

Meeting	Planning Policy and Local Plan Advisory Group
Date	9 June 2026
Present	Councillors Merrett (Chair), Ayre (Vice-Chair), Crawshaw, Myers, Orrell, Vassie, Pavlovic and Nicholls (Substitute)
Officers in Attendance	Garry Taylor – Director of City Development Ben Murphy – Head of City Development Alison Cooke – Head of Strategic Planning Policy Alison Stockdale – Strategic Planning Policy Manager Andrew Bebbington – Housing Policy Officer

1. Apologies for Absence (5:03pm)

Apologies were received from Cllr Steward, who was substituted by Cllr Nicholls.

2. Declarations of Interest (5:03pm)

Members were invited to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests, or any disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have in respect of business on the agenda.

Cllr Pavlovic disclosed that he was the Executive Member responsible for the Local Plan, and the advisory group discussed the position the Executive Member should serve regarding participation.

It was decided that as of this meeting, due to the Advisory Group serving as a guide for the Council Executive, the Executive Member should attend as an active observer and not a voting member of the Advisory Group.

The Labour Group would nominate another non-executive member to sit on the Advisory Group in Cllr Pavlovic's place for future meetings.

3. Public Participation (5:04pm)

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Written representations were received from Gwen Swinburn and Cllr Warters and the chair advised that these would be considered when the advisory group made its decision on item 7.

4. Minutes (5:05pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Local Plan Working Group meeting held on 15 April 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

5. Terms of Reference (5:05pm)

Members considered a report outlining the proposed Terms of Reference (TOR) Document for the committee, the report was presented by the Head of Strategic Planning Policy.

- Members proposed that it would not be appropriate for Cllr Pavlovic, in his capacity as Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities, to sit on the group, as the group's role was to advise the Executive Member.
- Members from all groups supported the view that, if the Executive Member were removed from the committee, another non-Executive Member from the same political group should be appointed to maintain proportionality.
- Members discussed, the role and interaction between the Chair and vice Chair of Planning, a strengthening of paragraph 4.1 in relation to policy discussion, voting issues and escalation of issues.
- The Chair asked members to forward proposed suggestions to democratic services in advance of the next meeting.

The committee thereby

Resolved: To bring an updated terms of reference that takes on board comments raised above to the next meeting of the Advisory Group.

6. Planning Reform and Scoping Report (5:33pm)

The Head of Strategic Planning Policy delivered a presentation on UK Planning Reform and Requirement for a Local Plan scoping Consultation, assisted in the subsequent discussion by the Director of City Development and the Strategic Planning Policy Manager.

She advised that the National Government planned to introduce reforms to accelerate the planning system, ensuring up to date local plans would be in place to deliver a target of 1.5 million homes.

- There would be a strict 30-month timeline for councils to deliver local plans within, including a mandatory four months' notice before the clock began.
- Officers also noted that proportionate evidence must be streamlined, transparent and aligned with upcoming national templates though it must remain robust enough to pass the examination stage.
- It was noted that the council was currently in the “get ready” phase focusing on early scoping consultations and identification of key stakeholders.
- It was noted that the Executive had originally endorsed initiating this Local Plan approach back in April, and this discussion built upon that decision.

In response to member discussion and queries, the following points were considered:

- Members discussed that month 30 would conclude with an officers report, asking whether the national government had any further input after this. Officers advised that national planning inspectors recommendations would still need to be accepted.
- In response to member query officers clarified that the timetable was being undertaken as prescribed by national government. Gateway One was November 2026 to qualify for contingent funding of £108,000, Gateway Two would be June 2027. The cost for getting to this stage would be made available to the Executive at a subsequent date.
- Members discussed balancing general housing need vs affordable housing need within the city. Officers responded that while they had no specific costs to share today this would be evidence based.

- Members discussed the consultation, with officers confirming that Parish Councils views would be considered at this stage of the process.
- Members asked about issues such as climate change, noting that when the Local Plan was agreed there were plans to advance Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) on issues of specific concern to councillors. Officers responded that SPDs do not exist in the framework, there would be supplementary documentation but this would not ultimately hold as much weight as was originally suggested. The Director of City Development did note that concerning biodiversity and housing standards, the government would take greater control and the Local Plan would take a lesser role.
- Members asked about the scoping document, which had contained views of York residents and between the spatial strategy and Mayoral Combined Authority who was now defining what the green belt/grey belt was. Officers responded that they were working collectively together on this; joint commission in evidence base which didn't define boundaries but could define allocations. The spatial strategy was the plan to follow and if timescales were adhered to then the council will be defining the core spatial strategy.

Actions were summarised by officers:

- The project scope needed to be organised, with evidence gathering and management processes to fit within the accelerated 30-month window.
- Officers would need to oversee alignment with national guidance by continuously monitoring and adopt the emerging standardised templates and digital guidance published by national government.
- Key stakeholders must be identified and early scoping consultation progressed by mapping out key partners and community groups required for the engagement phase.
- Advance Timeline Framework would need to be mapped out, giving specific testing checkpoints required for individual stages of the 30-month local plan timeframe.

Members then

Resolved: To endorse the proposed approach, taking into account the comments around the table.

7. Non-Statutory Guidance Report (6:36pm)

The Strategic Planning Policy Manager delivered a presentation on Non-statutory Planning Guidance and responded to member questions assisted by the Housing Policy Officer.

The presentation focused on five documents produced to support the implementation of Local Plan policies, together with an introductory note on changes to legislative strategy for planning papers:

- Transition from Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs) – due to legislative changes the council would no longer be able to support SPDs after 30 June 2026. The council had pivoted to SPGs which could be adopted faster while still carrying material weight in planning decisions.
- Affordable Housing (Policy H10) – this was developed with the Housing team and clarified expectations in relation to provision of affordable housing, housing standards and information on tenure mix.
- Hot Food Takeaways (NPPF Paragraph 97) – this was developed in partnership with Public Health and clarified assessment criteria for refusing hot food takeaways within walking distance of schools and places where young people congregate.
- Master Planning and Garden Villages Guidance – this signposted best practices to clarify comprehensive master planning expectations for major strategic allocation sites across York.
- Self and Custom Build Guidance (Policy H4) – this built on delivery experience – addressing site phasing, parameter plans, early utility provision and plot delivery options.
- Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) (Policy H8) – this updated calculations for threshold assessments and provided details on evaluating residential amenity impacts.

Transition from SPDs to SPGs:

- Members questioned why standalone items such as hot food takeaways had been fast-tracked ahead of broader Executive priorities, noting that the Comprehensive Planning for Health SPD would leave planning committees without the published evidence

base needed to secure Section 106 developer funding for GP surgeries and sports facilities.

- Officers explained that they had extracted parts of the existing SPD work to publish quick guidance without wasting resources, confirming that dedicated Public Health infrastructure mapping and an updated Built Sports Provision Study were currently undergoing national body sign-off separately.

Draft Affordable Housing Planning Guidance:

- Members voiced concern that case-by-case flexibility undermined the targeted 80:20 social/shared housing split, allowing developers (or council schemes) to dilute social rent proportions. Officers clarified that policy set a minimum threshold for social rent, but total tenure delivery depended on site viability and funding conditions.
- Members noted that subjective terms in the guidance, such as “compromising affordability” could allow high service charges to render schemes unaffordable.

Hot Food Takeaways:

- Members questioned why an 800m buffer (or 10-minute walk/20-minute return trip) was chosen for this paper, over 400m, noting that this would effectively restrict new takeaways across most of the city. Officers explained that 800m aligned with active travel toolkits and Local Plan walking distance standards.
- Members consequently noted an inconsistency in Public Health Scope, pointing out that bakeries, ice cream parlours and supermarkets selling highly calorific and obesogenic foods would be excluded from this ban, whereas takeaways potentially selling healthier foods would be caught by it. Officers noted that exceptional circumstances (eg. Restricted opening hours outside school travel times) could be applied by planning committees.

Master Planning and Garden Village:

- Members raised the issues of active travel and connectivity, emphasising that strategic garden villages must not become isolated “islands”. They emphasised the need for cycle network infrastructure connecting across site boundaries, into neighbouring communities and York proper.
- On the matter of biodiversity and water attenuation, members asked whether master plans might explicitly push for swift bricks, hedgehog highways, green roofs and surface water management in the

interests of mitigating sewer outflows and boosting biodiversity (per Policy GI2/GI3).

Self and Custom Build:

- Members discussed whether Developer-built shell/pre-approved homes aligned with the 2015 Act definition (which excluded homes built to third-party specification) and how this might interact with Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) exemptions.
- Members also discussed a Local Connection Test – querying why York did not currently apply this to prioritise residents on the self-build register.

HMOs:

- Members questioned how data accuracy for unpermitted HMOs was identified, with officers confirming calculations combined Council Tax, Student Exemptions, Licensing Records and existing planning consents to assess the 10% street/20% neighbourhood thresholds.
- Members evaluated the guidance standard requiring one off-street parking space for every 2 bedrooms, to prevent cumulative on-street congestion and highway safety issues.
- Members emphasised that staying under numerical thresholds should not inherently guarantee approval, stressing that strict evaluation of real world impacts like parking congestion, cycle/waste storage, room sizes and cumulative noise must be considered.
- Discussions clarified that guidance targeted single-dwelling conversions (C3 to C4) and explicitly excluded purpose built student accommodation.

Resolved:

- That the explanation on page 78 of the Shared Ownership SPG should be redrafted to clearly state that the 2.5% rental charge applies annually to the unsold equity.
- To add clear explanatory text to the Hot Food Takeaway SPG referencing NPPF Paragraph 97, Active Travel England guidance and national walking toolkits to justify the 800m buffer calculation.
- To add explicit web links to all external supporting documents, including the Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA).
- To strengthen the wording in the Master Planning/Garden Villages SPG around off-site active travel and cycle connectivity, and to incorporate explicit references to micro-biodiversity measures under GI2 and GI3.

- For officers to review the text regarding developer-led custom builds in the Self and Custom build SPG, the 2015 Act definition and CIL exemption rules for technical accuracy.
- The committee agreed to recommend to the Executive that they consider introducing a Local Connection Test for the Self and Custom Build SPG (and potential administration fee structure) for York's self-build register.
- Finalised guidance would be scheduled for the Executive Member Decision Session (EMDS) on 7 July 2026.
- Further guidance work (SPGs) would come back to the committee covering Health Impact Assessments (HW7), Short Term Housing Lets, Supported and Co-Living Housing, Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Design and a signposting Framework for Sustainable Design and Construction.

Cllr D Merrett, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.03 pm and finished at 7.56 pm].