

Ward Councillor Report for Maulden PC, 14th September 2026

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

Changes to the NPPF came into law on 17th August 2026. These are very significant for how town and parish councils and Ward Councillors can engage with the planning system locally.

All planning applications are considered by planning officers, and usually decided by planning officers in line with national legislation and the Local Plan and other local policies. Previously, Ward Councillors could “call-in” an application to be considered by the CBC councillor planning committee (Development Management Committee). Ward Cllrs would do this if requested by town or parish councillors, and sometimes by residents or organisations. DMC would also consider applications where an objection from a town or parish council could not be overcome by conditions/agreements.

These routes to committee consideration will be closed from 31st October 2026. The new legislation separates planning applications into **Schedule 1** (all household applications, under 10 dwellings on a plot less than 0.5ha), commercial development under 1ha) and **Schedule 2** (everything else, including CBC own applications).

Schedule 1 applications will always be decided by planning officers (“*mandatory delegation*”)

Schedule 2 applications will almost always be decided by planning officers, (“*presumption of delegation*”) but some larger applications can be brought to DMC with agreement of the Chief Planning Officer and Chair of DMC (a councillor) – but only if certain criteria are met.

This does not mean that it is easier to get an application through – planning standards remain very stringent and applicants absolutely need to have every aspect of their application in order for it to be acceptable. However it does mean that opportunities for communities to have their say on applications have largely been removed, except through the consultation process for each application.

What can town and parish councils do about applications?

Town and parish councils and Ward Councillors can still object to applications or ask for changes to applications to make them better. This can only be done through the consultation process by submitting responses to the application. This means that consultation responses to applications need to say everything that you want to say, and everything you want to have changed. Requests for allocation of any S106 funding should be included in your response.

If the town or parish council wants Ward Cllrs to respond to an application to support their views, this needs to be communicated very promptly to Ward Councillors. As we are always informed of applications in ward, we would hopefully pick up on any problematic or larger applications and be talking with you about them, but we will not be examining every household application.

Is there a way for local applications to come to DMC?

There is still a route for some bigger applications to come to DMC. DMC consideration of applications has been helpful for communities, because even though there is presumption in favour of permission, and there may not be substantive, defensible reasons for refusal that the committee can be persuaded of, it brings close examination of local issues and can apply conditions which improve the development and reduce its impacts. It was a channel for local knowledge into the planning system.

The new guidance states:

Schedule 2 application may only be referred to Planning Committee where:

- (a) at least one of the statutory criteria is met; and*
- (b) both the nominated officer and nominated member agree that the application should be referred.*

The statutory criteria are:

- *the application raises one or more economic, social or environmental issues of significance to the local area; or*
- *the application raises one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and other material considerations.*

CBC are still considering whether a route can be created for Ward Councillors to indicate to the “nominated officer and nominated member” that an application raises an “economic, social or environmental” issue of local importance. Councillors have asked for guidance on what those issues could be.

Using language in responses to Schedule 2 planning consultations which indicates that the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue might help to get the application as far as consideration for being brought to DMC. This will be most effective if done together with Ward Cllrs.

Changes in town and parish council processes

The need for more thorough and detailed consultation responses may conflict with the timescale of town and parish council meetings. Town, Parish and Ward Cllrs can't be expected to produce detailed responses at short notice, so if applications come in at the wrong point of the meeting cycle, it will be helpful to have a mechanism for “in principle” decisions, which then allows detailed responses to be brought to councils for approval or amendment. It will also be helpful to mobilise local expertise to help produce more detailed responses when needed. Communicating about applications of concern with Ward Cllrs could be a specific delegated task for one council member.

Where do the old and new Local Plan fit in with this?

Significant conflict with Local Plan policies is one of the criteria for bringing an application to DMC and for planning officers to refuse an application or work with the applicant to make changes. As the next stages of Local Plan consultation come forward, getting policies in place which do what local people want them to, to protect historic and natural landscapes and insist on good planning and high quality developments with strong climate resilience, gives us a framework to reject poor speculative development. Engaging with Local Plan consultation processes is really important!

Full details of the NPPF Changes are here: [The Town and Country Planning \(Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)

With a good summary list here:

[Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) and other changes to the planning system: August 2026 | Local Government Association](#)

Quiet Lanes

Cllr Clinch has submitted proposals for Water End to be considered for designation as a “Quiet Lane” prioritising resident amenity and active travel. Please see separate report.

Devolution

Over the next few years, an additional strategic tier of government will be established in all areas of England. Central Bedfordshire Council has voted to respond positively to the “Rewiring the State” proposals from government, notably expressing interest in proceeding directly to a Mayoral Strategic Authority rather than engaging with a phase of Foundation Strategic Authority, where decisions for the SA area would be made by the constituent councils. A Mayoral SA choice enables earlier access to significantly more funding for the SA area.

The extent of the Mayoral Strategic Authority is yet to be agreed. Whilst Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes are currently interested in proceeding with Central Bedfordshire to be a Strategic Authority and this would be acceptable to government, CBC has voted to continue to look towards a wider area to have greater national leverage.

Cllr Susan Clinch

6th September 2026