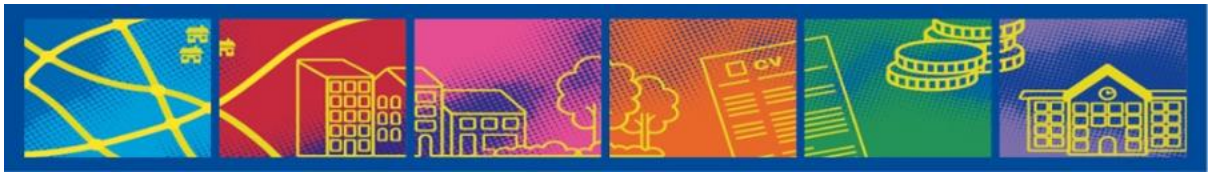
Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

October 2026

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary for the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan 2026–2044



How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

Formal preparation of a new Local Plan for the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk is scheduled to start on 30 October 2026, with publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment summary. Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities. This summary explains what we did to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe and where people can find further information and updates.

The current Local Plan 2021–2040 was adopted in March 2025. However, the Government's revised approach to calculating housing need involves an 80% increase in the Borough's housing requirement. On 15 January 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to the Borough Council, directing that we start preparing a new Local Plan by the end of October 2026. This is in line with the requirement to do so in the NPPF. To date, we have:

- January–May 2026 undertook a Call for Sites, with over 750 separate sites put forward by developers, land agents and/or landowners.
- June 2026: Published our official Notice of Intention to commence next Local Plan preparation (NoI), published a detailed Local Plan Timetable and agreed governance arrangements defining the role of members and officers throughout plan preparation.
- September 2026: undertaken the Local Plan Scoping Consultation, covering what the plan should contain and how we should consult and engage with people. We also carried out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report Consultation at the same time.

Much of what the Local Plan needs to cover is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 (NPPF). However, there are several factors that may define how the Local Plan develops, including:

- Need to allocate land to achieve 80% uplift to Local Housing Need, from 554 homes per year (current Local Plan 2025-2040), up to nearly 1000 homes per year
- Significant development constraints – flood risk (particularly in the Fenland areas; European biodiversity sites (The Wash/ Norfolk Coast; The Brecks)
- Localised polices which the NPPF either expects or allows

Full details regarding the current baseline situation are set out in the SEA Scoping Report, which accompanied the Scoping Consultation. Initial SEA Scoping Report for consultation - July 2026

We published a timetable for preparing the plan

The Local Plan Timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing the plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe. We will keep it updated as we make progress. Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 sets out the key milestones to be specified. The Local Plan Timetable operates as a live operational document and is to be updated at least monthly and when key milestones are reached.

Regulation 4 (relevant para)	**Associated Regulation**	**Requirement**	**LPT Date(s)**
4(1)(a)	Regulation 19	Date of notice of intention to commence Local Plan preparation	June 2026
4(1)(b) and (c)	Regulation 20	Dates for scoping consultation	September 2026
4(1)(d)	Regulation 21	Date on which Local Planning authority will make their self-assessment summary (in advance of Gateway 1, when the 30-months timetable will start)	October 2026
4(1)(e) and (f)	Regulation 23	Dates for notice of plan content and evidence consultation (first draft Local Plan consultation)	May – June 2027
4(1)(g)	Regulation 26	Date on which observations and advice will be sought (check in advance of Gateway 2 by appointed Planning Inspector(s))	November/ December 2027
4(1)(h) and (i)	Regulation 27	Dates for proposed Local Plan consultation (pre-submission draft version)	April – May 2028
4(1)(j)	Regulation 31	Date on which observations and advice will be sought (check in advance of Gateway 3 by appointed Planning Inspector(s))	September/ October 2028
4(1)(k)	Regulation 34	Date on which the Local Planning authority will submit their proposed Local Plan to the Secretary of State	November 2028
4(1)(l)	Regulation 39	Proposed date of adoption	May 2029

The full Local Plan Timetable is available to view on our website. Gateway 1 is scheduled for 30 October 2026 and adoption for May 2029.

We established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing a local plan is a complex process. It involves many people across the council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us monitor our progress and keep the work on track. It also helps us anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months.

We were aware, even before the new planning system was formally launched (March 2026), of the need to have effective arrangements in place for day-to-day management of the plan-making process. To this end, we have undertaken the following:

- Review and update of the Member/ officer steering group (known as the "Local Plan Task Group") Terms of Reference (ToR), to ensure these are up-to-date and relevant to the new planning system. The updated Local Plan Task Group (LPTG) ToR (Browse meetings - Local Plan Task Group) were agreed by Cabinet on 23 April 2026 (Choose agenda document pack - Cabinet 23 April 2026).
- Secured Council approval for agreeing the level/method of decision making (operational/ Member Delegated/ Cabinet, as appropriate) for all key milestones in the plan-making process. These detailed governance arrangements were agreed by Cabinet on 9 June 2026 (Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 9th June 2026, 6.00 pm).
- Appointed a dedicated project management officer as lead project manager for the process. The officer joined the team in July 2026.

The day-to-day management of the plan-making process will be led by the Planning Policy Team, overseen by the Local Plan Task Group (LPTG), Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing (LPTG Chair) and Assistant Director (Environment and Planning).

Alongside detailed governance arrangements, we have developed a project plan (Project Initiation Document) to help us prepare the plan in line with our local plan timetable and will meet regularly with our key decision makers to monitor how this is going. When we developed the project plan, we identified potential risks to its delivery. We have reflected on these risks and identified things we can do to reduce these risks.

We planned how we will consult on the plan

Public consultation is essential for the Local Plan to represent the needs of our communities today and over the plan period. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops. By planning this early, we can ensure people are aware in advance and can get involved from the start.

We have already undertaken extensive public consultation and engagement, in advance of Gateway 1 (formal start of the plan-making process). In January 2026, in advance of the launch of the new planning system in March, we undertook a Call for Sites. This prompted over 750 site submissions.

The Call for Sites consultation (29 January – 1 May 2026, inclusive) was accompanied by the following:

- Email to all current active contacts on the Planning Policy database, serving as both a notification of the Call for Sites and a personal data cleansing exercise, in accordance with the 2018 Data Protection Act/ GDPR.
- Multiple press releases, both at the start and during the consultation itself.
- Social media notifications; e.g. Meta (Facebook); LinkedIn; local forums.
- Extension of the consultation, which initially was scheduled to end on 31 March 2026, for an additional month, up to 1 May 2026. This was deemed necessary to ensure sufficient site submissions were put forward by developers, land agents and landowners to maximise the choice of potential sites put forward for all types of land-use (homes, employment, green infrastructure, renewable energy etc).
- Targeted emails to known landowners/ agents and interested parties at potential development locations (e.g. urban extensions).
- Posters and publicity in/ around public spaces.

The Call for Sites also allowed a new customer database to be set up for the new Local Plan. This has allowed the Scoping Consultation to be undertaken in line with GDPR requirements. The Scoping Consultation was supported by the following:

- Email to all contacts on the new Local Plan database (except those who have opted out from further consultation or notifications).
- Press release at the start of the consultation.
- Social media notifications; e.g. Meta (Facebook); LinkedIn; local forums.
- Afternoon/ early evening “drop in” events/ exhibitions at each of the three towns within the Borough (King’s Lynn, Downham Market, Hunstanton).

The Scoping Consultation itself ran for 28 days (1-29 September 2026, inclusive). Which was longer the minimum 21 days required, it was open to all, seeking feedback regarding:

- Matters relevant to the Local Plan, including what the plan should contain; and
- How the Borough Council should consult and engage with stakeholders (interested parties) in preparation of the Local Plan.

These key themes were supported by a series of questions regarding the scope (7 questions) and setting an engagement strategy (4 questions). In addition, people were invited to respond to site submissions put forward through the Call for Sites and the initial Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report. The latter was published alongside the Scoping Consultation material, under The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Most recently we have used the Scoping Consultation to help us prepare an engagement strategy. This details how we will consult and communicate with our communities as we continue to prepare the plan. As we are expecting significant engagement from our residents, especially in relation to site-specific proposals, we aim to provide a wide range of engagement opportunities.

We began scoping the content of the plan

Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps identify future needs and ambitions, allowing us to begin preparation with a clear vision and supporting consultation and decision-making. The September 2026 Scoping Consultation helped us understand local priorities and issues before formal plan preparation. The Borough Council reported more than 300 online survey responses, more than 450 emails, conversations with nearly 300 people in person and more than 1,500 comments on the interactive site map. These are separate measures of participation, not a combined total of unique respondents, because people could contribute through more than one route. Final reconciled totals, including paper responses, remain to be confirmed.

Feedback from the Scoping Consultation

Representations were analysed and processed using AI tools, supported by officer checking. The feedback covered:

- Scope of the Local Plan and Engagement Strategy: Findings will be published as part of the Summary of Scoping Consultation Report.
- Call for Sites submissions: more than 1,500 comments were received on the interactive site map. Further site submissions brought the combined number of possible sites identified to more than 800. These are submissions for assessment, not proposed allocations. The final reconciled site-comment total and thematic findings remain to be confirmed.
- SEA Scoping Report: responses from the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England under the 2004 Regulations.

Further details will be set out in the Summary of Scoping Consultation Report, prepared under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. The timetable schedules publication of the findings for November 2026. Consultation information is available on the Scoping Consultation webpage.

Progress towards draft Local Plan content and evidence consultation

We have reviewed existing evidence about the area and the people the plan needs to provide for, with baseline details set out in the SEA Scoping Report. Although the current Local Plan 2021–2040 was adopted in March 2025, the revised standard method has led to an 80% uplift in local housing need. Using the Call for Sites, consultation feedback, Local Plan Task Group input and new and emerging evidence, we have:

- Begun drafting a vision and 10 measurable outcomes for the Borough.
- Begun procuring specialist external expertise, including a Housing Needs Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Open Space Audit, Landscape Character Assessment and Plan Viability Assessment.
- Started considering growth options and a potential spatial strategy.
- Started identifying potential development locations using site submissions, infrastructure capacity assessment and constraints information.
- Started identifying further policies, information and data needed to inform site allocations and/or local standards.

We have shared some of this work through early public engagement and published summaries on our website. Our published headline participation update of 6 October 2026 summarises engagement across the online survey, emails, in-person conversations and interactive site map. It is an initial update rather than the final Regulation 22 consultation findings report.

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

We are legally required to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Local Plan and reasonable alternatives, taking account of the plan's objectives and scope. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) considers environmental protection objectives and challenges, predicts significant effects and helps develop ways to prevent, reduce or offset them. Starting early and being transparent about the assessment supports engagement with stakeholders and communities.

The SEA Scoping Report brings together baseline information on air quality and noise; climate change; biodiversity, geodiversity and green infrastructure; landscape; water; the historic environment; people and communities; deprivation; health; crime; education; transport and access to services; natural resources and waste; employment and the economy; and housing. It also sets draft indicators and targets and reviews relevant plans, programmes and strategies.

The scoping work identifies environmental designations and potential issues, including constraints that may make parts of the Borough unsuitable for large or strategic-scale development:

- Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3, particularly in the Fenland areas and west of the Great Ouse.
- European sites, including the Norfolk Coast and The Wash, Dersingham Bog, Roydon Common and the Brecks in the south-east of the Borough.
- The Coastal Change Management Area along The Wash coast, from Wolferton Creek to Hunstanton.

We are finalising the scope of the SEA and the level of detail needed in the draft environmental report. The Initial SEA Scoping Report for consultation — July 2026 is available to view on our website.

Additional early engagement

We extended the Scoping Consultation beyond consultation on the plan's scope and engagement approach (as allowed by the regulations) by combining it with publication of the sites submitted through the January – May 2026 Call for Sites, allowing comments on individual submissions, and consultation on the SEA Scoping Report. This enabled the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England and other interested parties to comment on the environmental assessment alongside the wider plan consultation. Bringing these activities together was intended to support more meaningful early engagement and avoid confusion from running separate consultations.

How to stay up to date

For updates about upcoming consultation activities, email local.plan@west-norfolk.gov.uk and state that you wish to be added to our consultation database. We will keep our Next Local Plan webpage updated regularly.

Data protection

We would like to use your personal data to notify you about future Local Plan stages, including publication of the Call for Sites assessment. Plan preparation is expected to take place from 2026 to 2029. If you no longer wish to receive consultation notifications, email local.plan@west-norfolk.gov.uk and we will remove your details from our customer database.

Personal information will be stored and processed in accordance with the council's data protection and GDPR policies. Details will be used solely for Local Plan-related purposes, including consultation and plan-making notifications where you have consented to receive them. Data will be held securely and not shared with third parties except where required by law. For individual members of the public responding to consultations, we may need to publish a surname to manage representations; for common surnames, a first-name initial may also be needed. For further information or to exercise your data protection rights, contact Data.protection@west-norfolk.gov.uk.