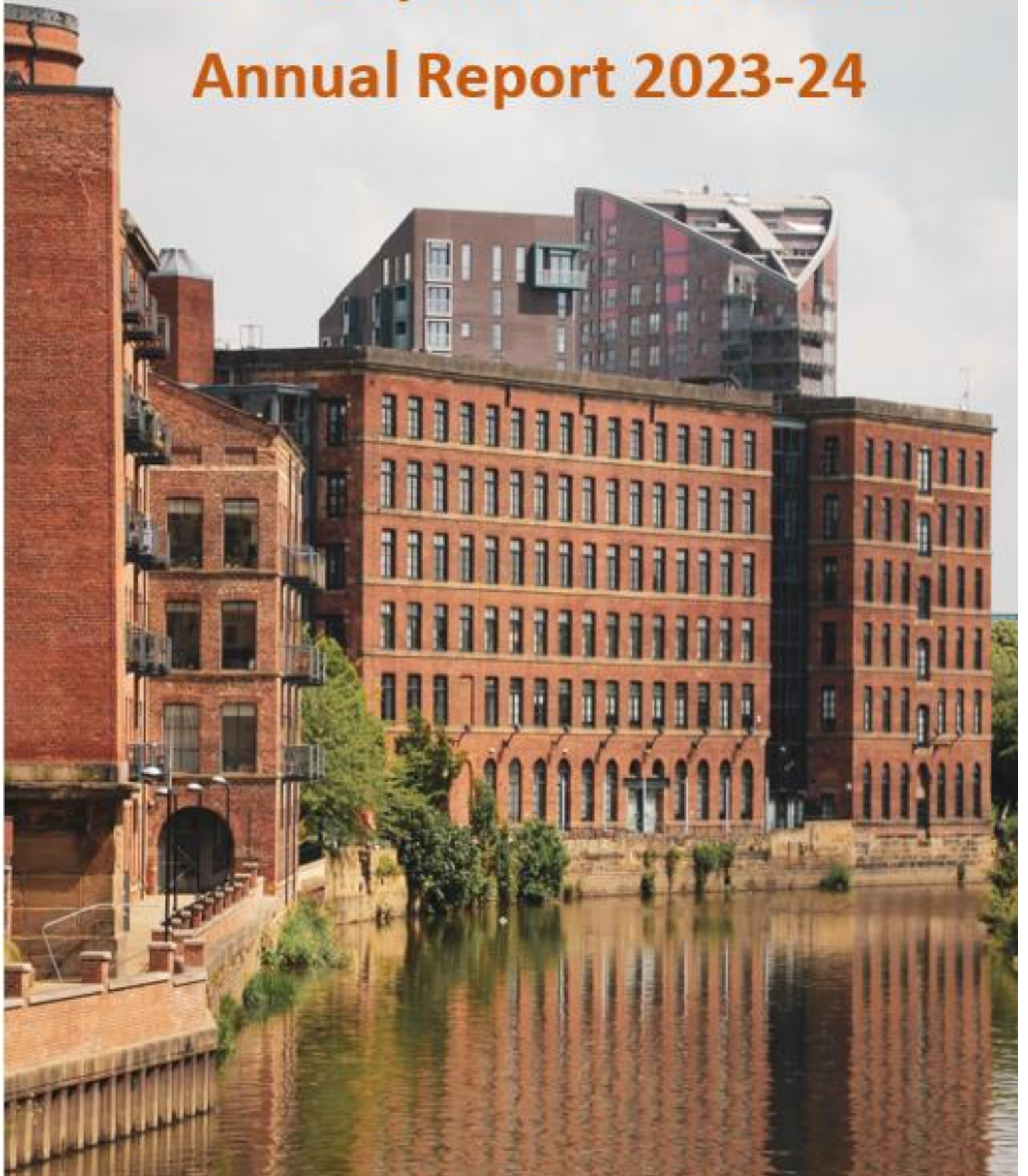


# Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel Annual Report 2023-24



## Introduction

Welcome to this Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel Annual Report, the first one in my time as Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development. The three area Plans Panels are authorised to discharge or delegate all Council (non-executive) functions relating primarily to planning applications. With regard to the Development Plan Panel (DPP), this is an Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to both the Executive and Council regarding the Authority's Local Plan.

The focus of this report is to summarise and highlight, the work undertaken by the three Area Plans Panels and the Development Plan Panel during 2023-24. Planning Enforcement falls outside the remit of these Panels and is not therefore covered in scope of this report.

This report highlights some of the key activities in this period and describes some of the major achievements in helping deliver the Best City ambitions for Leeds. As well as reflecting on the reporting period, this Annual Report also looks ahead to 2024-25 and describes some of the key challenges coming forward.

The applications coming before the Plans Panels are those which are not delegated to the Chief Planning Officer and are listed as “Exceptions” in their Delegation Scheme and ensures that significant or more contentious applications have Member oversight. These applications can be challenging, balancing the current and future needs of the district, delivering the inclusive growth needed, whilst still taking account views of local communities, in meeting both social and environmental objectives. Several applications in the reporting period have been contentious, requiring the Plans Panels to navigate through sensitivities, as well as maintaining focus on matters within the remit of Planning and setting aside matters dealt with by other legislation or agencies. However, the national legislative and policy driven framework within which planning operates, twinned with decision making processes, as endorsed by the Council’s Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, has ensured that decisions are robust, transparent and lawful.

The work of DPP continues to set ambitious planning policies for Leeds, that respond to our net zero, inclusive growth and health and well-being priorities. The Remitted Parts of the Leeds Site Allocations Plan (SAP) were adopted in January 2024, drawing the SAP process to a full close, with the Inspector’s report concluding that the remitted part of the SAP was legally compliant and sound. DPP has also endorsed progress on the Local Plan Update “Your City, Your Neighbourhood, Your Planet”; delayed by a Written Ministerial Statement at the end of 2023. Good progress has been made, through DPP workshops and meetings, on the evidence base and potential options for the Leeds Local Plan 2040. Further consultation will take place once the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have been published and the implications for the Plan accounted for (the deadline for comments on the NPPF consultation draft closed on 24<sup>th</sup> September). In addition, various planning reform proposals including the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act and the changes to the NPPF have also been discussed by DPP.

Throughout 2023, Members were provided with updates on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act; some provisions had been implemented prior to the General Election in July 2024 and the new Government is continuing with the planning reform agenda, at some pace. Details continue to emerge and will have implications for the Local Planning Authority and consequently for the work

of the Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel, who will respond accordingly. This is especially key given the ongoing budgetary and resourcing pressures.

Finally, the work of the Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel continues to deliver positive outcomes for the district and the people of Leeds. It has not been an easy year but one which showed the strength of the Local Planning Authority and of Leeds as a Council, where elected members and council officers work collaboratively and positively to help deliver this Council's ambitions. I would like to express my thanks in particular, to members of the Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel and Council Officers involved in the planning process for enabling long term investment, environmental improvements – through a Plan-led process, and any ensuring negative impacts upon communities are mitigated. We look forward to another successful year ahead.



**Councillor Jonathan Pryor**

**Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development**



Plans Panel activity 2023-24



**30 Plans Panel meetings and 4 Development Plan Panel meetings**



**Pre-application presentations for new homes including Springhead Road Holbeck, The Headrow, Kirkstall Road**



**Almost 7,000 new homes received consent at Plans Panel, including 561 affordable homes**



**Pre application presentations for Student Accommodation including SOYO Quarry Hill and Land at York Street**



**Over £16m in offsite contributions from approved schemes delivered through Section 106 agreements**

**Generated over £10m**

**in Community Infrastructure Levy through approved schemes**

## Significant schemes considered by the Plans Panels

### Development sites that form part of the East Leeds Extension.



These 3 sites will deliver 700 houses within the Middle and Northern Quadrants, adjacent to the East Leeds Extension. The developments provide a mix of units, policy compliant levels of affordable housing, sustainable drainage solutions, significant areas of landscaping and open space with policies in respect of accessible

housing and space standards also met. Before coming to a decision on the applications, Members considered a series of reports relating to these developments and had significant input into the final form of the schemes.



### Application 22/06503/FU for a 100% affordable housing block of 78 flats on a council owned Quarry Hill site

Partly funded by S106 affordable housing contributions, this development demonstrates how the S106 contributions collected as part of revised affordable housing policy for Build to Rent developments, has been used to provide affordable housing operated by registered social landlords in city centre locations.

### 23/05228/FU – a mixed-use hotel and ground floor commercial uses including a council gym on part of the Kirkgate Market site fronting George Street.

This site will contribute to regeneration of the market. The proposal also helps safeguard the future of the market and improves a gap in the street and the setting of nearby listed buildings.





**22/04852/FU – A co-living residential proposal for a 10 storey building at Holdforth Court, Brussels Street.**

The scheme will regenerate a vacant site and provides a form of high-quality shared accommodation. It is the first to be approved pursuant to the adoption of a co-living advice note prepared in consultation with Development Plans Panel.



**22/04827/OT – Mixed use proposal delivering significant residential, office, commercial and community uses**

This scheme is south of Sweet Street on a nearly 4 Ha. cleared site with improved connections to Holbeck. It represents placemaking on a more strategic scale and helps to connect the city centre and regeneration of the south bank physically to communities in Holbeck.



**23/05271/FU – Demolition of the Core shopping centre and provision of student housing and ground floor commercial uses with an extended public realm/street network.**

This scheme will help to maintain the vitality of the central area of the City Centre by addressing the current challenges posed by the Core shopping centre.



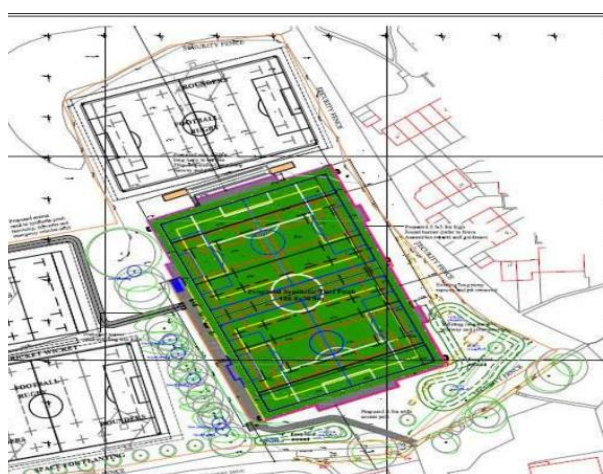
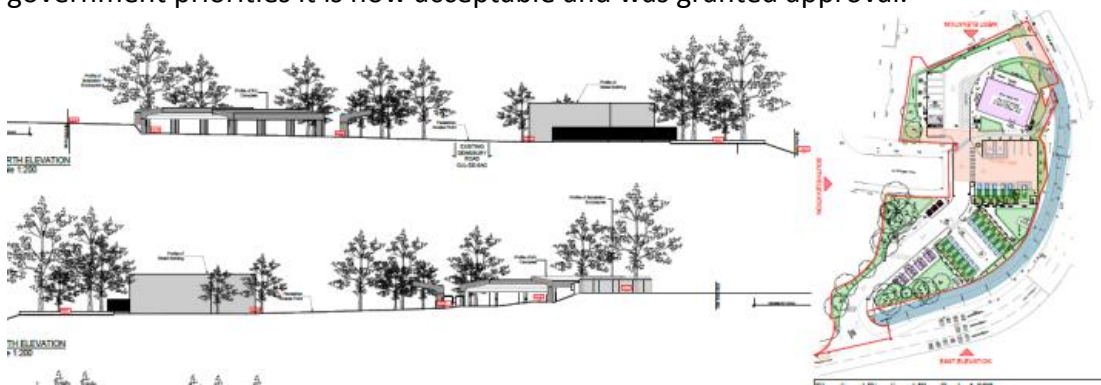


**23/02335/FU – an approx.180 bed student housing proposal on a Council capital receipt site, Burley Street and Park Lane**

Regeneration of this site which is at a prominent location on a route to and from the city centre. It also provides good quality student housing which helps to relieve pressure on HMO use of potential family housing in other areas of the city.

**23/03322/FU - Site of The Former White Bear, Dewsbury Road, Tingley**

The proposal was for a service station for electric vehicles only, located just off the M62 on a site that had a long history of Highways safety and amenity objections. However, due to changing government priorities it is now acceptable and was granted approval.



**22/03466/FU - Guiseley School, Fieldhead Road, Guiseley an application for a new artificial grass pitch with floodlighting; storage container; new emergency access; relocation of existing long jumps; associated landscaping works.**

This application involved some contentious issues. The application received an approval following two deferrals to ensure all matters were considered.



**22/06335/RM - Land at Owlcotes Road, Pudsey**, Reserved matters application (appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale) application for 50 dwellings and 4 apartments . This application also involved careful consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The application was considered by Panel three times, before it determined the application imposing conditions to address a range of mitigations

considered to be required.



**20/02710/FU - Cartwright House, Springwell Road, Holbeck** was for the demolition of existing building and construction of a 30 Storey residential development totalling 345 apartments with ancillary commercial space, landscaping and external amenity space. The application originally was submitted at 36 storeys following a pre application for a 40-storey development. It was approved at 30 Storey and after Panel consideration included a requirement for a family friendly ethos including internal play provision, It is clad largely in glass and with an elliptical

footprint, it should be a striking addition to the Leeds skyline when constructed.



## Development Plan Panel

The main focus of the Development Plans Panel has been progressing updates to the following:



### The Local Plan Update

“Your City, Your Neighbourhood, Your Planet”, Development Plan Panel Members endorsed the Pre-Submission Changes consultation in September 2023 which then took place from October – December 2023 with 44 responses received. This Plan focuses on delivering new planning policies to help address the climate emergency. However, following the close of the consultation the former Government published a Written Ministerial Statement with a view to restricting Local Planning Authorities from adopting planning policies that set local energy efficiency standards which exceed building regulations. In the light of comments received at consultation, the Written Ministerial Statement (restricting the ability of local planning authorities to set their own operational carbon targets) and changes to regulations that govern Biodiversity

Net Gain (BNG), revisions to the Plan are being considered.

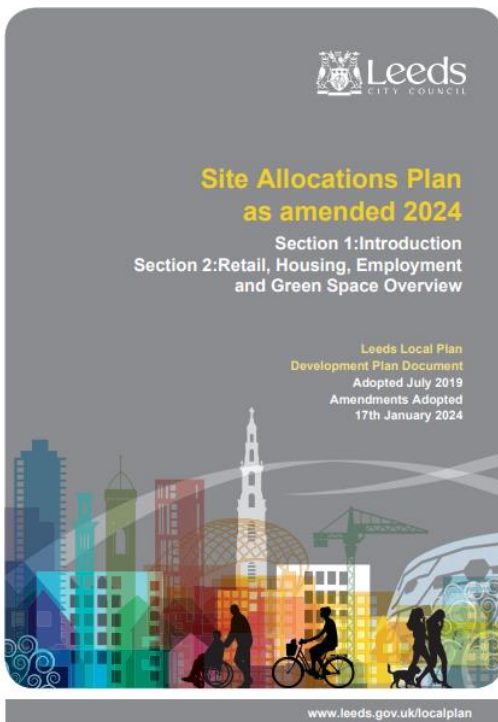
### Leeds Local Plan 2040

Significant progress has been made on the Issues and Options version of the Plan with:

- A series of topic-based DPP in-person workshops to help explore evidence and develop policy options took place from January to March 2024.
- Completion of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- Further evidence base work continued across all topics, including employment, transport, green belt, locational approach and minerals and waste.
- The large task of site assessment work on 900+ sites began following the close of the ‘call for sites process’, the completion of an urban capacity exercise, and the design of a consistent site assessment methodology.



## Site Allocations Plan



The Remitted Part of the Leeds Site Allocations Plan was adopted in January 2024. This draws the Site Allocations Plan process to a full close, with the allocation of site EG2-37 (Barrowby Lane) for general employment. The Inspector's report concluded that the remitted part of the SAP was legally compliant and sound. Being previously located in the Green Belt, the allocation of site EG2-37 required the demonstration of Exceptional Circumstances which the Inspector was satisfied were demonstrated. The District now has a modest oversupply of employment land, which helps inclusive economic growth and helps resist speculative development on unallocated sites.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

DPP has been considering the impacts of the new national BNG mandatory requirements, in response to the depletion of ecological resources. Introduced by the 2021 Environment Act, BNG became mandatory for major applications in February 2024 and other application types in April 2024. It requires a 10% net gain improvement on land, at time of receipt of an application, so developments leave habitats in a better state for wildlife than before. BNG will mean there is greater technical scrutiny on biodiversity through the planning system and there is an opportunity for the Council to act as a broker with the purchase and sale of biodiversity units for developers to fulfill policy obligations.

The Environment Act sets out a system for Habitat Banks, where the impact of development will be calculated and then it will be determined whether BGN can be achieved on or 'off site'. If 'off site', units must be purchased by developers to fund necessary enhancement projects. A report to the February 2024 Executive Board, established the principle of the Council setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle (a Habitat Banking Vehicle (HBV)), to enable the Council (rather than the LPA) to sell habitat units via the HBV, in line with the Environment Act 2021. Whilst positive, this is a complex process, and work is being finalised to set out the operational arrangements.

## Co-living Guidance

Given the emergence of the relatively new form of accommodation in the District, a "Co-Living Technical Guidance Note", was agreed in November 2023, to assist the determination of planning applications. The purpose of this is to put in place a consistent approach to dealing with this evolving sector, with a view to embedding further Policies as part of the Leeds 2040 Plan, referenced above. As part of formulating and agreeing the guidance note, Members of DPP visited the Oppidan Life Co-Living scheme in Manchester in October 2023.

## Reflecting on the year

### Member training

All Plans Panel members and substitute Plans Panel members in 2023-24, have undertaken the prescribed compulsory training. Additionally, a programme of discretionary member training was made available to all members of the Council, with the following sessions offered:

- Developer contributions
- Landscape planning and Trees.
- Enforcement and contaminated land
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
- Conservation

### Joint Plans Panel

A meeting of the Joint Plans Panel took place in September 2023, (an informal meeting of all the Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel) and discussed:

#### Member training Offer

As a basis to improve the clarity of the compulsory training programme, documentation of the member training offer for Planning and Sustainable Development was prepared and has been further updated to take account of digital opportunities for member training and timescales for accessing compulsory training. This was considered and subsequently agreed by Joint Plans Panel in September 2023.

#### Changes to the Public Speaking Protocol and Planning Code of Good Practice

As part of the regular review of the services' governance documents, two reports were considered by the Joint Plans Panels for consultation; the first was the '*Protocol for Public Speaking*', which further clarified arrangements for public speaking at Panel. The purpose of this was to bring the approach further in line with GDPR requirements and to provide greater transparency and clarity on the process for decisions made, not in accordance with the officer recommendation. In relation to the '*Code of Good Practice*', Joint Plans Panel were consulted on changes on Members' contact with developers, in the interest of probity and in the interest of clarity, removing duplicate information which was already in other documents.

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

Several contentions applications (including some referred to above), have been considered by the Plans Panels in 2023-24, relating to impacts on Protected Characteristics. Such applications have been dealt with carefully and sensitively in accordance with our protocols and legal requirements. The service carried out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) on the proposals in compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty to give proper consideration and due regard to the needs of diverse groups of people. An EIA is an evidence-based approach designed to help the decision-making processes to demonstrate that the Council has considered the equality impacts of its decisions. The core purpose of carrying out an EIA is to analyse a proposed activity against the three specific requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and use the outcomes of that analysis to inform



further decisions and action aimed at satisfying the discharge of the PSED which may include mitigating potential adverse impacts, or else to provide clear justification for continuing with a proposed course of action. In all applications, due regard was very carefully given and where possible, measures were put in place to mitigate the impacts of the development. Further Member training on this issue will be delivered as part of the mandatory Autumn Update training in November 2024.

### **...and looking ahead**

#### **Government reform of planning**

There are many and wide-ranging proposals coming forward as part of the Government's reform of planning, all of which will impact on the way new homes and other development is delivered. Full details are yet to emerge and the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is anticipated in the new year 2025. Proposals include the calculation of local authority housing requirements, boosting the delivery of Affordable Housing and revisions to the Plan-making process.

#### **Member and officer safety at Plans Panel meetings**

There have been a series of incidents at Panel meetings over the last year, which have raised concerns amongst Panel members and officers about security and inappropriate behaviour at meetings. Incidents include shouting, interruptions and acting aggressively from the public gallery. More recently, a number of incidents have occurred, which have taken place outside of the reporting period of this Annual Report. In response to these incidents, a comprehensive suite of measures have been introduced to tackle these issues. These are being kept under review. The purpose of making reference to these issues here, is to give Council the necessary reassurance, that these safeguards are now in place.