Local Government Association

PAS planning advisory service

Member Briefing: Planning Committee Reforms

August 2026

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Local Government Association

PAS planning advisory service

What is PAS?

*PAS exists to support local planning authorities to provide **efficient and effective** planning services, **drive improvement** and **respond to and deliver changes** in the planning system.*

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Local Government Association

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Planning Committee Reforms: Why are they changing

Government aims for the reforms

- address **variation and inconsistencies** across the country
- tackle **inefficiencies and delays**
- ensure **good quality decision making** and
- empower planning professionals and members to **make sound decisions**

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

- **power to delegate decisions** (i.e. national scheme of delegation),
- **power to control the size & composition of committees** and
- **power to mandate training for members**

Planning Committee Reforms: When & what is changing

Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026

- Draft **regulations laid 1 June 2026**
- **Regulations** come **into force 31 October 2026**
- **Statutory review** by **31 October 2028**

Statutory changes introduce:

- A **national scheme of delegation**
  - Schedule 1 applications are to be decided by officers, and
  - Schedule 2 applications can go if they meet a criteria at a "gateway test"
- A **new 'gateway test'** applied by the nominated officer and member for Schedule 2 applications
- Having no more than **13 members of a planning committee**

What does this mean?(1)

As of 31st October 2026:

- Local authorities can only have **13 members on a planning committee**
- The **national scheme of delegation creates two types of applications**
    - Schedule 1 applications (minor applications) – which **must be decided by officers**, and
    - Schedule 2 applications (everything else) - can go to committee if they meet a criteria set out in the regulations (Reg 5(2)); an application raises either: a) one or more issues of **economic, social or environmental significance to the local area**, or
        b) one or more **significant planning matters**.
- This decision is called a **"gateway test"** and is made by of a nominated officer and member agree for the application to proceed to committee

What does this mean? (2)

- It is not expected that **all Schedule 2 applications will go to the "gateway test"** or that all applications will pass the "gateway test" to go to committee.
- It is for **each authority to decide** which:
  - **Schedule 2 application types can go to "gateway test",** and
  - which applications **trigger the "significance" test to go to committee**
- Local Authorities can set their own designation with Schedule 2 applications, in their constitutions, as to how this will work in practice – this is described as "triaging" of schedule 2 applications

- Councils should be keeping a record (and publishing it) of the cases taken through this test, and the outcome and the reasons.

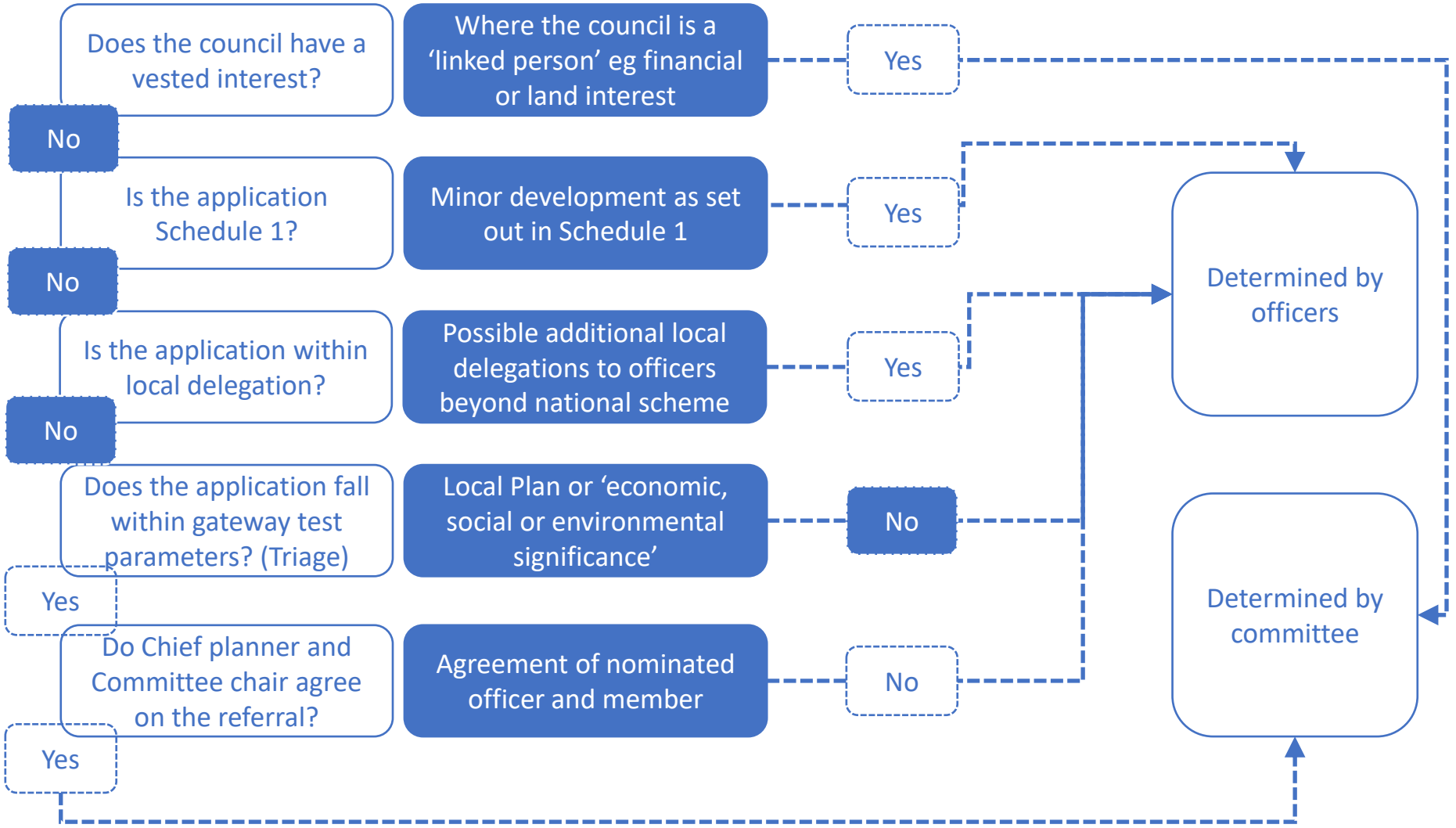
Schedule 1 & Schedule 2 applications

Schedule 1: decisions must be made by officers	Schedule 2: decisions presumed to be made by officers but could go to committee
'minor commercial' relates to use: classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 changes of use are **not** included under minor commercial	Anything not under Schedule 1
'minor residential' applications includes only dwellings and development for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of dwellings	Reserved matters – only Schedule 2 if meets 'large outline' definition

S73 applications to vary or remove conditions are now in the same schedule as the "original" application

Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 applications that the council considers to have a vested interest in ie financial or land interest or a "linked person" ie council employee or close relative or associate, may also be called to the "gateway test" and committee.

What this looks like



The Gateway Test

At least one of the criteria (a) and (b) must be met for a Schedule 2 application to be referred to committee:

a) ***one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area****, or*

b) ***one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations***

It is for the local authority to decide in their area what constitutes "significant" in criteria a) & b) but the guidance does some highlight examples that could be considered

Statutory guidance examples criteria a) significant economic, social or environmental issues :

Would **likely** be:

- Outline planning permission for a large multi-phase residential development
- Change of use from a community shop in rural area
- Planning permission or listed building consent for changes to a notable listed building in a town centre

Statutory guidance examples criteria b) significant planning matter:

What they are **unlikely** to be:

- Application in broad compliance with allocation and local policy and NPPF
- Where planning matter eg highways or flood risk was raised by statutory consultee but the application has been suitably amended to address it.

How this impacts your role as a councillor

Key points to note as a councillor are:

- **Understand** that **all 'minor development'** (Schedule 1 applications) will now **always be decided by officers**
- **Understand your council's local arrangements** for Schedule 2 and the '**gateway test**', so that you can **advise your communities** and **make representations** on whether decision should be **referred to Planning Committee**
- **Continue** to provide **views and representations** as part of **planning policy** and **Local Plan development**

Additionally, for Planning Committee members:

- Note Committee decision will **only be required for referred applications**
- Anticipate **potential change in workload** for Planning Committee

These changes do not alter the planning balance that planning decisions are made with

For councils to consider

In implementing these changes councils will want to consider:

- the impact of the regulations on your present committee:
  - **will the limit of 13 committee members** affect the committee and amend accordingly?
  - **does the council need to alter how it presently "triages" applications to committee;** no Schedule 1 applications, only the "significant" applications from Sch 2, is it seeing 7 or less applications per session?
- **How robust do 'gateway test' arrangements for the committee to be seeing what is "significant" for your authority need to be?**
- **Managing transition before the 31st Oct**
- **Informing members, community engagement and applicants of the changes**
- **How to make the new decision-making process clear and transparent**
- **Workload planning at "gateway" and committee process**

What councils need to do

Before 31 October 2026, all councils will need to:

- **Review the council's present approach to applications** going to committee and the impact of the regulations will have
- **Ensure awareness of regulations and guidance** with members, key officers and other interested parties
- **Establish a system and schedule** to apply to the **'gateway test'** locally
- **Amend the council constitution** so it complies with the national scheme of delegation and limits which Schedule 2 applications reach the "gateway test" if appropriate

Further PAS Resources



PAS website here for FAQs, recordings and presentations



PAS best practice guidance:

1. How to amend your constitution;
2. The gateway test; and
3. Material to train your members



PAS residential courses for Planning Committee Chairs @ Warwick University 10-11 October 2026 and 19-20 January 2027

Further information

Further information is available at: https://www.local.gov.uk/pas

To understand how these changes are being implemented locally, you should contact your council's planning team.

References

The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (June 2026)

Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England - GOV.UK (June 2026)

Reform of planning committees: technical consultation - GOV.UK (May 2025)

PAS 2026 Events | Local Government Association (April-May 2026)