

National Scheme of Delegation for Planning Functions

Report to Councillors

Purpose of Report

To provide Councillors with a brief overview of the new National Scheme of Delegation for Planning Functions, which will come into force across England from 31 October 2026.

Background

The Government is introducing a national approach to how planning applications are delegated between planning officers and planning committees. The aim is to provide greater consistency across England and allow planning committees to concentrate on applications that are considered to be of greater significance to the local area.

The new arrangements are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 and apply from 31 October 2026.

There will be two main categories of planning applications:

Schedule 1 – Applications that must be decided by Officers

Applications falling within Schedule 1 must be delegated to planning officers and cannot normally be referred to a planning committee.

These include:

- Householder applications.
- Minor commercial development.
- Minor residential development, generally 1–9 dwellings on a site of less than 0.5 hectares.
- Most reserved matters applications.
- Discharge of planning conditions.
- Prior approval applications relating to permitted development.
- Permission in principle applications.
- Non-material amendments to planning permissions.
- Certificates of lawfulness.
- Biodiversity Net Gain plans.
- Certain Section 106 modification or discharge applications.
- Other minor or technical planning matters specified within the Regulations.

Schedule 2 – Applications Delegated by Default

Schedule 2 applications will also be delegated to officers by default. However, unlike Schedule 1, they may be referred to a planning committee where specific requirements are met.

Schedule 2 includes, amongst other matters:

- Larger residential developments.
- Major commercial and other development that does not fall within the minor categories.
- Listed Building Consent.
- Advertisement Consent.
- Applications relating to Tree Preservation Orders.
- Retrospective planning applications.
- Certain Section 73 applications.
- Reserved matters relating to a large outline planning permission (500 or more dwellings or 50,000 square metres or more of floorspace).
- Certain Section 106 modification or discharge applications.

When can a Schedule 2 application go to Committee?

There is a presumption that Schedule 2 applications will be determined by officers.

An application can only be referred to Planning Committee where:

1. The application meets at least one of the statutory “gateway” criteria; and
2. The nominated planning officer and nominated Member agree that it should be referred to Committee.

The gateway criteria include where the application raises:

- An economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area;
or
- A significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and other material considerations.

The nominated officer will normally be the Chief Planning Officer or equivalent, while the nominated Member will normally be the Chair of the Planning Committee.

If the nominated officer and nominated Member cannot agree that an application should be referred to Committee, the application will remain with officers for determination.

What does this mean for Councillors and Parish/Town Councils?

The new scheme will mean that many planning applications that currently go before a Planning Committee will instead be determined by planning officers.

Existing local arrangements, such as a Ward Councillor being able to automatically call an application to Committee or a set number of public objections triggering Committee consideration, will no longer be permitted where they conflict with the national scheme.

Parish and Town Councils will still be able to submit comments on planning applications. However, submitting an objection will not automatically mean that an application will be considered by the Planning Committee.

Recommendation

Councillors are asked to note the introduction of the National Scheme of Delegation for Planning Functions from 31 October 2026 and the implications this may have for the way planning applications are considered by the Local Planning Authority.