

Briefing Note



Call for Sites – Questions & Answers

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 answered from that meeting. The full PowerPoint from that meeting is attached to this document.

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 that will be used to determine building and development from January 1 2031. As part of this, they need to know how much land is available for housing, and so 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. Your parish council submitted comments back to the planners 12 months ago.

In this parish, four sites have been suggested for housing development. At the moment, these are only suggestions and planning consent has not been asked for or been granted.

Where are the 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 to these sites?

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

This is a summary of the questions that were put to the Policy Manager at that meeting.

Affordable Housing

Residents at the meeting asked many questions about this topic. This section explains the background to it and how it's managed.

Where it's appropriate (and where there's space), developers have to include some affordable housing. The number of affordable homes built will depend on the size of the development and the number of them that will be built is negotiated between developers and Cornwall Council.

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 bought by people with no history in the area.

Special Circumstances

There is a safety net for unique cases, for people 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)

Q How do we get the affordable housing that has been agreed with land developers?

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 specific to Cornwall.

Q What are the rules on affordable housing?

A The numbers of affordable houses (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 Planning officers negotiate using the new Local Plan and information from the Council's Affordable Housing Team.

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.

Note: this is only a summary of how the scheme works. It is not a definitive explanation of what the full policy means. See the link to Cornwall's Planning website at the end of this note.

Why build so many houses 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 (Cornwall Council) 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 these sites is land contamination. The majority of new housing development will still 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 (Cornwall Council) 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 for this exercise? Do planning officers actually drive about or take a bus to see what the sites are like so they can see for themselves what the problems of building are?

A This listing is part of the assessment process that officers make, so it's very much a desk-top exercise at the moment. Planners have used a simple calculation to work out how many houses can be accommodated on each site. As the plan progresses, more detail will be needed.

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 the provision for these services. 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. But it's also a matter for the local school to estimate 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 (example) 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 without meeting their obligations.

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

A That's something that CC Highways will have to take into account when commenting on any plans that might be produced in the future.

How are decisions about housing numbers agreed generally?

Q Our Neighbourhood Plan has been ignored by planning offers when making their decisions (Cllr Kitto, Chair, 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 are set targets by central government, but we don't think that they are achievable in the county. We have written to the housing minister to tell him this. His 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?

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 350 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 so far are only suggestions for housing and nothing has been agreed or accepted by planning officers.

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 the facilities that have 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 specific to Cornwall.

How do we get our voice heard?

Q How can we make sure that planners listen to our objections?

A The parish councillors can lobby on behalf of the community. The agenda for public meetings will include full details of planning applications that are being discussed. The agenda is posted 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 direct 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 (Cornwall Council) have government targets to reach. If people want Cornwall Council to object, then CC must agree with the objections and provide evidence. You can help us with this.

Q The arguments against developments like this are massive – so why are we even considering these proposals?

A At the moment, this exercise is about identifying possible sites – nothing more than that. But 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 opposition in any appeal.

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

A We are obliged to follow this strict process – but 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 and we have to work to them

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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Preparing a New Local Plan for Cornwall

Robert Lacey
Strategic Policy Manager

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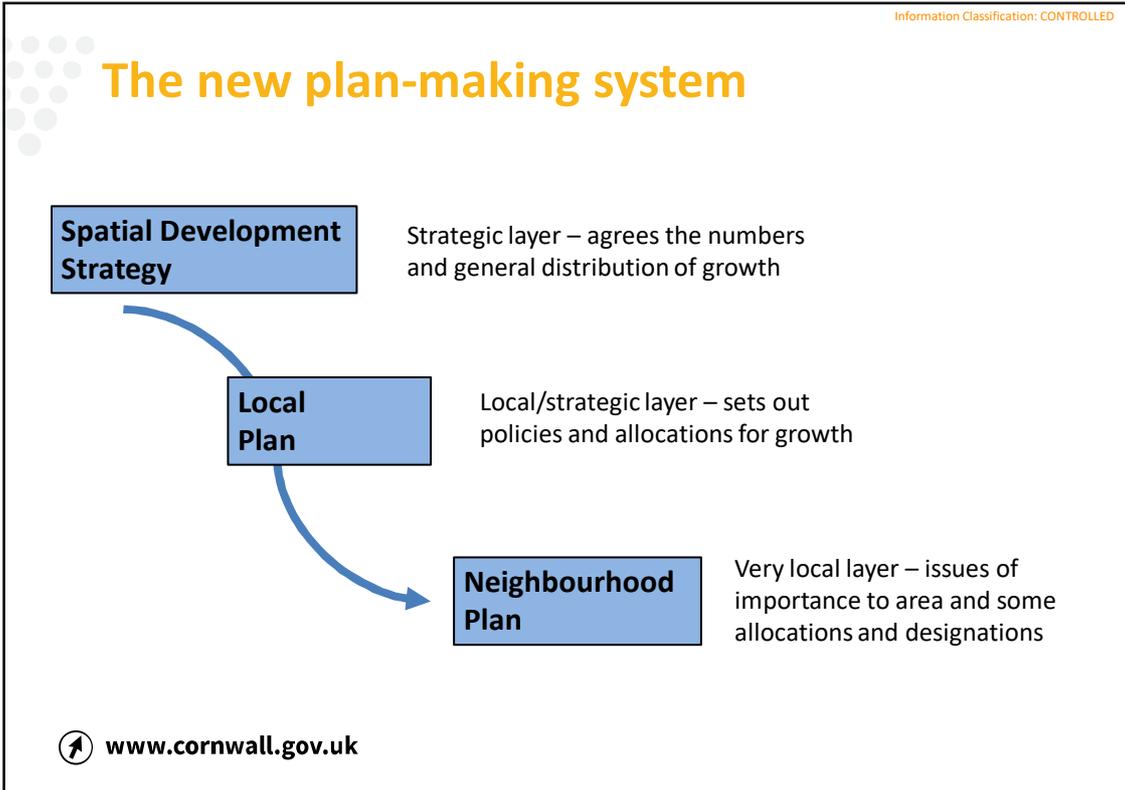
What is the Local Plan?

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

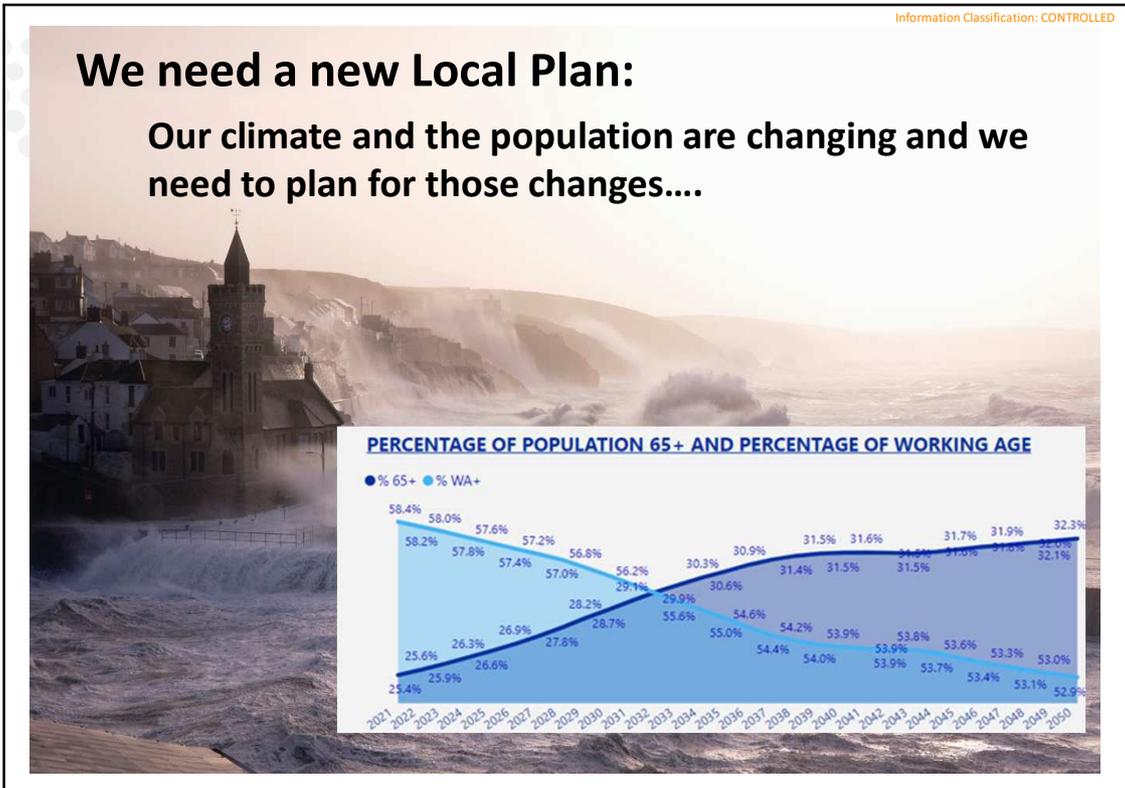
- Provides the hooks for applicants and decision makers
- Sets targets and distributes growth based on evidence
- A mixture of strategic and more local policy
- Read as a whole (locally and nationally)
- (Attempts to) provide for infrastructure

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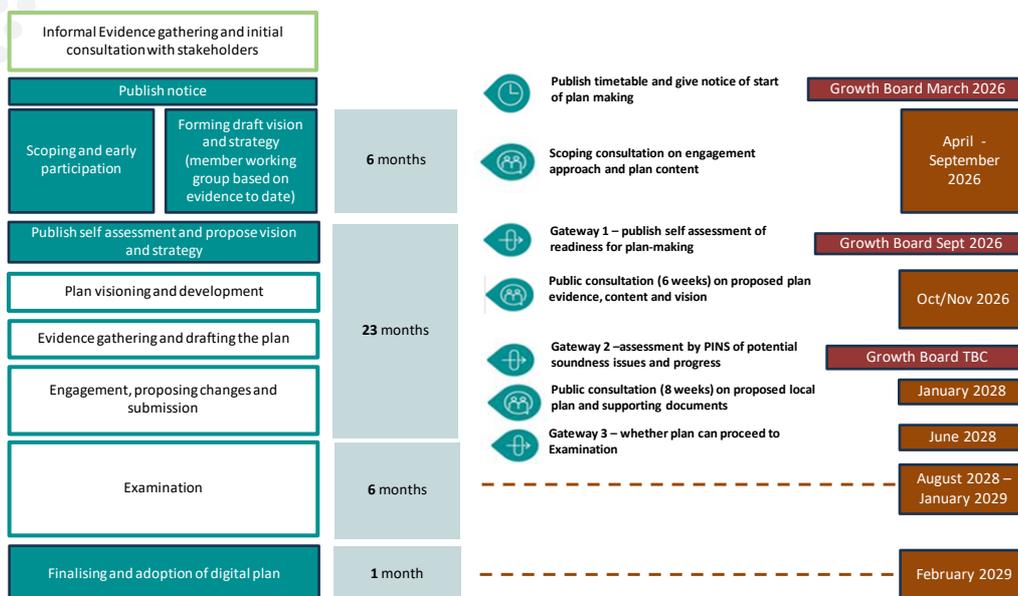
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We are planning in a dynamic system

- 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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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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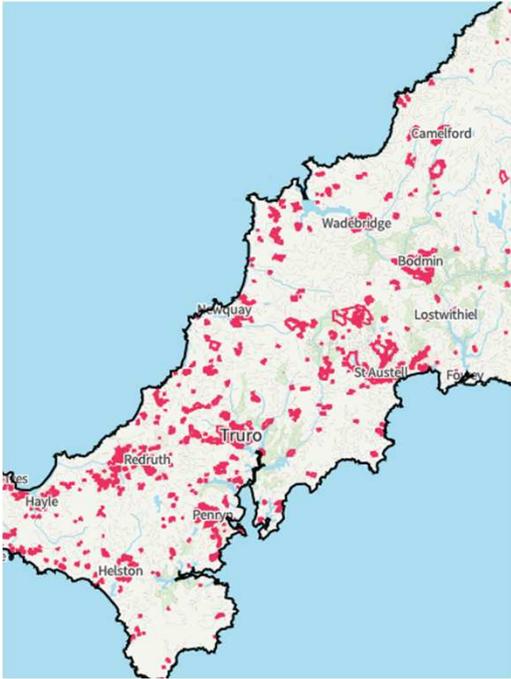
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Call for sites

- 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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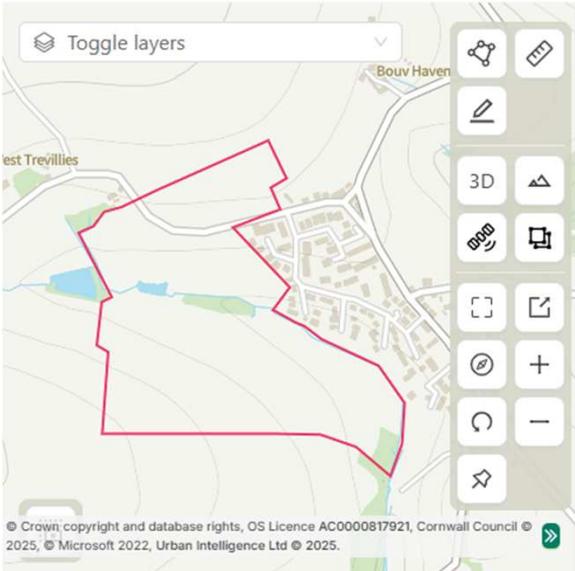
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Valley View, St Keyne

- 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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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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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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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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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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Thank you

If you have any questions or
comments

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