

Briefing Note

Call for Sites update



Introduction

In February 2026, St Keyne & Trewidland Parish Council held a public meeting for residents to put their concerns and questions to Robert Lacey, Strategic Policy Manager at Cornwall Council. Cllr Jane Pascoe chaired the meeting. The notes below are a summary of the questions and answers from that meeting. The full PowerPoint from this meeting is available on the parish council's website.

What's the background to this?

Cornwall Council planners are in the process of updating the Cornwall Local Plan that will set out all the planning policies used to determine building and development from January 1 2031. As part of their need to know how much land is available for housing, Planners put out a 'Call for Sites' in January 2024 asking landowners and parish councils to identify spaces they thought might be suitable. This list has been published and is now open for comment.

In this parish, four sites have been suggested as being available for housing development. 'Available' does not mean 'suitable' or that planning consent has been granted.

What sites?

Horningtops

1 site that may accommodate 6 dwellings

Valley View

3 sites opposite Valley View that may accommodate up to 350 dwellings.

When will we know what's happening?

The new Local Plan has not yet been written and when it does, the parish council will comment on its content. The first draft should be published early 2027 and out for consultation about mid 2028. The Cornwall Local Plan is about broad planning policies and won't be specific about sites. The plan is due to take effect from 1 January 2031, but is likely to be available in the months before that.

Affordable Housing

In Cornwall, 'affordable housing' is a strictly defined legal and planning term. Because house prices in the Duchy are often more than 10 times the average local salary, these homes are specifically designed for people whose needs are not met by the open market. To qualify, you generally must have a local connection (living, working, or having family in the area) and a household income typically below £80,000 (though some specific schemes cap this lower, at £60,000). These are the main ways to use the scheme for rental: Affordable Renting; Social Rent; Affordable Rent. And for ownership: Affordable Home Ownership; Shared Ownership; Discounted Market Sale; Rent to Buy

How to qualify for affordable housing

There's always concern that anyone (typically, people or councils from outside the Duchy) can come in and buy this housing stock. So in Cornwall, people renting or purchasing need to show a local connection. This is a set of legal criteria used to ensure that affordable housing is reserved for people who already have strong ties to a specific community.

It's essentially a 'priority filter'. Because demand for housing in Cornwall is so high, the council and housing associations use these rules to stop homes from being snapped up by people with no history in the area.

Special Circumstances

This is a safety net for unique cases, such as needing to move to an area for specialist medical treatment or support that isn't available elsewhere (for example, members of the armed forces or domestic abuse survivors)

Note: this is only a summary of how the scheme works. It is not a definitive explanation of what the full policy means. See link below.

Why here and what are the alternatives?

Q Why is St Keyne being used for this new housing? Aren't there other sites like Camborne, Bodmin etc that can take more? Or have more older buildings to renovate?

A We are looking at other sites for development, especially around Liskeard.

Q Why not make better use of brownfield sites?

A Nationally, the preference is for brownfield sites, but often the big problem with reusing them is the problem of land contamination. The majority of new housing development will be on greenfield sites. And nationally, the push is for greater density of housing.

Q What about all the empty spaces above shops?

A We have grants to encourage people to convert upper storeys into accommodation but in practice, it's very difficult to persuade premises owners to allow this. It's a complex process and many landlords don't find it worthwhile.

Q How was the potential number of houses calculated? Do planning officers actually drive about or take a bus to see what the sites are like?

A It's a part of the assessment process that officers will consider access and what new routes will be needed. As the process progresses, more detail will be needed.

How do we get what has been agreed with land developers?

Q How do we hold developers to account when they've agreed to conditions as part of their planning consent?

A Any planning agreements that are made between Cornwall Council and developers is legally binding – but – they are specific to the time they are made and if circumstances change, then we have to be open to making changes. This is a matter of national guidance – and isn't particular to Cornwall.

We need more

Q With so many houses possible, where will the doctors and dentists be?

A Part of the planning process is to identify where there are gaps in provision. In order for providers (eg the NHS) to commit to more facilities, they need to be certain that development will go ahead.

Q What about schools?

A This will be part of any plans, and it's a statutory requirement for children to have access to schools. So – for planners and developers, there is an incentive to avoid areas without existing school provision. It's also partly a matter of the school's team estimating what future demand will be. Not always easy to forecast when there can be troughs and peaks in actual births.

Q If a developer runs out of money that had been allocated for (eg) a surgery, why are they not held accountable? Why are they allowed to get away with it?

A Developer contributions (land charges) like this are phased, and charges such as this are enforced irrespective of the status of the developer. It is rare for any developer to walk away completely.

Q What about the extra traffic generated? 350+ houses will have more than 350 cars because we don't have proper public transport.

A That's something that CC Highways will have to take into account when commenting on any plans.

Affordable housing: how does this work? (see notes above)

Q What are the rules on affordable housing?

A All affordable housing (social housing that is rented or sold at less than market rates) has to be negotiated. We might want more but we have to be pragmatic in agreements.

Q Who decides (and how) what the breakdown of social, affordable, buy, rent, part ownership etc is?

A Local connection needs to be demonstrated.

Q Why isn't social housing built before the commercial (open market) housing?

A The sales of commercial housing subsidises the affordable housing, so the commercial is built (and sold) first. Sometimes, there might be government subsidies available to speed up the building of affordable housing.

How are decisions about housing numbers agreed?

Q Our Neighbourhood Plan has been ignored by planning officers when making their decisions (Cllr Kitto, Dobwalls Parish Council)

A The numbers of new homes needed has increased and we have to accommodate them. The presumption is always to support applications, and this may sometimes mean ignoring boundaries .

Q Do you have to listen to what government says about housing numbers and development?

A We have already written to the housing minister to tell him that the housing targets here are not achievable. The reply was not positive! But we are still lobbying.

Q If we have a change of government in the future, will the targets for new house building change? (Note 2)

A The targets we are given are made to a strict formula. It's possible that a new government could change the formula but unlikely because there will still be a rising demand for new homes. If we had written the current plan just a few years ago, the number would have had to be increased.

The local impact

Q If there really will be 360 houses build on these sites, they will dwarf those of us living in Valley View. These proposals will hang over us and reduce the value of our own houses. Why does nothing appear on searches?

A Nothing appears on searches because what has been published are only suggestions for housing and nothing has been agreed or accepted by planning officers. See Note 1 above.

Q What does the parish council think of this?

A This process (of creating a new Local Plan) has only just started, and is part of a long period of public consultation – like this meeting tonight. The parish council lodged its

objections 12 months ago, and any future consultations with us will reflect what has been said here tonight.

How do we get our voice heard?

Q How do we get our voice out there to object?

A Keep watching for the parish council agendas that will always list planning applications. You can find these on the noticeboards in St Keyne and Trewidland as well as on the parish council's website. We would always encourage residents to comment on new planning applications, either at the monthly meeting or direct to Cornwall planners via their website. We publicise these meetings on the noticeboards and on our Facebook page. We can't always monitor what people are saying on social media – please alert us if you think there is something we need to know.

Q If everyone lobbied and opposed this plan, are we listened to or are we ignored?

A We have government targets to reach. If people want Cornwall Council to object, then CC must agree with the objections and provide evidence.

Q The arguments against developments like this are massive – so why are we considering them?

A Because we have to follow a strict legal process to assess what is appropriate and what isn't. We also need to have evidence to support our opposition in any appeal.

Q What can the community do to stop this happening? Or is it out of our hands?

A We have to follow a legal process – and your views will be taken account of at every stage.

Q Why do councils (and government) ignore us when we elect them to listen to us?

A Government impose conditions on councils.

Comments

More houses will mean less open space for deer, buzzards and hawks.

In Saltash, they were promised schools and more healthcare facilities to go with the new developments. It didn't happen Haven't we learned from these mistakes?

Read more

Affordable housing in Cornwall

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/housing/affordable-housing/>

Cornwall Council Planning

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-advice-and-guidance/how-to-respond-to-planning-applications/>

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Date: 23/2/26

Information Classification: CONTROLLED



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Preparing a New Local Plan for Cornwall

Robert Lacey
Strategic Policy Manager

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1

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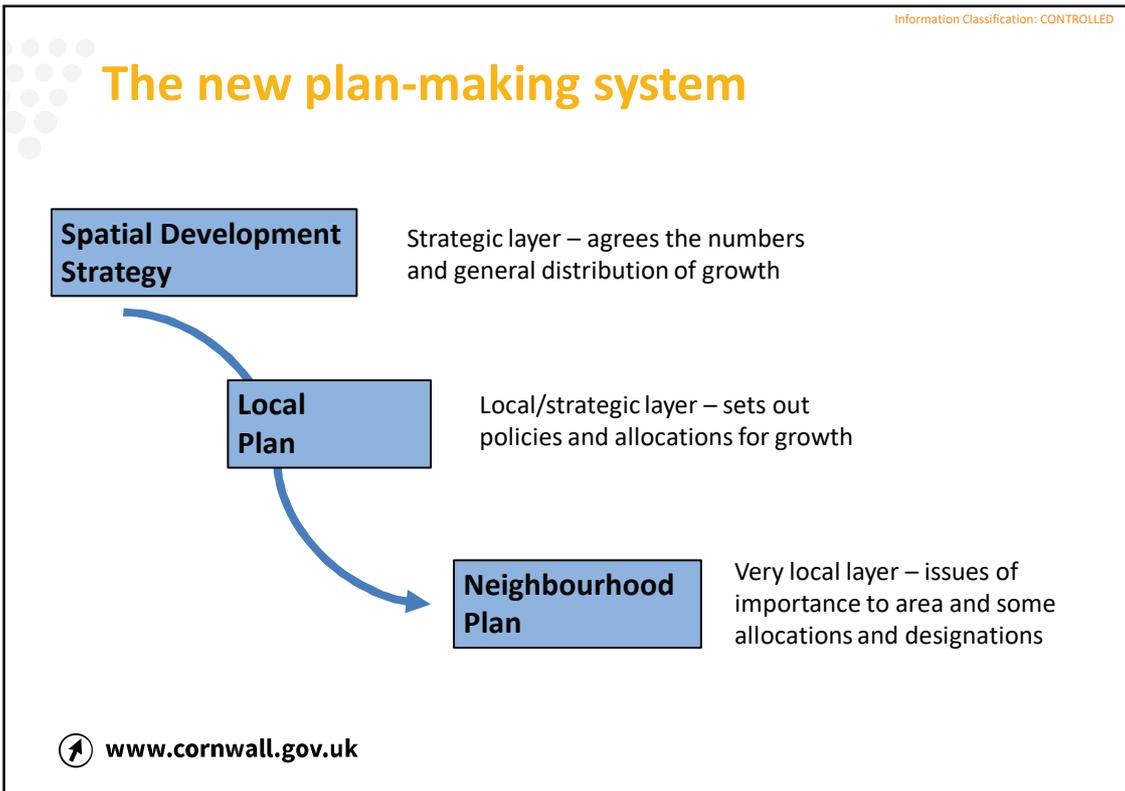
What is the Local Plan?

“Successful planning requires a combination of discretion to foster flexibility and rules to foster certainty”

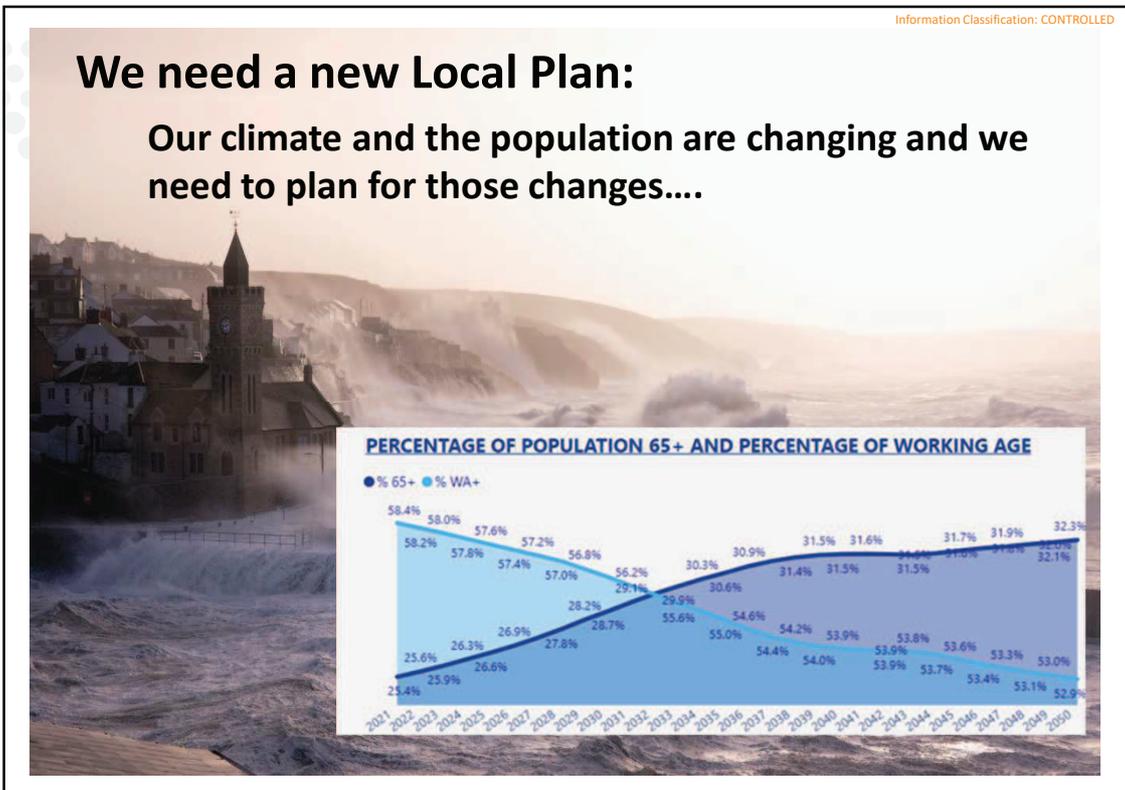
- Provides the hooks for applicants and decision makers
- Sets targets and distributes growth based on evidence
- A mixture of strategic and more local policy
- Read as a whole (locally and nationally)
- (Attempts to) provide for infrastructure

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2



3



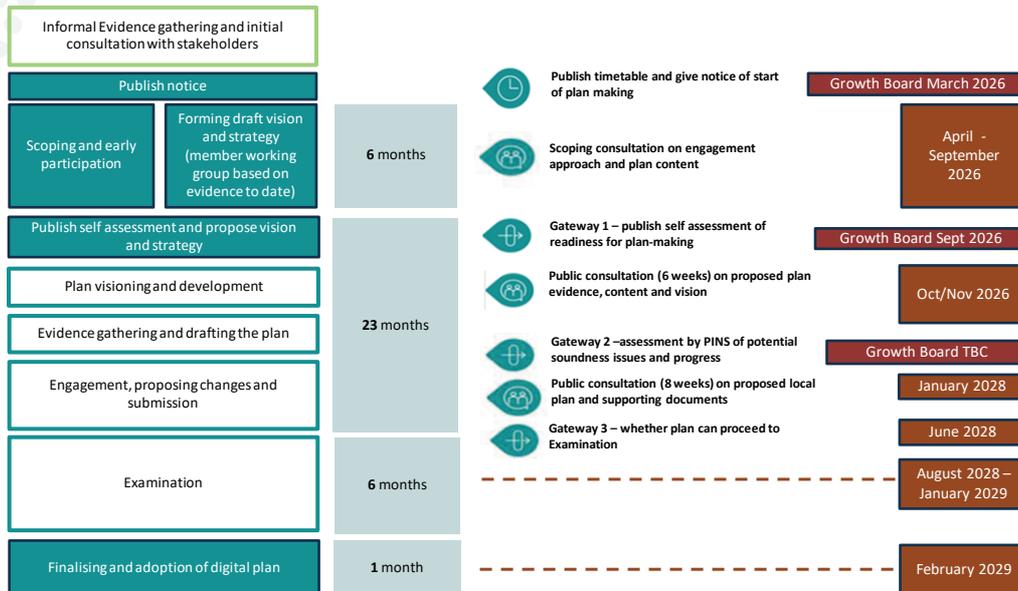
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We are planning in a dynamic system

- New housing numbers – up from 2,707 to 4,421 per year!
- Presumption in favour (Interim guidance)
- New systems (not quite) live
- Neighbourhood plans
- Call for sites and understanding reasonable alternatives
- A need to move at speed

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5



Note: All times are approximate and depend on confirmation of final detail of proposals for launch of new plan-making systems by MHCLG

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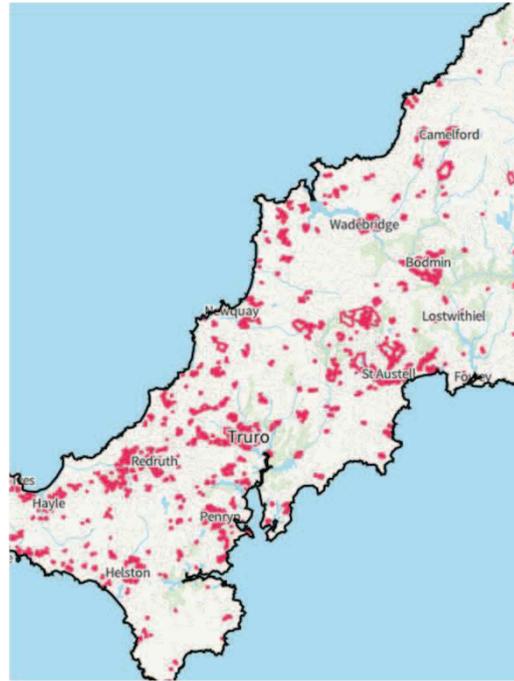
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Call for sites

- Collection started April 2024
- 900+ sites subject to further testing
- Parish engagement (2 rounds)
- Completion of mapping and publication
- Not allocations, but evidence
- Allocations and reasonable alternatives process
- Still receiving site suggestions

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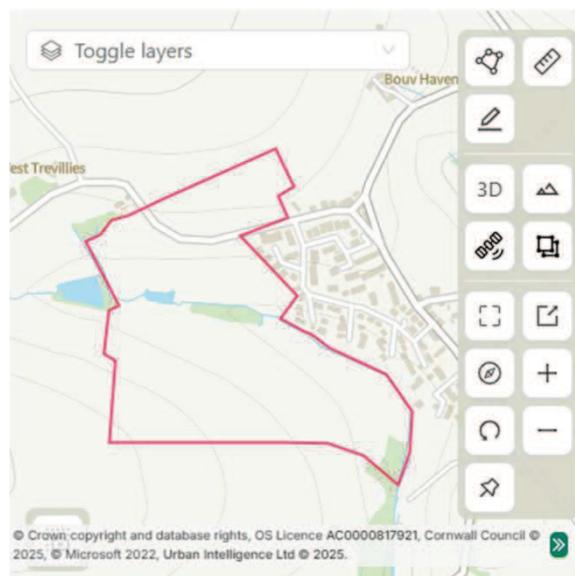
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Valley View, St Keyne

- 16.7 hectares (over 3 parcels)
- 350 homes
- Years 5 – 10
- 150 sq metres of community facility/ies
- Based on land ownership
- Passes initial checks
- Will need to be tested alongside development of the local plan

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8

Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) - purpose

Purpose of HELAA

- Required by government – following a methodology (drafted 2024)
- Identifies land that **might be suitable, available and achievable** for housing or economic development.
- Is a guide to potential housing capacity and non-residential floorspace
- Informs growth distribution and allocations in the **Local Plan**

Important to know

- It's a **technical study**, not a policy.
- HELAA **does not decide** which sites will be developed and **does not change the planning status of any sites.**
- Decisions on distribution and allocations are made through the **Local Plan process**, with public consultation.

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9

What it does and why it matters

What HELAA Does

- **Assesses sites** submitted by landowners, developers, or found by the council.
- Due to Cornwall's scale, some sites will only have a very basic assessment, those with more significance will have a more detailed assessment
- It isn't a judgement against policy, but site assessments consider things like:
 - Relationship to settlements
 - Access to roads and services
 - Environmental constraints
 - Planning history
- **Includes planning consents and windfall allowance**
- **Creates a register of land with willing land owners**

Why It Matters

- Enables distribution options to be developed and tested.
- Helps meet **housing and job needs**.
- Supports **sustainable growth** in your area.

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10

Local Plans and site allocation

There are many factors involved in choosing locations for development:

- General distribution - Broad options before local detail

Then:

- Settlement classification and hierarchy
- Facilities and infrastructure capacity
- Connectivity
- National guidance

And then:

- Need and demand
- Deliverability
- Viability
- Proportional appropriateness

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11

We need to act swiftly to secure a new plan

March Growth Board Report

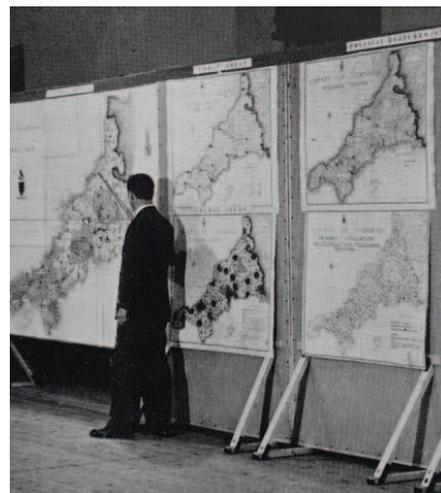
- Updating on progress
- Determining
- Setting a timetable and giving formal notice

April 2026

- Formally start a new plan
- Establish the scope and baseline of the plan
- Consult on our approach

And in the meantime?

- Work through evidence and priorities
- Await further detail of the new system
- Collectively agree the main issues and opportunities
- Continue to engage with towns, parishes and CAPs



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12



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Thank you

If you have any questions or
comments

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