

**More Detailed Consultant (ONH Planning) Advice and
Strategic Deadlines for the Burford Neighbourhood Plan Mtg 22 June 2026**

1. Context and Relationship with Planning Authorities The consultant, ONH Planning, represents a firm with 15 years of experience, having supported 250 neighbourhood plans across 66 different local planning authorities. He cautioned the Steering Group that West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) has historically been unenthusiastic, and at times hostile, towards neighbourhood planning. This cultural friction stems from the origins of the Localism Act, which many in the planning profession perceived as an interference in their traditional processes. A key piece of advice was to **seek independent guidance**, as planning authorities often fail to offer critical advice, such as identifying when draft policies merely repeat existing national or district rules.

2. National Policy Shifts and Protection Status A critical concept discussed was the "**tilted balance**," a planning principle that generally favours development when a local authority lacks a five-year housing land supply. However, the consultant clarified that this balance **does not apply** within National Landscapes (formerly AONBs). This provides Burford with a significant layer of protection, acting as a "bastion of planning control" that makes it much harder for speculative developers to "beat the system".

Simultaneously, **radical changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** are expected within four weeks. These changes will introduce **National Development Management Policies**, which are set to replace generic local policies regarding subjects like heritage and landscape. The consultant advised the group to be "**clever**" and focus on a small number of specific local issues rather than populating the plan with generic policies that will soon be swept away by national standards.

3. New Housing Requirements for Burford The method for calculating housing requirements changed in December 2024 to a **stock-based method**. For Burford, this formula suggests a starting point of **14 to 15 homes per year**, which totals approximately **180 to 190 homes** over a 15-year plan period. The consultant noted that these numbers are far higher than many in the town currently anticipate, and the group must address this reality.

4. Approaching Deadlines and Implementation Speed A primary theme of the consultant's advice was the **urgent need to meet approaching deadlines**. WODC is currently racing to publish its Regulation 19 plan and submit it by the end of the year to avoid being forced into a new, more rigid three-year local plan system. The consultant emphasized that the group must **put their "markers down"** during the statutory consultation period, likely starting in August, to ensure their evidence-based views are heard at the public examination next year.

Crucially, the consultant disputed the idea that the process must take three years, stating that a plan can be completed in **18 months**, or even less than six months for a review. He

urged the group to **move fast to take control** of development before the district council's local plan is finalized and developers begin speculative promotions.

5. Tactical Advice for Community Engagement Regarding the July 13th public meeting, the consultant warned against presenting a "blank sheet of paper," which he described as a "courageous" but risky approach. Instead, he advised **managing expectations** by providing the community with specific directions and options. He also suggested using tactical tools like **Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDO)** or **Community Right to Build Orders (CRTBO)**. These allow the town to secure **genuine affordable housing** that is community-led and exempt from the "Right to Buy," ensuring long-term benefits for the local demographic.

6. Conclusion The Steering Group must act immediately to appoint a consultant and prepare for the July 13th engagement. The combination of the WODC Local Plan timetable and the imminent changes to the NPPF means the window for Burford to exert influence is **closing quickly**, necessitating a front-footed approach to planning

G Haines 22.6.26