

Report to Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

24 September 2026



Local Plan Update

Lead Member:

Cllr Jonathan Gullis – Leader & Cabinet Member for Planning & Town Centres

Lead Officer:

Simon McEneny – Deputy Chief Executive

Key Decision: No

Ward(s): All

Appendices: Not Applicable

Report Assurance:

	Name	Date
Lead Officer	Allan Clarke	8/9/26
Monitoring Officer	Olwen Brown	
Section 151	Craig Turner	10/9/26
Chief Executive	Gordon Mole	
Cabinet Member	Jonathan Gullis	

Report Summary

To update the Scrutiny Committee on the current position on the Local Plan.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Notes the update on the Borough Local Plan

1. Background

- 1.1. The Local Plan sets the vision and framework for how the Borough will grow in the future. It includes targets for the number of homes and jobs to be provided in the Borough alongside a spatial strategy and planning policies to guide future development in the Borough. The Local Plan also includes several planning policies to help shape future development in the Borough.
- 1.2. A standing item on providing a Local Plan update has been requested by Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee since 2022.
- 1.3. The Borough Council Local Plan (2020-2040) was adopted at Full Council on the 8th of July 2026 and now forms part of the Development Plan, replacing legacy policies from the previous Joint Core Strategy from 2009. The 6-week legal challenge period following the adoption of the Plan has now passed with no formal challenge received on the Plan.
- 1.4. Following adoption of the Borough Council Local Plan (2020-2040), the Council has now published its five-year housing land supply position statement which notes a five-year housing land supply position of 7.57 years supply. The government has recently published housing delivery test results for local authorities. This considers a measurement of housing delivery for the preceding 3 years, before the adoption of the Local Plan. The 2025 results indicate that housing delivery in the Borough has fallen to 94% of housing needs over the period. Because of this, the Council must prepare an action plan on how it is to support housing delivery in the Borough. This is to be completed in the next six months in line with government guidance. The delivery of allocations contained within the Local Plan will be a key part of the action plan.
- 1.5. Transitional arrangements (included in the relevant regulations)¹ state that the Council should start work on a 'new' Local Plan, in line with the plan making system (notice of intention to commence local plan preparation) by the 30th June 2026. This is due to:-
 - The date(s) when the Local Plan (2020-2040) was submitted for examination and adopted;
 - The adopted Plan meeting less than 80% of local housing need figure defined by government using the standard method.

A report was considered by Cabinet on the 23rd June 2026, seeking permission to start work on a new Local Plan, in line with the new Local Plan making system. Cabinet resolved, at that meeting, not to start work on a new Local Plan until there was an understanding regarding the outcomes and implications of Local Government Reorganisation.

- 1.6. Following the Cabinet decision, officers have engaged with officials of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and are awaiting an understanding of

¹ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (regulation 91)

next steps, including whether the Council will now be asked to start work on a 'new' Local Plan, through a Ministerial Direction from the government.

- 1.7. The government published an update to the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") in August 2026. The NPPF has been restructured so that it now contains distinct plan making policies and national decision-making policies. The structure and content of the NPPF will have an impact on the development of the Local Plan, should the Council be asked to start work on the Local Plan by government.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The changes to the NPPF will have implications on the scope and content of a future Local Plan. This includes not duplicating or being materially inconsistent with policies contained within the NPPF. In addition, the NPPF has shortened expectations on the expected Plan period attached from Local Plans, from a minimum of 15 years to a minimum of 10. This will have implications for the amount of development to be included in any new Local Plan.
- 2.2. The new Plan making system includes a new set of stages (including regulatory stages), this includes: -



Figure 1: Stages in New Local Plan Making System

- 2.3. The Council is now awaiting further information from the Government and whether the Council will be asked to start work on a new Local Plan.

3. Strategic Approach

- 3.1. Following the Cabinet decision on the 23 June 2026, the commencement of a new Local Plan for the Borough is now dependent on the outcomes of engagement with the MHCLG and whether the Council will be directed to start work on a new Local Plan.

4. Finance & Resources

- 4.1. Future report(s), following any Ministerial Direction on the Local Plan would be considered by a future Cabinet meeting. This Cabinet meeting would consider the content and implications of a Ministerial Direction and any implications, including resourcing.

5. Legal & Governance

- 5.1. The Local Plan process is one in which the functions and responsibilities are allocated in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 as amended. The Council must comply with their statutory duty to prepare and maintain a Development Plan pursuant to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) The Town and County Planning (Local Planning (England) Regulations (2026) sets out what the Local Plan must contain and the process of preparing a Local Plan.
- 5.2. Cabinet on the 23rd June considered the implications for the Local Plan and resolved not to start work on a new Local Plan. MHCLG have been advised of the outcomes of this decision.
- 5.3. The NPPF is a material consideration in decision taking on planning applications and plan making. The NPPF reinforces the need to prepare and update Local Plan(s) and provides further guidance as to how to take this forward. An update to the NPPF was published on the 17th of August and will be an important consideration in the development of the Local Plan.

6. Supporting Information

- 6.1. June 2026 Cabinet Meeting:- <https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=118&MId=4264>