



Agricultural & Development Consultants, Chartered Surveyors, Auctioneers & Estate Agents
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Professional Ponderings – May 2026

Planning & Development

To follow on from Andrew Middleditch's ponderings in February 2026, the position concerning planning across Northamptonshire has not changed significantly. Most recently, in North Northamptonshire, following an appeal case in Barton Seagrave, the council can no longer meet a deliverable five-year housing land supply. With a Local Plan that is out of date, the council are now exposed to speculative applications seeking permission to develop unallocated sites to plug the supply gap. This means that at this time Buckinghamshire, Bedford Borough, Huntingdonshire District, Peterborough City and North Northamptonshire cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, leaving all of these authorities open to speculative applications.

The purpose of this section is to consider the role and benefits of Permission in Principle (PiP) as a potential planning strategy. It is important to recognise that seeking planning permission will always carry a degree of risk, as decisions are made by planning officers or committees based on a planning balance. This involves weighing compliance with national and local planning policy against other material considerations. As a result, it can be challenging to provide absolute certainty as to whether planning permission will be granted, particularly in areas where the principle of development is more finely balanced or under pressure.

In June 2018, Permission in Principle (PiP) was introduced as an alternative mechanism for securing planning permission for housing-led development. This process separates the assessment of the principle of development from the consideration of its technical details.

PiP comprises two stages: the first stage determines whether a site is suitable in principle for residential development, while the second stage—Technical Details Consent (TDC)—involves the evaluation of the detailed development proposals, such as design, layout, scale, landscaping and other technical matters such as highway, drainage, ecology.

The determination period for a Stage 1 PiP application is typically five weeks from validation, offering a relatively quick route to establishing whether development is acceptable in principle. PiP can be applied to both previously developed land (and its curtilage) as well as undeveloped sites.

A significant benefit of PiP is that it reduces upfront cost and risk. At the initial stage, there is no requirement to commission detailed and often expensive supporting surveys. A valid PiP application generally requires only a completed application form, a location plan, and a supporting planning statement.

However, there are limitations to the PiP route. Applications are restricted to small-scale development, defined as up to 9 dwellings, development of less than 1,000 square metres, and sites not exceeding 1 hectare. You will have a period of three years from stage one consent to submit the technical details consent in stage 2.

Bletsoes has had success in both North Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire recently and feel that this planning route could be used to unlock development in authorities that cannot demonstrate a five-housing supply.

Please contact our Planning and Development Team for a detailed conversation about Permission in Principle.

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