

Agenda 16 c)

COUNCIL

19/03/26

## Milly Southworth

**From:** Julie Calleya <Julie.Calleya@cornwall.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 11 March 2026 10:27  
**To:** CornwallALC Enquiries  
**Cc:** Training Cornwall ALC; Mary Gosling  
**Subject:** Local Plan and Local Councils involvement

Information Classification: CONTROLLED

Dear Member Councils,

As the Cornwall Local Plan develops, CALC have been approached to request clarity from Cornwall Council on how and when Town and Parish Councils can engage with the process and be part of the conversation. CALC have been in discussion with the Head of Planning and Housing regarding this, and a full response is below. The response includes:

- Acknowledgement of Town & Parish Councils' role
- Explanation of how engagement will work
- Why this Local Plan engagement differs from the last
- Explanation of the role and limitations of Neighbourhood Priority Statements (NPS)
- Rollout plans and upcoming engagement
- How to contact the planning team
- Information about forthcoming Cabinet paper

Kind regards

*Lee Dunkley BA (Hons), MPhil, FSLCC*

County Executive Officer  
Cornwall Association of Local Councils  
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Dear Lee

Further to our conversations please find below a note for you to circulate as you feel most appropriate to your membership.

Firstly, we fully respect and understand the wish of your member Councils to engage and contribute to the Local Plan. We welcome that and the commitment that individual Councils make to listening, contributing and working

with us. We also know that burden is sometimes borne disproportionately by some individual members within Councils too – and we appreciate their passion and interest especially.

We understand that your members would like clarity on how they will be engaged with the Local Plan, as well as clarity on routes for contact, and why things might feel a bit different this time compared to the last Local Plan.

I apologise for the length of this note, but hope it goes some way to covering those points.

We recognise that there are clear differences between larger towns (significant precept, staffing level and asset base) and smaller parishes (less infrastructure, lower capacity). Impacts of developments can also vary and the local context is important in assessing this. We have to somehow navigate all those circumstances.

In summary, our proposal has three elements. Firstly, that we will continue to offer collective briefings via CALC (including the Planning Partnership and Large Councils Group) as and when you invite us or when a particular issue emerges that we think needs flagging. Secondly, we will continue what is effectively a standing offer to attend Town or Parish meetings by request. If that demand turns in to significant calls on time to attend multiple parishes in a short space of time, we might need to review with CALC how best to approach that. Thirdly, and perhaps most formally, we think the new Neighbourhood Priority Statements provide the strongest, clearest and most efficient route to collect and collate local Council input into the Local Plan. We also have a proposal for a further round of workshops focussed on towns, which we outline later in this letter in relation to Neighbourhood Priority Statement work.

I understand some Councils have also asked why engagement on this Local Plan differs to the last one.

On one level, we don't think we ever stopped having conversations or dialogue with many towns or parishes about planning and policy, especially in places where NDP conversations have continued. All those documents still form part of the development plan, even if the weight given to some policies is being overtaken by national ones.

However, in terms of direct comparison in terms of process, we have fundamentally different guidance and expectations from Government this time round. In the last Local Plan there was a lot of incremental work which fed in to town transport plans, allocations (via the Cornwall Site Allocations DPD or neighbourhood plans), and all the other wider work on neighbourhood plans too. This time the Government require us to a) find sites for a larger number of houses in the plan period; b) allocate to a much greater level of granularity (i.e. encompassing smaller sites and smaller settlements than last time); c) to do site allocation via the Local Plan in a single document at the same time as all the other policy preparation; and d) to do all that and get it to examination within a 30 month window rather than the 6 years we took to agree the strategic policies, the further 2 years to finish the Site Allocations DPD, then the further 4 years to secure the Climate Emergency DPD, or the many separate NDP processes that we have collectively run and concluded over the last 15 years.

Therefore, we will have to inevitably analyse sites in a more prescribed and filtered way, and we don't have the option in the same way of doing it over many years including via many different NDPs or a separate Site Allocations DPD. There is immense pride in some NDPs, but they also took huge amounts of volunteer time and commitment. We hope that the NPS route provides a clearer more achievable template for feedback and policy development, and evidence around infrastructure, including transport. So, in some ways, for the majority of places, we hope that it is a more proportionate and structured conversation. Also, the evidence of NDPs and other work is not lost – it all still exists, especially in terms of the local transport and green infrastructure studies which are a good platform for updating from.

Taking the NPS point forward, we think that Neighbourhood Priority Statements will be a useful vehicle for towns and parishes to inform the Local Plan. We have been undertaking some pilot studies and are grateful to the towns and parishes involved. As a result, and taking into account feedback, we are expecting to roll the NPS process out to all parishes in spring.

Our experience in the pilot has been that NPS are relatively quick to produce (several parishes have completed them within 9 months) and the parishes who have taken part have found that they have been a really good way to engage with their communities and to think about what is important for their places in the future.

However, there are some caveats:

- a) NPS's were conceived by the last Government but the approach for them is not clearly articulated in latest guidance. However, we think the principle is still good and so are continuing with them.
- b) they do not form policy in their own right as NDPs do. They can only inform policy in the Local Plan. Practically that means contributing to evidence for strategic policies that are already proposed, or acting as a catalyst for, new strategic policies if a trend emerges. But, importantly they can also form an evidence base of local infrastructure needs. There may be rare occasions when there is a specific local issue of such consequence it needs its own policy.
- c) they cannot allocate or prevent allocation – they can provide context about constraints which can be taken in to account in allocations, but that difference is really important to be clear about.
- d) there is no funding – but, given how efficient the pilots are, that is not currently thought to be a barrier and the team have resources which are available, including templates, precedents from the pilots and standard surveys.

In summary, therefore, we think NPSs will be the main way for towns and parishes to feed in to the Local Plan. We are also working on a further round of facilitated workshops for next winter focussed on towns (but we recognise that in many places it could also be helpful to involve directly adjoining parishes via a cluster approach) to progress to the next level of more place specific detail. We have capacity for 24 sessions. We are preparing a briefing note on how we think this could practically work, and would intend to make better use of the local expertise and knowledge of clerks in arranging those sessions (in response to some of the feedback from last years events).

Some Councils have also asked for clarification on how best to contact us. General/new enquiries are best via [neighbourhoodplanning@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplanning@cornwall.gov.uk) and we can re-direct from there. However, relationships are important and we accept that many parishes or towns will be comfortable emailing colleagues like Colleen O'Sullivan, Rob Lacey or me depending on who they have historically or most recently dealt with and that is fine too.

If there is further clarification required then please do let us know.

A paper will go to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> March to set out the intended timetable for the Local Plan now that some of the relevant regulations have been published by Government. This paper includes the first initial report on the community engagement sessions of the last few months, with a more detailed report to follow shortly once the team have managed to finishing collating everything.

Link to report:

[Local Plan Update - Final Interim Report on Local Plan progress including Baseline report recommen.pdf](#)

Kind regards

Adam

**Adam Birchall | Head of Planning and Housing Policy  
Cornwall Council | Planning & Housing Service**

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