

NORTHERN ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT January 2026.

Dear clerks,

As we have not yet received reports from our PCSO's we shall give a verbal report at the next PC meeting.

Draft Local Plan Consultation (Regulation 18)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Planning that sought Cabinet's approval to consult on the Regulation 18 Local Plan document scheduled to commence in January 2026 for a period of eight weeks. There was a corporate commitment to producing a new Local Plan for Rother in line with the deadlines set by the Government, to finalise the Local Plan by the end of 2026 ready for submission for independent examination and adoption in 2027.

The Government had made it clear that increasing house building was a priority and Government imposed targets had been significantly increased last year. Rother's annual target was currently 912 homes per year, which was 4 times as many homes as were currently built in Rother and almost 2.5 times as many as the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy planned for. It was considered that Rother had a strong case for not meeting the Government's housing requirement in full, primarily due to the significant environmental constraints. However, the Council would need to demonstrate that an extensive search for suitable sites had been undertaken.

The draft Local Plan consultation document proposed site allocations for housing, employment and gypsy and traveller sites, resulting in a proposed housing requirement for the new local plan of some 495 homes per year (54% of the Government's target). The proposed site allocations had been developed following significant work and assessment beginning in 2020 and involving a further call for sites this summer.

It was noted that the Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) would be contacted by the end of the week to give them advanced notice of the consultation to begin in January (although many had already been alerted to the document, through the OSC Agenda publication) and would be encouraged to make a response within the consultation period. Members were also encouraged to use communication channels within the P&TC networks to promote the consultation to all residents.

The consultation responses would help officers pull together the 'Proposed Submission version' of the Local Plan, which would include policies relating to many different topic areas (building on the draft Local Plan published in 2024), as well as a final Development Strategy, site allocations and area-specific policies. The Proposed

Submission version of the Plan would be subject to further public consultation ('Regulation 19' stage), in summer 2026, followed by an 'Examination in Public' by a Planning Inspector.

The draft Local Plan suggests housing development in

Beckley:

a/ South and West of Buddens Green – 20 new dwellings

b/ East of Hobbs Lane – 20 new dwellings

c/ West of Oakley Cottages – 13 new dwellings

Northiam:

North of Northiam C of E primary school – 7 new dwellings

Egmont Farm, Station Road – 25 new dwellings

Staplecross:

a/ East of Stockwood Meadow – 25 new dwellings + 0.5 hectares of amenity green space

b/ East of Hop Gardens – 8 new dwellings.

Cllr. Biggs joins me in sending you our best wishes for a very happy New Year in 2026 and I'm sure you join me in hoping that Tony Biggs and his wife Carol recover soon from their severe attack of 'flu.

Cllr. Tony Ganly.