

Local Plan for the Broads

Examination

12 October 2026

Topic paper relating to the New 2026 NPPF and potential emerging Local Plan issues.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The new NPPF was released in August 2026.
- 1.2. While the Local Plan for the Broads, was prepared under the legacy plan-making system and using the 2024 NPPF, and submitted in February 2026, some policies in the new 2026 NPPF are of relevance. It could be that the deliverability and effectiveness of the policies in the emerging Local Plan are affected by the new NPPF.
- 1.3. This Topic Paper identifies some potential issues. It also identifies some parts of the emerging Local Plan that are supported by the 2026 NPPF.
- 1.4. It should be noted that over the coming months, greater understanding of the NPPF and its nuances may identify some other potential issues that may need discussing and addressing.

2. Adaptable dwellings

2.1 What the NPPF2026 says

HO5: Meeting the needs of different groups

1. The development plan should, at the most appropriate level, set out policies to address the housing needs of different groups (including, but not limited to, those assessed under policy HO1). This should include:

...Inter alia...

b. Setting out the proportion of housing on major developments to be delivered to requirements M4(2) and M4(3) of the Building Regulations. Requirements should meet or exceed local levels of need, and should ensure that no less than 40% of homes on major developments are delivered to M4(2) standards (subject to any appropriate exemptions set out in the development plan);

2.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM52: Design

4. Proposals will be assessed to ensure they effectively address the following matters:

...Inter alia...

i) Accessibility and adaptability: Developments shall be capable of adapting to changing circumstances, in terms of occupiers, use and climate change (including changes in peak water level). In particular, dwelling houses should be able to adapt to changing family circumstances or ageing of the occupier(s) and commercial premises should be able to respond to changes in industry or the economic base. All new homes must be designed and built to meet requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations unless it can be robustly demonstrated it is not practicable to do so due to the physical characteristics of the site. The Authority encourages larger schemes to consider providing dwellings designed and built to meet M4(3). For schemes that will result in at least ten affordable housing units (in line with the affordable housing policy) 10% of the affordable housing provided on site will comply with requirement M4(3) of the building regulations unless it can be robustly demonstrated it is not practicable to do so due to the physical characteristics of the site. Where exemptions are sought on practicality grounds, the minimum number of units necessary will only be exempted from the requirements.

2.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
For M4(2) says plans should set out proportion on major developments.	Requires M4(2) on all new homes unless not practicable.

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
For M4(3) says plans should set out proportion on major developments.	Encourages larger schemes to consider providing some M4(3) dwellings. Requires M4(3) on schemes that include 10 or more affordable dwellings – 10%.

2.4 Discussion

The Local Plan stance on M4(3) accords with the NPPF 2026.

The Local Plan stance on M4(2) goes beyond the NPPF2026 as it applies to all schemes unless not practicable due to physical characteristics. The Local Plan, in the supporting text, refers to the NPPG and says ‘The Authority acknowledges that this standard may not be appropriate in some locations or for some schemes, but applicants are required to justify reasons for not including dwellings that are accessible and adaptable’.

The reason the Authority requires all new homes to be M4(2) compliant is for the following reasons:

- The Census 2021 shows that the Broads Authority Executive Area has an ageing population; 36.6% of the population being over 65 and 22% are disabled under the Equality Act and 23% of people saying their daily activities are limited.
- The age profile of the Broads is likely to change in a similar manner to our districts. That is to say that the relative proportions of those aged 65 and over and 85 and over will increase during this plan period. Older people may experience health and mobility issues, and it is these issues which the Building Regulations M4(2) seeks to help address.

2.5 Proposal

Given the reasons for all new homes to be M4(2) compliant, unless not practicable to do so, **no change to** the policy stance of the submitted Local Plan for the Broads is proposed. The justification is still valid.

3. Biodiversity Net Gain

3.1 What the NPPF2026 says

N1: Identifying environmental opportunities and safeguards

...interalia...

2. Development plans should only set local standards for biodiversity net gain which are in excess of the statutory net gain requirement where this is for specific site allocations, and is fully justified and deliverable. Local standards should not extend to categories of development which are exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain.

3.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM16: Biodiversity Net Gain

1. All development types (unless meeting the criteria for an exemption) must achieve a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (or any higher percentage mandated by national policy/legislation) over the pre-development site score as measured by the latest version of the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric (or Small Sites Metric if appropriate) or any subsequent Biodiversity Metric on the application site, secured and monitored for 30 years after the completion of the habitat creation.

3.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
More than 10% BNG only on specific sites.	20% BNG across the entire Broads Executive Area.

3.4 Discussion

The NPPF clearly states that 10% BNG should only be set for specific sites. The Local Plan for the Broads seeks 20% across the entire area. In the NPPF, at Annex A, there are instructions regarding the implementation of the NPPF 2026:

- 1. The policies in this Framework are material considerations which must be taken into account in decision-making from the day of its publication.*
- 2. Development plan policies (or parts of those policies) which are materially inconsistent with national decision-making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight. The only exception to this is where they have been examined and adopted⁶⁶ or made against this Framework.*

This implies that if the 20% BNG standard area-wide was adopted, it would have limited weight in decision-making. It therefore seems that the policy will be ineffective and not deliverable.

3.5 Proposal

The Authority is disappointed in the change to national policy and, given that the Broads Authority Members want to retain the 20% then it is proposed to retain this as a 20% requirement.

Given that there have been some changes to how BNG is applied, that came into force 6 August, it is also proposed to review and amend the policy to reflect those changes to ensure the policy is deliverable and effective.

Policy PUBDM16: Biodiversity Net Gain

1. All development types (unless meeting the criteria for an exemption) must achieve a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (or any higher percentage mandated by national policy/legislation) over the pre-development site score as measured by the latest version of the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric (or Small Sites Metric if appropriate) or any subsequent Biodiversity Metric on the application site, secured and monitored for 30 years after the completion of the habitat creation.
2. In addition to the statutory minimum requirements, it will be expected that an application will be accompanied with the additional information included on the local validation list to ensure confidence that the BNG requirement of a development can be fulfilled.
3. The Authority will seek to secure Opportunities to secure Biodiversity Net Gain proportionate enhancements for biodiversity within on a householder and other BNG exempt developments and exempted brownfield sites will be supported.
4. ~~Exempted developments must achieve no net loss of biodiversity. They will be required to provide biodiversity enhancements (see the [Natural Environment](#) policy (PUBDM15)).~~
5. The Biodiversity Net Gain will be provided on site with habitats functionally linked to the wider habitat network ~~creating coherent~~ to reinforce the coherence of local ecological networks. 6. Where a proposal adequately demonstrates within ~~in~~ the Biodiversity Gain Plan that the DEFRA mitigation hierarchy has been followed and where it is proven the required net gain cannot be achieved onsite within the application site boundary, it must ~~provide for the Biodiversity Offsetting of any habitat types to be lost alongside the percentage gain required~~ deliver its biodiversity gain obligation in the following hierarchical manner. The calculation of off-site units will ~~is will need to~~ take into account the metric multiplier associated with spatial risk ~~provision off site~~:
 - a) Offsite delivery: should prioritise and ~~contribute towards~~ the Local Nature Recovery Strategy relevant to the area within which the biodiversity gains are being delivered. ~~ing to nearby habitat recovery and creation strategies as identified within adopted mitigation strategies, strategic wildlife corridors, Local Nature Recovery Strategies~~

(Norfolk and Suffolk) and, where relevant throughout the Broads which is a core area for nature and its recovery as guided by the [Broads Nature Recovery Strategy 2024-29](#) and the relevant District Council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

- b) Statutory Credits: as a last resort, and where it is agreed by the local planning authority no suitable alternatives exist, through the purchase of an appropriate amount of national biodiversity units / credits.
- 6. The receptor site for any biodiversity offsetting must be in a suitable location where local climactic conditions and existing habitats suit the type of habitat being restored or created ~~offset habitat~~.
- 7. ~~Biodiversity gain sites need to avoid the best and most versatile agricultural land.~~ Any use, for biodiversity offsetting, of the best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) must be thoroughly justified to show why land of other soil grades cannot be used.
- 8. BNG proposals will be secured by condition and/or legal agreement with the Authority or a conservation covenant with a designated responsible body. Where legal agreements are with the Authority, this will include a requirement to cover the Authority's costs associated with the long-term monitoring of the BNG delivery.

Reasoned Justification

The approach to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is set out in the Environment Act 2021. It has an aim to reverse the historic decline in biodiversity and leave the natural environment in a better state by making sure that any development subject to planning permission has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity.

In England, BNG is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 2021. This will require all planning permissions to be subject to a general biodiversity gain condition, unless exempt. Developers will need to demonstrate how they will bring about a minimum 20% increase in biodiversity to obtain planning permission for their projects. The necessary habitat enhancements or creation will be paid for by the developer and must be secured for 30 years via conditions, planning obligations or conservation covenants.

Justification for 20% BNG

The Authority has produced a [Topic Paper](#) that justifies requiring more than 10% BNG. Further to this, the viability study that assessed the policies in the Local Plan concluded that 20% BNG was viable.

Consultation on Future changes to the approach to BNG

At the time of writing, the Government were consulting on proposed changes to BNG. It is not envisaged that the proposed changes necessarily affect the policy and supporting text as written, but the Authority will liaise with the Planning Inspector through the Examination of the Local Plan to amend the Local Plan as required. The Government has indicated changes to BNG may be forthcoming. The LPA will monitor changes and will review how they may relate to this policy.

Delivery and implementation of the policy

The Authority will follow the current statutory framework and guidance with policy being consistent with these minimum requirements. The latest version of the Natural England BNG Metric (or small sites metric where appropriate) will be required for relevant planning applications.

The following are intended to support and supplement mandatory requirements and guidance.

Planning applications subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain must submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan at the pre-commencement stage (although it would be encouraged to submit a draft version at application stage) as required by, and meeting the requirements of, the statutory general biodiversity gain condition. This should set out how the development will deliver BNG including: how impacts of the development on the on-site habitat have been minimised, the effects on any irreplaceable habitats, a valid fully completed statutory biodiversity metric with the post development biodiversity value on-site and off-site if relevant, how the mitigation hierarchy has been adhered to, proof of registration of off-site gains allocated to the development (and/or proof of purchase of statutory credits). Additionally, a habitat management and monitoring plan should be provided detailing how the significant post development biodiversity values of the site and any supporting off-site provision will be secured, managed, and monitored. ~~in perpetuity.~~

A positive and proportionate contribution should be made to the ecological networks and priorities as outlined within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and regional Nature Recovery Network¹ and for maintaining or creating local ecological networks through habitat creation, protection, enhancement, restoration and management.

The ecological assessments, together with the baseline metric must be undertaken by a suitably qualified and/or experienced ecologist and be submitted together with suitable supporting information including baseline and proposed habitat mapping in a digital format with the application. The local validation checklist will outline information that the local planning authority will require at application stage to make decisions relating to BNG.

¹ [Nature Recovery Network - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nature-recovery-network)

Sites where net gain is provided (on or off site) must be managed and monitored by the applicant or an appropriate body funded by the applicant for a minimum period of 30 years. Regular monitoring reports detailing the site's condition must be submitted to the Authority at agreed intervals over this period. The starting point for monitoring will be the following years: 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30. The Authority will ~~also charge applicants/landowners for~~ officer time relating to monitoring BNG.

~~Significance~~ The significance of on-site enhancements is broadly explained/defined in [national guidance](#): The Authority will also consider the following:

~~BNG will be considered significant for the following distinctiveness and thresholds~~ On-site habitat enhancements will be considered significant if the meet one or more of the following criteria:

- High distinctiveness habitat / Any size
- Medium distinctiveness habitat / 0.15ha or greater in size ~~(of the habitat)~~
- Low distinctiveness habitat / Where the combined value of units delivered gain is ≥ 0.5 units

A planning condition will typically be used to secure medium and low distinctiveness habitats that are below those thresholds. However this is heavily caveated by the local ecological context, and we reserve the option to use a S106 agreement to secure on-site habitat that is deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity within the local context. The following non-exhaustive list contains examples of where this may be relevant:

- Any habitat adjacent to ecologically important habitat or site (e.g. habitat ~~listed on the priority habitat inventory, designated statutory / non-statutory sites~~ mapped and listed within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as being an Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, APIB).
- Any grassland habitat which sits adjacent to, or is in close proximity to, public open space used for recreation (e.g. playgrounds, sports pitches, picnic areas, amenity grass).
- Any habitat which could be considered locally rare (i.e. within 500m of the development site).
- Any habitat which could be considered a potential ecological stepping stone due to its proximity to existing local habitats.

Where there is evidence of neglect or damage to any of the habitats on development sites reducing their baseline biodiversity value, their deteriorated condition will not be taken into consideration and steps will be taken to establish the previous ecological baseline of the site in order to decide the acceptability of any development proposals.

~~Also of relevance is that at the time of writing, self/custom build on small sites is exempted from Biodiversity Net Gain. The Authority will require some additional information relating to proposals seeking exemption.~~ Any application seeking to apply to use a legally permitted

exemption from the 10% biodiversity gain obligation must provide a statement supported by sufficient information to clearly demonstrate to the Authority how the proposal meets the criteria for exemption. Where appropriate this may require mapping and use of the statutory metric to quantify any project impacts.

4. Impacts on the transport network

4.1 What the NPPF2026 says

TTR6: Assessing transport impacts

...inter alia...

4. Development proposals should be refused if they would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion, including cumulative impacts), or an unacceptable impact on highway safety; taking into account any mitigation measures proposed as well as any wider network improvements, including measures to support sustainable patterns of movement. This applies both during the construction phase and following completion.

4.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM45: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People

...inter alia...

3. Where there is a proven need, appropriate development will be allowed where the following criteria are met:

...inter alia...

d) There are no severe residual impacts on the safe and efficient operation of the highway network;

Policy PUBCAN1: Cantley Sugar Factory

...inter alia...

2. Development on this site which secures and enhances the sugar works' contribution to the economy of the Broads and wider area will be supported where this also:

...inter alia...

e) Avoids severe residual impacts on highway capacity or safety;

Policy PUBSSROADS: Main Road network

1. New development accessed by the Primary Route Network (directly or by a side road which connects onto it), or by a Main Distributor Route, or by an identified lorry route, will only be permitted if, potential impacts can be mitigated such that development will not have:

...inter alia...

ii) A severe, cumulative residual impact on the road network; or

4.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
Uses the term 'adverse impact'.	Generally uses the term 'severe residual impact' or similar.

4.4 Discussion

Following advice from Norfolk County Council, it is proposed to use the NPPF term 'severe adverse impact on the transport network'.

4.5 Proposal

Policy PUBDM45: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People

d) There are no severe ~~residual~~ adverse impacts on the safe and efficient operation of the ~~highway~~ transport network;

Policy PUBCAN1: Cantley Sugar Factory

e) Avoids severe ~~residual~~ adverse impacts on highway capacity or safety;

Policy PUBSSROADS: Main Road network

ii) A severe ~~adverse, cumulative residual~~ impacts on the ~~road~~ transport network; or

5. Loss of community services and facilities

5.1 What the NPPF2026 says

HC6: Retention of key community facilities and public service infrastructure

1. Development proposals should not result in the loss of key community facilities and public service infrastructure unless:

a. It can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the use being retained, either due to there being insufficient community support for the service it provides, or because it is no longer viable or feasible to operate (in the case of shops and public houses where commercial viability is an issue, evidence should be provided that reasonable steps have been taken to market the property for its existing use without success, for a period of at least 12 months); or

b. The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision, in a location which offers comparable or improved accessibility for the community it serves; or

c. The decision-maker is satisfied that there is sufficient alternative provision of the type of use concerned in the local area, such that its loss will not diminish access to key community facilities and public service infrastructure.

5.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM58: Visitor and community facilities and services Existing facilities

1. Applications for the change of use or redevelopment of an existing community, visitor or recreational facility or service that meets a local need or contributes to the network of facilities through the Broads will only be permitted where:

a) It can be proven that there is no community need for the service/facility; and

b) It can be demonstrated through an assessment of viability that the current use is economically unviable.

2. In all instances, details of consultation with the community regarding the change of use or redevelopment need to be provided.

3. Where appropriate, any historic features which allow buildings to be read as an important former community use/service should be restored or protected.

5.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
HC6 introduces three tests for the loss of community facilities	Has two tests, but essentially, the two tests are the same as test a in the NPPF

5.4 Discussion

During the examination of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019, the Inspector was keen on ensuring that community facilities and services were protected. The Inspector amended our submission policy to the policy in the previous blue box. The submission policy said:

Policy PUBDM43: Visitor and community facilities and services

Applications for the change of use or redevelopment of an existing community, visitor or recreational facility or service that meets a local need or contributes to the network of facilities through the Broads will only be permitted where:

- a) It can be proven that there is no community need for the service/facility; or
- b) It can be demonstrated through a viability assessment that the current use is economically unviable; and
- c) Details of consultation with the community regarding the change of use or redevelopment are provided; and
- d) There is an equivalent facility available or one is made available prior to the commencement of redevelopment, to serve the same need in an equally accessible and convenient location.

PUBDM43 of the 2019 Publication version of the Local Plan is similar to the new NPPF policy.

In the [Inspector's Report](#) for the 2019 Local Plan examination, the Inspector says:

97. Criterion d in Policy PUBDM43 allows the loss of community facilities where an equivalent facility is available. This could lead to the loss of valuable facilities in villages and fail to protect rural communities. The criterion should therefore be deleted, in order to ensure the policy is effective and consistent with national policy relating to the rural economy and healthy communities (**M63**). Amendments are also needed to clarify that pubs are excluded and are covered by a separate policy in the Plan (**M64, M65**). Linked to this, Policy PUBSSPUBS on pubs should be re-titled to clarify it relates to pubs across the Broads, and not just those by the waterside (**M113**).

The 2019 Local Plan stance was rolled forward into the emerging Local Plan for the Broads.

5.5 Proposal

It seems there is no choice but to remove part 1 of the emerging Local Plan policy PUBDM58. This is because the NPPF will have precedence. It is disappointing as we agree with the 2019 Local Plan Inspector that this could lead to the loss of valuable facilities. It is proposed that reference to the tests set out in the NPPF are referred to at part 1 and the rest of the policy remains the same.

1. Applications for the change of use or redevelopment of an existing community, visitor or recreational facility or service that meets a local need or contributes to the network of facilities through the Broads will only be permitted where <u>it meets the tests set out in policy HC6 of the NPPF (or successor)</u> .÷
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- ~~a) It can be proven that there is no community need for the service/facility; and~~
- ~~b) It can be demonstrated through an assessment of viability that the current use is economically unviable.~~

2. In all instances, details of consultation with the community regarding the change of use or redevelopment need to be provided.

3. Where appropriate, any historic features which allow buildings to be read as an important former community use/service should be restored or protected.

6. Parking standards

6.1 What the NPPF2026 says

TR2: Local parking standards

1. Development plans should set local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, across the plan area or for specific sites or sub-areas, in a way which aligns with the transport vision for the plan and opportunities to promote sustainable transport.

6.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Parking Standards

Some districts have their own set parking standards. The County Councils also have their own set parking standards. These will be of relevance when considering a scheme.

6.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
Development plans should set local parking standards for residential and non-residential development.	Defers to district and county council parking standards.

6.4 Discussion

Neither the currently adopted Local Plan (2019) or the submitted Local Plan set standards specific to the Broads, but instead refer to district and county council standards. This is because it is not logical to have a specific Broads' standard when for some settlements, part is within the Broads for planning purposes and part is within the neighbouring district.

6.5 Proposal

There is not a reason to change the Local Plan. **No change proposed.**

7. Development outside settlements/development boundaries

7.1 What the NPPF2026 says

S5: Principle of development outside settlements

1. Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework:

...ineralia...

c. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the existing building²⁵. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not disproportionately larger than the one it replaces;

7.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM62: Re-use, conversion or change of use of buildings

1. The re-use, conversion or change of use of buildings and structures to employment, tourism (including holiday accommodation for short stay occupation on a rented basis), recreation and community uses will be supported where:

...interalie... (criteria a to g)

2. The conversion of a building or structure to a residential use outside a development boundary, where the building would be used as a second home or for the main residence of the occupiers, will only be acceptable when all the above criteria are met and when it is clearly demonstrated that employment, recreation, tourism, and community uses would be unviable.

3. The conversion of a building or structure to holiday/tourism accommodation would need to meet criteria a to g of this policy as well as the requirements of the policies in the tourism section.

4. For proposals outside development boundaries for uses other than residential, second homes and tourism accommodation (which are covered in criteria 2 and 3), the above criteria will apply and also that the building is in a sustainable location, with adequate access to services and facilities or adequate access to people who would use the service or facility.

5. The Authority may seek to apply conditions limiting the ability to change use to other uses within Use Class E without the need for planning permission.

7.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
NPPF 2026 S5 1 C does not set a use hierarchy for reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building. But our policy does.	We set out what uses and in priority order, but NPPF does not. Seeks employment, tourism, recreation and community uses first. Only considers residential if these uses proven unviable.
Sets some criteria for the existing building: i. permanent and substantial construction ii. lawful in planning terms iii. any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the existing building iv. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use v. and not disproportionately larger than the one it replaces.	Also sets some criteria for the existing building... the following assesses the NPPF wording: i. This is not in the policy. ii. This is not in the policy. iii. Part d of the policy covers this and some other things. iv. Our Local Plan allows a change of use. v. Part d of the policy covers this and some other things. But there are many other things that the policy includes that are not included in this policy of the NPPF: Part 1a refers to the building being re-used is structurally sound. Part 1b and 1d refers to the impacts of the scheme on the surroundings. Part 1c refers to design quality. Part 1e refers to highways impact. Part 1f and g refers to impact on or of wildlife, climate change, flood risk amongst other things. Part 2 refers to if schemes are for residential.

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
	Part 3 effectively cross refers to tourism policies that would be of relevance. Part 4 refers to adequate access. Part 5 seeks to control future PD rights.

7.4 Discussion

The Local Plan policy includes more than the NPPF policy. That does not make it contrary to the NPPF policy. The extra criteria in the Local Plan policy reflect local circumstances and can all be justified.

While S5 does talk about allowing tourism development outside of development boundaries, it does add a caveat; 'unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework'. As such, it seems there could be instances whereby location outside of settlements is not appropriate.

The main issue is that in not setting out a hierarchy of preferred uses for conversions the NPPF by default includes residential development. However the Local Plan seeks to promote economic/tourism uses before residential use in order to protect the wider viability of the Broads. Only after demonstrating that those uses are not viable would residential be considered.

This is an important distinction; given the protected status of the Broads and the limited opportunities for new build, the reuse of existing buildings provide a valuable way of development which potentially has the least impact on the landscape and serves to retain existing, often historic structures. However the need is not for residential (the OAN is low and is part of the district requirements) but for economic and tourist uses that will sustain the economy of the Broads.

7.5 Proposal

In terms of the additional criteria, the Local Plan policy supplements the NPPF with specific issues to address and consider. These reflect the protected landscape and special qualities of the Broads. For the reasons set out above it is **not proposed to make any changes** to policy PUBDM62.

8. Special qualities of the Broads

8.1 What the NPPF2026 says

N4: Protected Landscapes

1. Development proposals within Protected Landscapes should be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed to avoid harm to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the Protected Landscape. Substantial weight should be placed on the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of these areas, and to conserving and enhancing wildlife and cultural heritage in National Parks and the Broads.

...inter alia...

3. Where, exceptionally, proposals for major development are approved within Protected Landscapes, steps should be taken to mitigate potential adverse impacts on their special qualities and statutory purposes⁶⁰, including on features such as tranquillity and dark skies.

8.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

The special qualities of the Broads are referred to throughout the Local Plan as a consideration. For example:

Policy PUBSP10: A prosperous local economy

1. Proposals that contribute towards sustainable economic growth, prosperity and employment will be supported, subject to other policies in this local plan, there being no adverse impacts on the special qualities of the Broads, and there being sufficient infrastructure to accommodate proposals.

Policy PUBSP12: Sustainable tourism

f) Promoting low-impact tourism which seeks to protect or enhance the special qualities of the Broads which visitors come to see, enjoy or experience.

Policy PUBDM61: Advertisements and signs

6. Where an advertisement or sign would have an adverse impact on the special qualities of the Broads, it will be refused.

8.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
Refers to impacts on special qualities and avoiding harm to special qualities.	Protect or enhance special qualities/not have adverse impact on the special qualities.

8.4 Discussion

Generally, the NPPF and Local Plan are in alignment in terms of the special qualities. The special qualities are included in the Local Plan at section 7.5. The Broads Plan (the management plan for the Broads) sets out the special qualities and the list in 7.2 is taken from the most recent Broads Plan. The Broads Plan is updated every five years.

8.5 Proposal

Amend section 7.5 as follows to reflect that the Broads Plan is updated every five years.

7.5 The special qualities of the Broads

The Broads Plan sets out the special qualities of the Broads. Over the years, the Authority has asked people to identify the special qualities or features of the Broads they value most. The special qualities listed below are those in the version of the Broads Plan that was in place at the time of writing this Local Plan. It should be noted that the Broads Plan is updated every five years and so the most up to date version of the Broads Plan should be checked in relation to the special qualities. ~~Common responses include:~~

- The winding rivers and open water bodies – the ‘broads’
- The variety of habitats
- The abundance and rich diversity of wildlife
- Navigable, lock-free waterways to explore and enjoy
- The variety of patterns and textures in the landscape
- Countryside access to both land and water
- ‘Big sky’ views, dark skies and a sense of remoteness, tranquillity and wildness
- The people, the visitors, the activities
- The history and historic environment: Earth heritage, heritage assets, archaeology
- Boating, boatbuilding and unique heritage fleets
- Cultural assets, skills and traditions such as thatching and millwrighting
- People’s interactions with the landscape
- Waterside settlements and quiet villages

9. Location of gypsy and traveller sites

9.1 What the NPPF2026 says

HO12: Traveller sites

1. Development proposals for traveller sites should be located so that they:
 - a. Provide a settled base while recognising the extent to which traditional lifestyles (whereby some travellers live and work from the same location thereby omitting many travel to work journeys) can contribute to sustainability and may also mean that locations not well-related to existing settlements may be appropriate; and
 - b. Enable access to frequently used services, such as education, welfare and health services, including ensuring that children can attend school on a regular basis.

9.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM45: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People

...inter alia...

3. Where there is a proven need, appropriate development will be allowed where the following criteria are met:

...inter alia...

- b) Well related to existing settlements, services and facilities and do not harm the character and appearance of the area;
- c) Within reasonable distances to facilities and supporting services that can be accessed by various modes of transport, not just motor vehicles;

9.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
Locations not well-related to existing settlements may be appropriate	Well related to existing settlements, services and facilities
Enable access to frequently used services	Within reasonable distances to facilities and supporting services that can be accessed by various modes of transport, not just motor vehicles

9.4 Discussion

The emerging Local Plan policy's stance of sites needing to be well related to existing settlements is contrary to the new NPPF's stance. The new NPPF would take precedence, and the new Local Plan will need to be amended. The NPPF does say 'may' also mean that

locations not well-related to existing settlements may be appropriate'. The use of the term 'may' means that this could be suitable in some occasions and not for all schemes.

In terms of access to frequently used services, the thrust of the new NPPF and the policy are similar, providing there is an allowance made for sites that are not well related to settlements where a justification for the location is given and accepted.

9.5 Proposal

It is proposed to make the following amendments:

b) Well related to existing settlements, services and facilities. Where locations are not well related to existing settlements full justification for such locations is required as part of any planning application; and

c) do not harm the character and appearance of the area;

10. Re-use of historic buildings

10.1 What the NPPF2026 says

HE4: buildings should ‘maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation’

HE6: ‘securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or under-used listed building’ is now listed as an ‘important public benefit’ to be considered in weighing up proposals.

E4: suggests rural businesses should be supported through the conversion of existing buildings.

HO11: lists reuse of a redundant or disused building, including listed buildings, as one of the circumstances under which isolated homes in the countryside could be allowed

10.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM14: Re-use, Conversion or Change of Use of Historic Buildings

1) Specifies that where possible its original use should be retained and then goes on to specify preferred uses.

2a) Requires a structural survey.

2c) Requires the retention of features that contribute positively to the character of the building.

3) For non-designated heritage assets, where it is not possible for the structure to remain in the use for which it was originally designed, employment, recreation or tourism uses (excluding holiday accommodation) will be the next preference. Conversion to residential uses, which includes holiday accommodation, will only be permitted where employment, recreation or other tourism uses of the building are proven to be unviable.

10.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
buildings should ‘maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation’	Wherever possible, the building or structure should remain in the use for which it was originally designed.
lists reuse of a redundant or disused building, including listed buildings, as one of the circumstances under which isolated homes in the countryside could be allowed	Sets out a use hierarchy.
-	Includes some useful detail.

10.4 Discussion

PUBDM14 goes beyond the NPPF (as was the case with the previous version) in requiring a structural survey (although this is required to fulfil the requirements of HE5 to assess the impacts of the proposal) and the retention of features that contribute positively to the character of the building.

PUBDM14 also specifies that where possible its original use should be retained and then goes on to specify preferred uses. Reference to retaining a building's original use, finding an optimal viable use is now removed from the NPPF which is arguably more permissible and requires buildings should 'maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation' (HE4) and 'securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or under-used listed building' is now listed as an 'important public benefit' to be considered in weighing up proposals (HE6). The policy is in accordance with E4 which suggest rural businesses should be supported through the conversion of existing buildings but HO11 lists reuse of a redundant or disused building, including listed buildings, as one of the circumstances under which isolated homes in the countryside could be allowed, contrary to PUBDM14 which states residential use would be the last of all the uses to be permitted.

10.5 Proposal

The following changes are proposed:

PUBSP4

The historic environment of the Broads will be conserved ~~protected~~ and enhanced.

PUBDM13

7a Where proposals which involve the unavoidable loss of any heritage asset or part of a heritage asset...'.

7b) ~~The demolition of structurally sound buildings which make a positive contribution to the significance of a conservation area will be resisted unless there are exceptional circumstances, including when the demolition is proposed as part of a scheme for redevelopment which would make a greater positive contribution to the Conservation Area.~~ Where the demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation

the ~~public~~ benefits of the proposal.

PUBDM14

Policy PUBDM14: Re-use, Conversion or Change of Use of Heritage Assets ~~Historic Buildings~~

2a) ~~Development proposals appropriately re-use redundant or under-used heritage assets with the optimal viable use⁵⁹, securing their long-term conservation and enhancement, including of their setting;~~ Development proposals appropriately secure a use for redundant or under-used heritage assets which is consistent with their conservation⁵⁹, taking into account their long-term maintenance, conservation and enhancement, and the positive contribution the assets make to their setting and the distinctiveness of the Broads.

⁵⁹ Sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires investment and putting heritage assets to a ~~viable use consistent~~ with their conservation is likely to enable the maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation. Certain heritage assets may have limited or no scope for new uses and indeed may be so sensitive to change that alterations to accommodate a viable use would lead to an unacceptable loss of significance. It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also the future conservation of the asset. The ~~optimum viable~~ use may not necessarily be the most profitable one. ~~If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use.~~ If there is a range of alternative ~~viable~~ uses, the optimum use consistent with their conservation is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes.

2d) The proposal can be achieved in such a way that ~~preserves the structure's historic, cultural and architectural features and its character~~ the significance of the asset is retained, for example through high-quality design that retains the character of the site and its architectural and historic features and / or cultural value.

3. ~~For non-designated heritage assets, where it is not possible for the structure to remain in the use for which it was originally designed, employment, recreation or tourism uses (excluding holiday accommodation) will be the next preference. Conversion to residential uses, which includes holiday accommodation, will only be permitted where employment, recreation or other tourism uses of the building are proven to be unviable.~~

11. Renewable energy

11.1 What the NPPF2026 says

W2: Securing renewable and low carbon energy and electricity network infrastructure

1. The development plan should support the transition to clean power by planning positively for the increased supply and use of renewable and low carbon energy and electricity network infrastructure. This means that the development plan, should, at the most appropriate level, seek to maximise the potential for suitable development by identifying:

a. Areas which are suitable for renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure, including for future re-powering and life extension, where this would help secure their development

W3: Renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure

1. In considering proposals for renewable and low-carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure, substantial weight should be given to:

a. The benefits for improving energy security, supporting economic development and/or the transition to a net zero future;

b. In the case of applications for the re-powering and life-extension of existing sites, the additional benefit of utilising an established site for this purpose; and

c. The contribution that small-scale and community-led renewable and low carbon energy projects can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, along with their associated economic and social benefits.

2. Applicants should not be required to demonstrate the need for renewable or low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure. Where proposals for this form of development come forward outside areas which have been identified as suitable for them in the development plan, their acceptability should be assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework, taken as a whole.

3. Where development is expected to be time-limited, applications should be accompanied by proposals for decommissioning and site restoration, including details of how these measures are expected to be implemented.

11.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM21: Renewable and low carbon energy

The policy includes much detail such as impacts on radar, telecommunications, MOD sites, special qualities of the Broads. Also refers to the Landscape Sensitivity Study.

11.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
NPPF is very light on things to consider for renewable energy schemes.	The Local Plan provides detailed considerations.
Refers to identifying areas which are suitable for renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure	The Local Plan does not do this.

11.4 Discussion

The Local Plan policy says a bit more than the NPPF in terms of things to consider. That being said, the things that we say to consider, are covered in their individual sections in the NPPF– like impact on landscape and heritage.

The Local Plan does not identify areas for renewable energy.

11.5 Proposal

The Local Plan policy supplements the NPPF with specific issues to address and consider. These reflect the protected landscape and other special qualities of the Broads.

There is no concern about not identifying areas for renewable energy, some, smaller speculative proposals may come forward and be assessed through a planning application.

No change is proposed.

12. New employment development

12.1 What the NPPF2026 says

E4: Rural business development

1. In applying policy E2, the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas should be supported, including through:
 - a. The conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - b. The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;
 - c. Facilities to support rural leisure and tourism and measures to retain and expand accessible local shops and services; and
 - d. Development to maintain and enhance farm viability and sustainability and support domestic food production, such as improved accommodation for livestock, on-farm reservoirs, greenhouses, polytunnels, farm shops and temporary accommodation for seasonal workers (where this accommodation is ancillary to the agricultural use and not for permanent occupation).
2. Development proposals to meet business needs in rural areas may need to be located outside settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances:
 - a. Development proposals should take opportunities, where they exist, to use previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing development; and
 - b. The siting and design of development should be appropriate having regard to the character of its surroundings.

12.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBDM31: New employment development

1. Proposals for new employment uses (classes B2, B8, and E(g)106), or the extension of existing premises used for employment uses, will be approved subject to meeting all of the following criteria and other relevant policies of the development plan:
 - a) The site is located within a development boundary or within existing employment sites or is a building that has a lawful employment use. For proposals adjacent to existing employment sites, that are outside of development boundaries, the Authority will require justification;

12.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
E4 wording allows employment in rural areas.	Directs new employment to development boundary, within existing employment sites or a building with lawful employment use.

12.4 Discussion

Part 1a of the Local Plan policy seems to be in conflict with part i of policy as E4. The rest of the policy is acceptable.

12.5 Proposal

The NPPF takes precedence over the Local Plan and so the following amendment is proposed:

1. Proposals for new employment uses (classes B2, B8, and E(g)106), or the extension of existing premises used for employment uses, will be approved subject to meeting all of the following criteria and other relevant policies of the development plan:
 - a) The site is located within a development boundary or within existing employment sites or is a building that has a lawful employment use or in line with policy E4 of the NPP F2026 (or successor). For proposals adjacent to existing employment sites, that are outside of development boundaries, the Authority will require justification;

13. Location of tourism development

13.1 What the NPPF2026 says

S5: Principle of development outside settlements

1. Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework:

...inter alia...

b. Development for rural businesses and services, including tourism, where a location outside settlements is shown to be necessary;

E1: Providing the conditions for long-term economic growth

1. To support business investment and employment, development plans should, at the most appropriate level:

...inter alia...

c. Allocate sites to implement the economic vision and strategy and meet identified needs over the plan period, paying particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy (including sites and premises which are flexible and adaptable) and the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes, where a need exists or is anticipated, making provision for:

...inter alia...

iii. The expansion or modernisation of other businesses of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience (such as leisure and tourism, agriculture and other rural and land-based businesses which may be of particular importance in certain areas).

E4: Rural business development

1. In applying policy E2, the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas should be supported, including through:

...inter alia...

c. Facilities to support rural leisure and tourism and measures to retain and expand accessible local shops and services; and

13.2 What the Submitted Local Plan for the Broads says

Policy PUBSP12: Sustainable tourism

1) Sustainable tourism in the Broads will be strengthened by the creation, enhancement and expansion of high quality and inclusive tourism attractions and related infrastructure, in accordance with the policies within this Local Plan, and by:

...inter alia...

g) Locating tourism development where it is easily accessible by a variety of modes of transport including by water. Consideration will be given to the establishment of tourism facilities in less accessible locations where it relies on a specific geographically located resource to justify this location; and

Policy PUBDM36: Sustainable tourism and recreation development

1. New tourism and recreational development (including holiday/tourism accommodation of all types) will be permitted (subject to other policies of the Local Plan) where it:

a) Is within or adjacent to a defined development boundary; or

b) Is part of an existing visitor attraction/tourism site, group of holiday dwellings, boatyard or established sailing or similar club.

DM30: Holiday Accommodation – New Provision and Retention

Policy PUBDM37: Holiday/tourism accommodation – new provision and retention New Holiday/tourism Accommodation

1. New holiday/tourism accommodation will be permitted where:

a) It complies with the approach to locations for tourism and recreation development as set out in Policy PUBDM36;

13.3 Comparison

NPPF 2026	Local Plan for the Broads
S51 lists tourism as potentially being allowed outside of settlements. E1 C ii refers to the economic impacts of tourism. E4 refers to tourism in terms of rural business development.	PUBDM36 directs tourism development to development boundaries or part of existing tourism uses. PUBDM37 cross refers to those locational criteria. PUBSP12 refers to the location as well.

13.4 Discussion

The NPPF takes precedence over the Local Plan, and the emerging Local Plan policy should reflect the 2026 NPPF. Whilst S5 does talk about allowing tourism development outside of development boundaries, it adds a caveat about ‘unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework’. There could be instances whereby location outside of settlements is not appropriate.

13.5 Proposal

PUBSP12 seems acceptable and in line with the 2026 NPPF. No change proposed.

PUBDM37 cross refers to PUBDM36 in terms of locational criteria. No change is proposed.

PUBDM36 needs to be amended. The following changes are proposed:

1 New tourism and recreational development (including holiday/tourism accommodation of all types) will be permitted (subject to other policies of the Local Plan) where it:

a) Is within or adjacent to a defined development boundary; or

b) Is part of an existing visitor attraction/tourism site, group of holiday dwellings, boatyard or established sailing or similar club; or

c) meets the locational criteria set out in the NPPF. Justification for not locating the scheme in line with parts a and b of this policy will be required as part of a planning application.

14. NPPF changes that potentially support stance in Local Plan

The following policies of the 2026 NPPF support some policies in the emerging Local Plan. It does not necessarily follow that if a Local Plan policy is not listed below, it is not supported in the NPPF; the following refer mostly to changes to national policy that we have noted that reflect the stance of mostly new, but also some existing policy stances of the Local Plan for the Broads.

- a) PM13 1 b ii – refers to going beyond building regulations for water use; this supports our proposed amendments to the policy PUBDM7 on water efficiency to require 90l/h/d of water use for new/replacement dwellings.
- b) CC2 1 f – protects peatlands in a stronger way than the 2024 NPPF; this generally supports the stance of PUBDM12 on protecting peat soils.
- c) CC2 2 and DP 1 2 b – refer to overheating and are stronger than the 2024 NPPF; this generally supports policy PUBDM54 on heat resilient design.
- d) HO9 1 a i and b ii – supports our policy PUBDM48 on elderly and specialist housing needing to be in development boundaries.
- e) HO10 2 – generally supports our policy on rural exception sites, PUBDM43: Affordable housing.
- f) HC6 a – this uses a marketing period of 12 months, like we do for our marketing periods set out in our Local Plan.
- g) P3 2 d – generally supports protecting tranquillity; this supports our policy PUBSP7 that protects tranquillity in the Broads.
- h) N policies support biodiversity enhancements which is in line with our natural environment policy PUBDM15.
- i) Pubs are protected in the new 2026 NPPF in a stronger way than the 2024 NPPF and this supports our policy on pubs: PUBSSPUBS.