, strengthening the need for agreement with adjoining authorities.

New guidance and tools

In addition to the '[Plan-making regulations explainer](#)', a series of dedicated guidance and tools to support plan-makers bring forward a local plan in the new system have also been published in draft. These build on the new dedicated plan making guidance page '[create or update a local plan](#)' which was published in February 2025.

In addition, a new National Planning Policy Framework and national development management policies will be published later in December. These will impact the content of the plan and a briefing will be provided once they are published.

Potential Timetable

Based on current information, we anticipate that subject to Growth Board approval, a new local plan could be commenced in March/April 2026. This would then have an anticipated adoption date of around February 2029.



Note: All times are approximate and depend on confirmation of final detail of proposals for launch of new plan-making systems by MHCLG

Immediate Programme

We are currently in the informal evidence gathering stage of plan-making and will continue to build our evidence base ahead of a report to Growth Board in March 2026. That report will provide a summary of the evidence collected, progress made and seek approval to formally give notice and start a new Local Plan in April 2026.

The current programme is in line with the 30 month programme period set out in the Ministerial Statement and shown above. This includes informal engagement of a range of stakeholders to scope the content of the plan and engagement approach over the spring and summer of 2026. This will inform the development of a draft vision and strategy, which will be consulted on in Autumn/winter 2026/27.

Work on further evidence gathering and the drafting of the plan will be undertaken over the course of 2027 with an Examination in late summer/autumn 2028.

The programme has sufficient flexibility to adjust to implementation changes to the plan-making system by MHCLG and will be subject to regular review to accommodate this.



Briefing note

National planning changes and the introduction of national planning policies

December 2025

Government published a draft new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 16th December 2025. This sets out revised guidance and decision-making policies for planning across England. The policies are not yet in force, and the introduction of the changes is subject to a consultation that ends on 10th March 2026.

This note has been written to provide a brief summary of the key changes to national planning policy in England. We will provide a more detailed briefing early in 2026 with a set of suggested responses.

The draft document may be viewed at: [National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation](#)

What are the main changes in the NPPF?

Overall, the draft retains the core approach of the current (December 2024) NPPF, including mandatory housing targets, five-year land supply, densification, and strengthened sustainability. The government rhetoric is that the changes are to deliver more certain, consistent and streamlined policies with a clear push to reduce duplication and deviation from national policy. The main changes can be summarised as:

- Embedding National DM policies (NDMPs) within the NPPF to standardise policy across all local authorities;
- Formalising a permanent presumption in favour of development this means brownfield urban sites for example area acceptable 'by default' - this applies even if you have a 5YLS (which wasn't the case previously);
- It creates two sets of policies – those focussed on Local plan writing and those focused on decision making; and
- Embedding the 30 month Local Plan timetable.

- Some aspects of these changes are very clearly aimed at greenbelt authorities in the southeast where development is stymied rather than places like Cornwall, this is very clear in the proposal to support development around some train stations which explicitly includes the green belt. Whilst this doesn't impact on us as we have no green belt it is a very strong move by a government to force those areas to accept more development.

Other changes proposed

- Outcome on planning committee reform is promised in early 2026, alongside a consultation on draft regulations on our national scheme of delegation.
- A new category of medium development between 10-49 homes or sites up to 2.5 ha. This is designed to support SMEs, with some simplification of requirements.
- Requirement for proportionate information for decision making on minor and, by implication, medium development sites. Only essential validation requirements and local lists. An appendix makes clear the studies potentially required to meet national policies. It does not cover all aspect of legislative requirement notably not covering ecology.
- It restates the core principles that planning decisions should be based on whether development would be an acceptable use of land, and that other regulatory regimes should be assumed to operate effectively.
- Seeks to further standardise viability information.
- Sets out that sites below 0.2 ha to be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain with regulations to follow on this in the new year. Defra will also consult rapidly on an additional targeted exemption for brownfield residential development, testing the definition of land to which it should apply and a range of site sizes up to 2.5 hectares
- Government will provide a one-off amount of between £70-£90K funding and support to some eligible LPAs to support the delivery of major planning applications. Today, we have been notified that we are eligible but securing this subject will be subject to the submission of an EoI in the new year.

Breakdown of key provisions

1. Changes to the purpose of the NPPF and introduction of national decision making policies

The new NPPF is based around a set of clearly marked policies. Much of the content is similar, even if the formatting is visually very different. These policies are separated into plan-making and development management decisions. The policies are set out much like a local plan, making it clearer which are policies or statements.

The draft introduces the long-promised National Decision Making Policies (NDMPs). These are common development management standards embedded into the NPPF as material considerations. It is important to note that these are not mandatory policies (i.e. not automatically replacing local plan policies), but where local policies are 'inconsistent' to

those in the NPPF they should carry “very little weight”. The NPPF also does not want plan-makers to “duplicate, substantively restate or modify” what’s in NDMPs, which could restrict the content of any future Cornwall Local Plan.

Local plans are restricted in setting quantitative standards for new development to infrastructure provisions, affordable housing requirements, tenure mix on 150+ home schemes, parking, design and placemaking. They should not repeat building regulations other than for accessibility standards (at least 40% for M4(2) and (3)) and water efficiency. It would appear that future standards would not be able to extend beyond these measures where they would impact on other regulatory regimes such as building regulations.

2. Presumption in Favour of Development

The 2025 draft reinforces the presumption in favour of suitably located development, by establishing a rules-based default position that extends the ‘tilted balance’ principle and limits discretionary refusals unless specific protections such as local green space are threatened.

The presumption would apply to all development proposals within settlements, unless the “harms would substantially outweigh the benefits”. i.e. a default yes for brownfield. Outside settlements and where the housing delivery test or 5-year land supply can’t be met, development boundaries would be given minimum weight and proposals that create a logical extension and are well connected to services school and transport will be supported.

The contribution towards meeting unmet need for ‘accommodation’ would attract ‘substantial weight’ examples of this could be proposals for specialist and supported housing. This is subtly different to the previous tests applied by the NPPF.

The existing provisions regarding protection for certain NDPs are retained, but these apply to a very small number of plans in Cornwall.

3. Introducing the new local and regional plan-making systems

The document sets out policies for how new style local plans must be produced. This will be covered in separate papers as we start to understand better how the new plans will have to be produced. However, we do know that the 30-month timetable and guidelines on content remain in place. There is an added focus on NDMP alignment and nationally consistent policies during plan examinations.

The document also discusses potential arrangements for developing Spatial Development Strategies. These will set out a plan for 20 years, including broad locations for growth,

including new settlements, supporting economic growth and nature recovery and the type, extent and broad location of strategic infrastructure requirements.

But note that English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will need to become an Act and regulations for an SDS will still need to be introduced before any formal work starts on providing this layer of plan-making in Cornwall. SDSs were intended to coordinate work amongst the constituent Councils of combined authorities but if Cornwall becomes a foundational authority, we believe that would result in the geography for our SDS being solely Cornwall. This does mean we would be in quite a unique and positive position – where we would also be the authors of our own SDS at the same time as the Local Plan. None of that means we should not still ensure coordination and alignment with neighbouring authorities.

4. Housing Delivery & Supply

Housing land supply policies from the 2024 NPPF remain intact including the requirement to demonstrate a 5-year supply against the standard housing methodology and emphasises accelerating delivery through the NDMP framework.

There is strong expectation around planning for a wide range of housing needs, including affordable housing with specific reference to social rent as a clear part of the viability mix, meeting other specialist needs and for Gypsies and Travellers.

At least 20% of the housing requirement should be accommodated on sites no larger than 1 hectare and 2.5 hectares.

5. Economic, Infrastructure & Environmental Focus

The draft continues to support labs, gigafactories, data centres, and digital/logistics infrastructure. These are reinforced through national policies.

Climate considerations are increased and set an expectation for a ‘net-zero future’ with increasing detail on water, energy and communications infrastructure resilience. However additional controls through local level standards are limited.

The draft suggests standardised requirements in viability assessments and thresholds for onsite energy/data centres as part of national policies.

6. Design, Placemaking & Local Identity

There are few significant changes to design standards, but good design is clearly stated to include good access to services etc rather than purely aesthetic standards.

The local plan should set a vision for desired design and placemaking outcomes. This may include the development of design codes; however national development management policies include more specific sets of design criteria to increase consistency. This may in turn require us to revise our design guidance.

The question of harm to designated heritage assets is now split into three categories: 'harm', 'substantial harm', and 'total loss'. The new definition of 'substantial harm' is "where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance".

7. Transport, Connectivity & Density

The document increases the importance given to a 'vision-led' approach to transport planning. This should be included in the local plan vision. NDMPs are expected to include national policy standards for sustainable transport expectations. Maximum parking standards may be set where this would support the use of sustainable transport modes. The Government's Connectivity tool should be used alongside other evidence to assess connectivity.

There is a strong push for densification and connectivity: Beyond station corridors, the document encourages urban infill, vertical extensions, and redevelopment under NDMP principles. Increased density of housing, particularly around high-quality transport networks, including rail stations is particularly supported. Density standards could be set across parts or the whole of the plan area where this is justified.

What does this mean for Cornwall and what happens next?

This briefing note has been assembled immediately as changes are announced. It cannot capture all changes stated or implied and further interpretations will emerge over the coming days and weeks.

The NPPF and national DM policies are published for consultation and do not formally apply until they are published following the consultation period between 6th December 2025 and 10th March 2026.

Other information such as that relating to planning committees and formal changes to BNG are expected in the new year, we will provide updates as required.



Neighbourhood Planning Newsletter – January 2026



Welcome to the January update

We hope you are all safe and well following Storm Goretti. In this edition we've got important information on changes to the NPPF and local councils mapping. We'll also be giving an update on neighbourhood priorities statements, Local Plan development and updates, Calls for Sites, neighbourhood planning assistance and the latest neighbourhood planning progress. You can also view online only [News and Updates](#) and [Planning News for Local Council and Agents](#). Contact us at neighbourhoodplanning@cornwall.gov.uk.



National Planning Policy Framework
Plan-making and national decision-making policies

December 2025

Changes to the NPPF

Government published a draft new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 16th December 2025. This sets out revised guidance and decision-making policies for planning across England. The policies are not yet in force, and the introduction of the changes is subject to a consultation that ends on 10th March 2026.

This note has been written to provide a brief summary of the key changes to national planning policy in England. We will provide a more detailed briefing early in 2026 with a set of suggested responses.

The draft document may be viewed at: [National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation](#)

Overall, the draft retains the core approach of the current (December 2024) NPPF, including mandatory housing targets, requirement to maintain a five-year land supply and strengthened sustainability. The main changes can be summarised as:

- Creating a series of National Decision Making Policies (NDMPs) to standardise policy across all local authorities;
- Formalising a permanent presumption in favour of development within settlements (development of sites within settlements generally acceptable 'by default') and certain types of development outside, even where a 5 year supply of housing is available (which wasn't the case previously);
- Embedding the 30 month Local Plan timetable and allowing us to start our new local plan.

The policies are not yet in place, but early indications are that they will potentially replace or reduce the weight that can be given to a number of local plan and neighbourhood plan policies. We are still working through the policies to understand the implications and will advise in a later edition of this newsletter.



Local councils interactive mapping

We offer an interactive mapping service to town and parish councils through the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA).

Please can you let us know which of these mapping layers and functions that you find useful and any that you might find useful in the future. Please provide us with your feedback at neighbourhoodplanning@cornwall.gov.uk by **5 March 2026**. This will help us to review and make any changes to our mapping so we would like to know your views on what is vital to you.

These are the layers that we have on the [local councils mapping](#):

Agricultural land classification

Biodiversity action plan

Care homes - with nursing

Care homes - without nursing

Cornish rivers

Cornwall development plan site allocations

Cornwall land and property gazetteer

Dentists

Employment allocation

Former community network areas

General practices

Hedge and field boundary heights

Historic settlements

Hospitals

Housing allocation

Housing allocation unquantified

Housing permissions annual snapshot

Japanese knotweed

Landscape Character Areas 2007 - 2022

Main rivers

Mixed use allocation

Open greenspace

Open greenspace access points

Open space standards area boundaries

Principal Residence Boundaries (as designated in Neighbourhood Development Plans)

River bank top 20m buffer

Road traffic collisions - 5yr casualties

Neighbourhood Planning

January 2026

Safeguarded allocation

Small area population predictions: 2015 population prediction 0-19
 Small area population predictions: 2015 population prediction 20-64
 Small area population predictions: 2015 population prediction 65 plus
 Small area population predictions: 2015 population prediction total
 Small area population predictions: 2020 population prediction 0-19
 Small area population predictions: 2020 population prediction 20-64
 Small area population predictions: 2020 population prediction 65 plus
 Small area population predictions: 2020 population prediction total
 Small area population predictions: 2025 population prediction 0-19
 Small area population predictions: 2025 population prediction 20-64
 Small area population predictions: 2025 population prediction 65 plus
 Small area population predictions: 2025 population prediction total
 Small area population predictions: 2030 population prediction 0-19
 Small area population predictions: 2030 population prediction 20-64
 Small area population predictions: 2030 population prediction 65 plus
 Small area population predictions: 2030 population prediction total

Speed limits

Strategic open spaces within study boundaries

Street names

Unoccupied households

Urban greenspace

With the following functions:

Street View

Select

Measure

Drawing



Neighbourhood priorities statements – An exciting opportunity for towns and parishes to shape Cornwall's future

This spring, Neighbourhood Priorities Statements will be rolled out to all town and parish councils across Cornwall, offering a new and meaningful way for local communities to influence planning and development in their area.

Following a successful pilot phase, several parishes – and one town – have already produced draft statements and will shortly be consulting their communities, others are still finalising their drafts. The early feedback has shown that Neighbourhood Priorities Statements provide a clear and accessible way for councils to capture what matters most to the people they represent.

We are currently refining the guidance and templates that will support councils through this process. These resources, alongside the finalised statements from our pilot parishes, will be published once they have been formally submitted, ensuring all councils can benefit from shared learning and examples of good practice.

We strongly encourage **all town and parish councils** to take part. Producing a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement gives councils a direct opportunity to:

- clearly express local priorities and aspirations
- reflect the views and needs of residents
- and ensure those priorities are considered as part of the Local Plan process.

By participating, councils can help shape our new Local Plan and ensure that local voices are heard at a strategic level. This is a chance for communities to influence policy and to set out a positive vision for their area.

Further information about Neighbourhood Priorities Statements and how to get involved is available here: [Make a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement - Cornwall Council](#)



Local Plan development and updates

The Ministerial statement and new NPPF published in December means that we will soon be able to start our new Local Plan. We think that regulations will be published in February and will be presenting an item to the Cornwall Growth Board on the 16th March asking to serve notice that we are starting the new plan in about April.

Neighbourhood Planning

January 2026

Once this happens, we will start a new round of engagement to help establish the scope of the plan (what it should cover, issues, opportunities etc) and will publish a plan setting out how we will do this, including where and when.

In the meantime we will continue to collect evidence and hold conversations to understand what the plan will need to do next.



Welcome to the Cornwall Council public consultation page.

Please choose the consultation you wish to complete:

[Call for Sites 2024](#)

Ends on 31/12/2026 00:00:00

350 days left!

[City/Town/Parish Council Consultation](#)

Ends on 31/12/2026 00:00:00

350 days left!

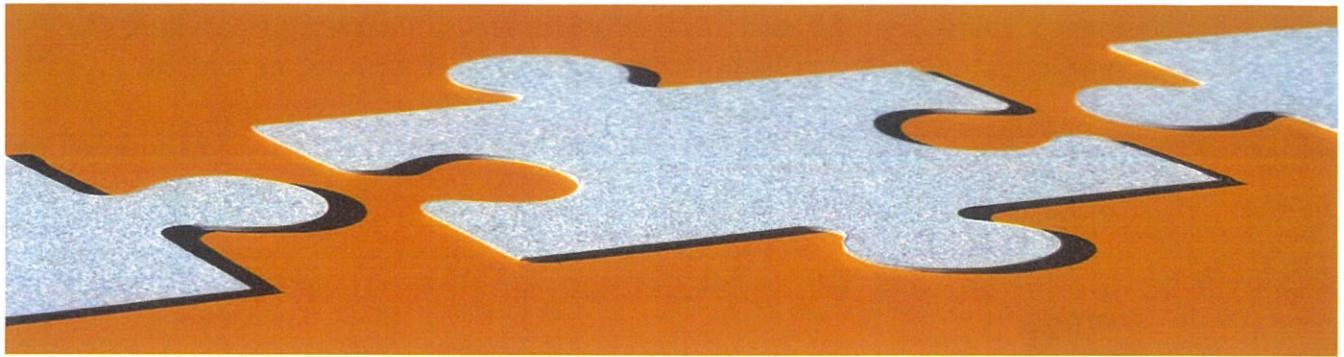
Calls for Sites

Our Calls for Sites remain open throughout 2026. Thank you for the site suggestions and comments on sites received so far. If you are considering putting forward a site through our Call for *Large* Sites route (for the sustainable development of 800 homes or more with infrastructure) we ask that you let us know your intention to make a submission as soon as possible to assist our planning. Details on how to make a submission are available on our [Call for Sites web page](#).

If you are proposing a site through a Neighbourhood Plan allocation, you do not need to submit the land through the Calls for Sites as well – but you are welcome to do so if you have additional information.

You can also view our assessment methodology and the sites that have already been given an initial high-level assessment on this page. These assessments do not change the status of any land but will inform the next Local Plan, including strategic options for the distribution of development and site allocations. We are welcoming local council comments on these draft site appraisals via our [local council consultation](#). If you have difficulty providing comments on sites by the end of this month please drop us a line to discuss. You will be consulted on any further sites screened into the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment from the Call for Sites and again on any sites which are candidate allocations once work on the Local Plan is formally underway.

Please email localplan@cornwall.gov.uk if you have any queries.



Neighbourhood planning assistance

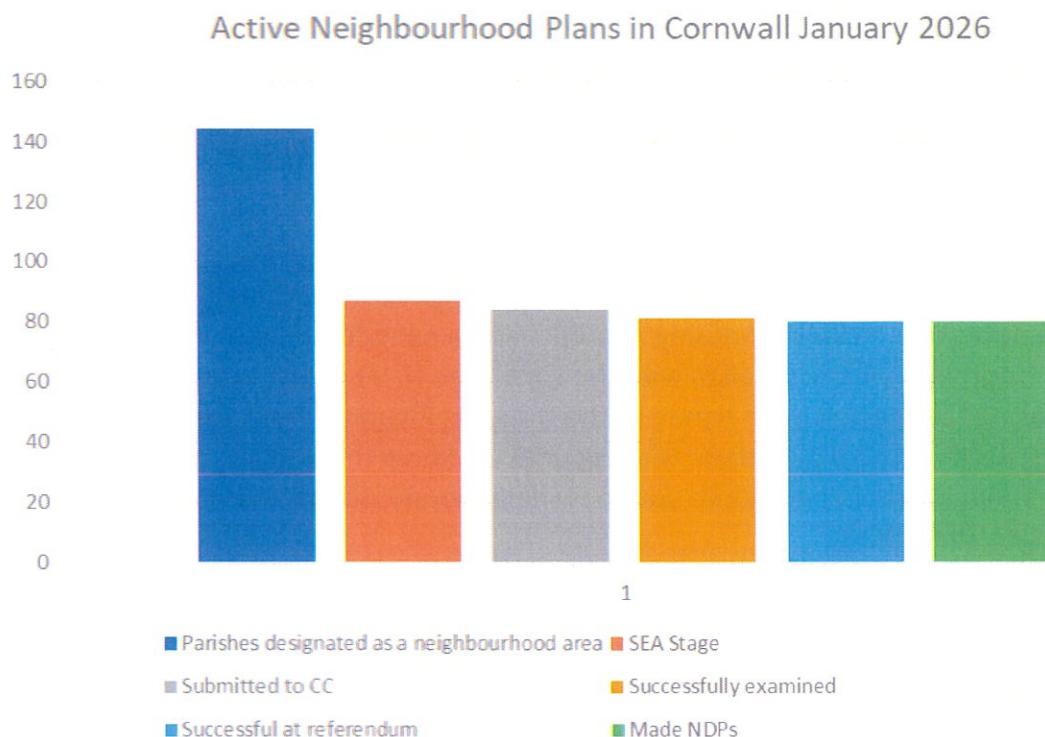
Our advice is to wait before reviewing your neighbourhood plan. There is significant change proposed to the planning system including housing numbers and a need for us to produce a new Local Plan. Your neighbourhood plan must align with the Local Plan to be legally approved without hindering our new housing targets and have regard to the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) December 2025](#) which is in consultation. Waiting until we know the impacts of those changes will ensure that any work that goes into your new neighbourhood plan from allocations to policies will be up-to-date and robust.

The Government has confirmed that it is unable to commission new neighbourhood planning support for 2025 onwards. We would advise you to consider whether it will be possible for you to complete the review without financial support from Government.

If you are significantly advanced with your neighbourhood plan we can offer the following free support:

- Advice and help from reviewing drafts, advising on content to evidence requirements
- Confirm which national and Cornwall policies are important and help with drafting policy text
- Share data and evidence and resolve issues
- Provide support such as help in laying out and illustrating a plan
- Help with mapping from the local area and the site allocations to local green space allocations
- Check the neighbourhood plan before formal submission. (For example by Development Officers and the Policy Team). We also screen it to see if it requires [Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\)](#)
- Provide advice on who you need to consult to help the draft plan meet the basic conditions (tests, including whether they have been consulted on and have evidence)
- Provide advice on the legal requirements for neighbourhood planning. Check that your neighbourhood plan meets the statutory requirements
- We carry out a further Regulation 16 public consultation
- Organise the examination
- Hold the neighbourhood planning referendum

Book an appointment to talk to us, ask questions, seek advice or just to update us on where you are. Email us at neighbourhoodplanning@cornwall.gov.uk to arrange a virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams.



Note that some neighbourhood areas cover more than one parish; the total number of parishes in a designated neighbourhood plan area is 142.

1 The post examination modified plans are published and the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities and Local Government has updated [planning guidance](#) to indicate that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendums can be given significant weight in decision-making. A full list of made plans can be found on our webpages.

Neighbourhood Plans in Cornwall – January 2026

Latest activity

You can find more information about neighbourhood plan updates on our [neighbourhood planning activity in Cornwall](#) page.

Any questions?

Contact us at neighbourhoodplanning@cornwall.gov.uk