



Agricultural & Development Consultants, Chartered Surveyors, Auctioneers & Estate Agents

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Professional Ponderings – February 2026

Planning & Development

Planning Policy is in a state of flux at present across Northamptonshire with the two Unitary Authorities seeking to bring forward Local Plans to address their housing and employment needs. West Northamptonshire have just published a Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan to cover the period 2025 – 2043 which is out to consultation from 29 January until 27 March, and is the first formal stage of the local plan process involving engagement with the community and the gathering of feedback on the emerging plan. The Plan seeks to address housing and employment provision by allocating sites and defining policies which will govern planning decisions over the coming years. As well as identifying sustainable urban extensions for the major settlements within the area, the Plan also sets out housing targets for the larger more sustainable villages, with a requirement for sites to be brought forward through Neighbourhood Plans or a later Local Plan review.

The current consultation is an opportunity to seek to inform the content of the Local Plan and to promote development interests where appropriate. Anyone with land in the West Northamptonshire area which they feel may be suitable for promotion is welcomed to contact a member of our Planning and Development Team to see whether there is an opportunity to make a representation as part of the current consultation exercise.

Whilst West Northamptonshire Council is seeking to bring forward their Local Plan under current regulations governing Local Plan preparation, North Northamptonshire is lagging somewhat behind and has decided to advance their Local Plan at a slower pace once new regulations are published early this year. This will mean that they are unlikely to have a final plan adopted until the end of 2028. This decision has been made in the context that the authority has been found to lack a deliverable 5 year supply of housing land at a recent Planning Appeal. With a Local Plan which is out of date, the council are now exposed to speculative applications seeking permission to develop unallocated sites in order to plug the gap in supply.

Elsewhere a number of other Local Authorities have been found to lack a deliverable 5 year housing supply with Buckinghamshire, Bedford Borough, Huntingdonshire District and Peterborough City being notable in this regard. These authorities also face the prospect of having to deal with speculative planning applications at a time when national government are pressing for increased housing numbers.

There is also particular interest in Cambridgeshire where the planning landscape is being influenced by Local Government reorganisation which is aiming to establish new unitary authorities by April 2028. Various options are currently being considered with each of the existing authorities having their own preferred organisational structures. Different permutations involving either two or three unitary authorities are being considered, with the government due to make a final decision later this year.

This ever changing planning system is evolving under the umbrella of the Planning and Infrastructure Act which received Royal Assent in December 2025. The full impact of the Act will not take effect without accompanying regulations to bring the various parts into force but the overall aim of the Act is to streamline the planning process and in particular enhance the efficient delivery of infrastructure projects. This will play a key role in the UK government's stated aim to remove barriers to development and economic growth.

Please contact our Planning and Development Team for an up to date view of the opportunities being created by this latest planning evolution.

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