

Why does Cornwall need a New Local Plan?

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Cornwall needs a new Local Plan because the current one is no longer sufficient to meet higher housing targets set by the government, and the existing Plan's policies are ageing. It is also being updated to incorporate recent changes, such as the declaration of a Climate Emergency and a shift in transport philosophy to prioritise community needs over car-centric growth.

Housing targets have increased:

The government's standard method for calculating housing needs has changed, requiring Cornwall to plan for 4,421 new homes per year instead of the 2,707 in the existing plan. The current plan cannot meet this new requirement, meaning some of its policies are now considered "out of date".

Age of the plan:

Since the current plan is more than five years old, the council must be able to demonstrate that it remains "up to date" and can meet the housing numbers and the current Concept of Sustainable Development.

Therefore, all planning applications currently refer back to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), requiring us to find in favour of the 'Presumption of Sustainable Development':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Such needs would be Social, Economic and Environmental. However, soundings indicate that Environmental needs are set to be outweighed by the Social/Economic needs.

Timeline to produce the Plan:

Formal construction of the plan to commence in February 2026, with the plan to be completed by circa 2028.

This will be followed by the Examination and Adoption process that will lead to adoption circa January 2029.

An initial public survey can be accessed on the Council's 'Lets Talk' page where you will find links to various important documents.

<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/planning-for-our-future>

Interim policy statement from Cornwall Planning:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/4vqdpzic/interim-policy-statement-final-april-2025.pdf>

Baseline report:

<https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/documents/s191421/Local%20Plan%20Update%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Draft%20Baseline%20Report.pdf>

Draft plan:

<https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/documents/s191423/Local%20Plan%20update%20-%20Appendix%203%20-%20Draft%20Engagement%20Plan.pdf>

Public Consultation

Public Consultations (Walk-in events) are currently taking place all over Cornwall, where the public is invited to attend and have their say. A list of these is available on the Cornwall Council website.

Lost Neighbourhood Plans

There must be a certain amount of embarrassment among Officers, regarding the fact that only eleven out of 77 Neighbourhood Plans in Cornwall are deemed to be 'in date', based on the rationale that those plans make specific site allocations that are deemed to be of sufficient size and are protected by section 14B in the NPPF. These plans involved the public, specifically the Parish Councils, in a huge amount of work, including public engagement and hours of very hard, high-level, detailed presentations. All of that work was undertaken by volunteers. There was also funding available to enable the Parish Councils to engage with the public thoroughly. A new system called a Neighbourhood Priority Statement (NPS) is now being piloted. It is hoped that original detail can be incorporated into these new Statements. No funding has been made available for their preparation.

A call for sites.

As part of the Government's directives, Cornwall Council has issued a "Call for sites" to provide a land supply for up to 2050. The initial returns were sifted through by a board of Developers and Planning Officers for suitability. There was a link supplied to the public to make comments, which I shared at the time, but the system was not easy. It may still be followed through the Council website until the 1st January 2026. I commented on two sites in my division when I was the Local Member:

<https://cfs.cornwall.urbanintelligence.co.uk>

The Climate Emergency

Cornwall declared a climate emergency in 2019, and the new Plan is being developed to include policies that address this directly, helping to shape a more resilient future for the region. For example, all new approved applications must provide housing to a carbon neutral standard and if

this is not achieved a £25,000 levy is taken for each house built, which is then used to retrofit the Council's existing housing stock.

Changed transport philosophy:

The new plan is moving away from the "predict and provide" model, which led to more traffic and pollution. The new "decide and provide" model will focus on working with communities to plan for their specific needs and create healthier, more sustainable places. Notably, there appears to be traffic monitoring in areas designated for development.

However robust the "transport plans" appear on planning applications, the reality is that people are generally very reluctant to use public transport (if it is available) or bicycle or pedestrian means of getting about. The noticeable increase in traffic on all our roads will certainly not improve and is set to increase substantially.