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Campaign to Protect Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

Planning explained

In partnership with

NALC

Campaign to Protect Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) fights for a better future for England's unique, essential and precious countryside. From giving parish councils expert advice on planning issues to influencing national and European policies, we work to protect and enhance the countryside. We believe a beautiful, thriving countryside is important for everyone, no matter where they live. Nationally, we don't own land or represent any special interests.

Our members are united in their love for England's landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations.

We are a grassroots organisation, with a branch in every county, more than 200 local groups and 60,000 members and supporters. Our Patron is Her Majesty the Queen and our President is Bill Bryson.

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NALC

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is the national representative body for 9,000 local councils throughout England. In all there are over 80,000 community, parish and town councillors across England. These councillors, who serve electorates ranging from small rural communities to major cities, are all independently elected.

The councils have powers to raise their own funds through council tax. Local councils provide employment for over 25,000 staff while their annual expenditure exceeds £500 million. Together, they can be identified as one of the nation's single most influential grouping of opinion formers. Around 16 million people live in communities served by local councils nationally – this represents up to 30% of the population. Over 200 new local councils have been created since 1997.

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Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

This guide was written based on our best understanding of current and emerging primary and secondary planning legislation at the time of writing (Nov 2011).

Why is the planning system important?

Why is the planning system important?

England's planning system shapes new development and the use of land all over the country with the aim of achieving outcomes that are positive for people, the economy and the environment.

The system exists to ensure that the development and use of land is in the public interest, weighing up its economic, environmental and social benefits and drawbacks. It plays a key role in helping to make the places where we live and work attractive, vibrant and well designed.

The planning system can help secure development that supports regeneration and that meets the needs of local communities. It can support the provision of affordable housing and other necessary development. It can make sure that new building in historic areas takes into account the surroundings and enhances their character. And it can prevent development where it would cause unacceptable environmental damage.

Local Plans

Local Plans are a key component of the planning system. They shape how land use and places will change and develop in the future. Planning applications need to be in line with Local Plans otherwise they are unlikely to receive planning permission. It is when Local Plans are being prepared therefore that you can have the most influence over shaping the future of your local area.

WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO YOUR COMMUNITY? THEN START PLANNING!

Once the Local Plan is adopted, many of the big decisions have usually been made, and your influence becomes more limited. It is therefore important that all of us – the public – and our community representatives, such as parish and town councillors, are aware of when and how to engage with Local Plans, in order to have our say about how we would like our cities, towns and villages to change and develop. If you don't speak up, you won't be heard! This guide will help you to get involved in the development of your Local Plan.

A community-led approach to planning

We are now entering a new era for planning. The Government wants to place much more emphasis on planning at the local level. It believes that local communities know best what the local needs are and how they should be met.

This places a responsibility on local communities but it is also an exciting challenge. It is your opportunity to have a greater say in the planning system. We can bring our local knowledge, our sense of what we value, and our desire to make a difference to our communities.

How this guide can help you

This guide shows when and how you can get involved in Local Plans, and why it's in your interest to do so. It also provides an introduction to Neighbourhood Plans. It explains:

- Why Local Plans are important.
- The need to engage with the preparation of Local Plans at the right time and in the right way to have an influence, before decisions are made on the overall strategy and approach to development.

Why is the planning system important?

- The purpose and usefulness of accompanying processes, such as Sustainability Appraisal, in identifying the most suitable approach to development.
- The role of Neighbourhood Plans and how they fit with Local Plans.

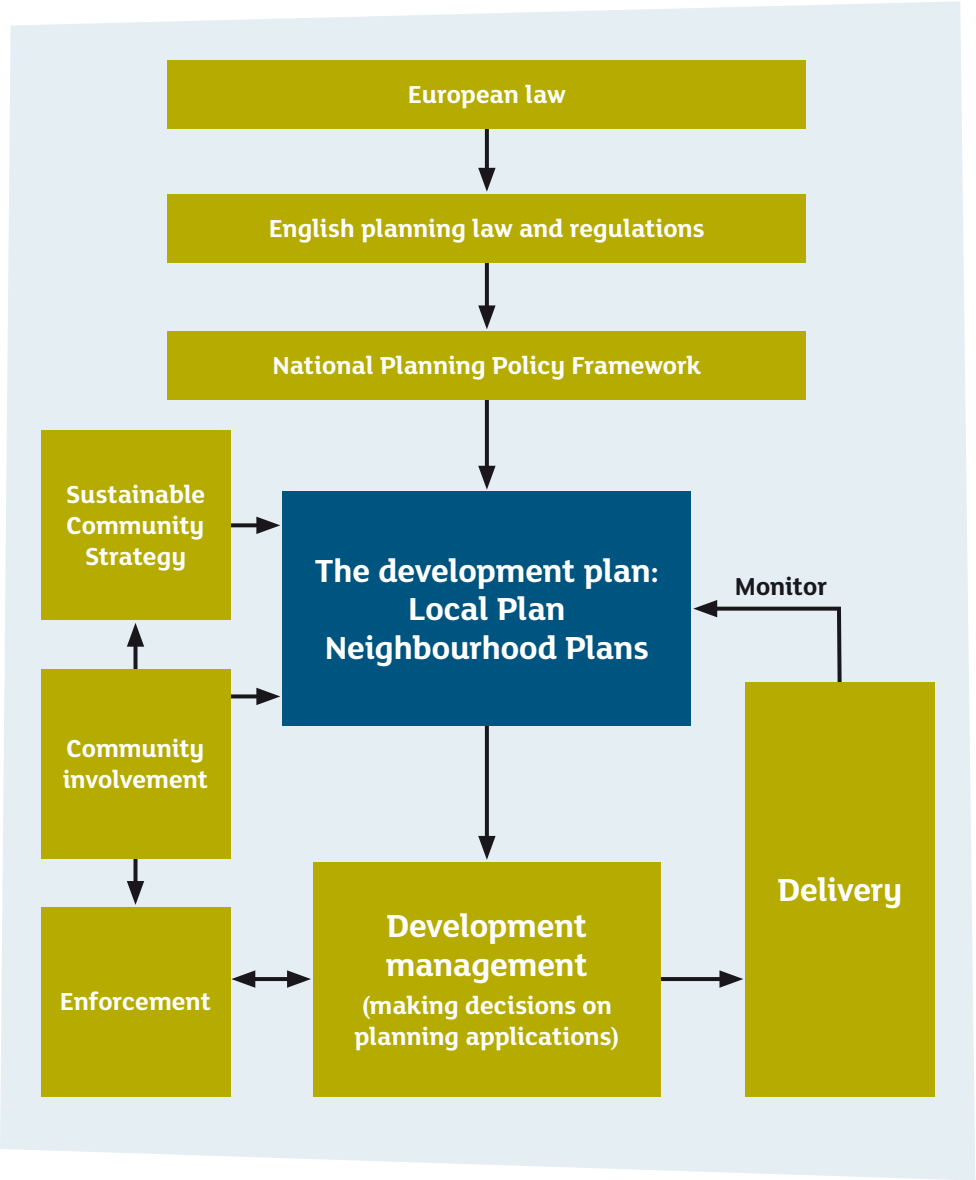
LOCAL PLANS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This guide will give you the knowledge and tools you need to get started. It doesn't cover all the details, but it will provide you with the essentials. It explains some of the terms you might come across, and provides lists of contacts and useful information if you need more advice. We hope this guide will give you the confidence to engage with and enjoy planning!

◄ *Creative planning can help to ensure that new development works with the local environment*

Why are Local Plans important?

The key components of planning



Key components of the planning system

This section of the guide explains where Local Plans sit in the English planning system, as shown in the diagram opposite, and why they are important.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS ARE AT THE HEART OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM

European law

The planning system is required to implement European law on assessing the impacts of plans on the environment and people. In the UK this process is called Sustainability Appraisal. European and UK law also requires public participation in the planning process.

Planning law

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides the main legal basis of the English planning system, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. These Acts are implemented through regulations which provide the detailed procedures to be followed. Further changes were introduced by the Localism Act 2011, including the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. It will replace previous national planning policy, which was set out in Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). National planning policy sets the framework within which Local Plans will be developed. The NPPF confirms the purpose of planning is to help achieve 'sustainable development'. The most commonly recognised definition is known as the 'Brundtland' definition:

Definition of sustainable development

'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

(The Report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, 1987)

Local Plans have a key role in delivering sustainable development:

- They have an economic role (planning for prosperity) – they help to ensure that sufficient land of the right type, and in the right places, is available to allow businesses to set up and grow, and to be supported by infrastructure such as roads and railways.
- They have a social role (planning for people and places) – they can promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing for housing, leisure and recreation facilities, shops and schools.
- They have an environmental role (planning for the environment) – they help to protect and enhance landscapes and wildlife, historic buildings and archaeology, and they can help to ensure that water, minerals and energy are used more efficiently.

The development plan

The law requires that planning decisions are made in line with the development plan, unless there are good reasons why this should not be done. These reasons are called 'material considerations'. The development plan is therefore at the heart of the system. The key components of the development plan are:

- Local Plans, which must be prepared by all local district or unitary planning authorities for their area.
- Neighbourhood Plans, which are voluntary, and are prepared by local communities.

LOCAL PLANS ARE WHERE THE BIG DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR CITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES AND COUNTRYSIDE

Sustainable Community Strategy

Sustainable Community Strategies are prepared for every local authority area. These provide a strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. They set out the issues which are important to local people, and how they might be tackled, to move towards a 'vision' of how the place should be in the future.

The Local Plan translates aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy into a plan for the future use and development of land.

Local Plans can help to protect vital local services ►

Why are Local Plans important?

◄ *Planning plays a crucial role in delivering new housing*

Local Plans – why get involved?

The role of Local Plans

Local Plans are where the big decisions on planning for the future of communities and land are made. They set out the long-term strategy for the development of the area covered by each local planning authority.

This includes deciding the future role of cities, towns and villages, and where new development should be concentrated. Local Plans identify: where, and how many, new homes should be built; the locations where businesses need more land to expand; which areas need to be regenerated (such as former industrial or military land, or older housing estates); where new shops should be located; and which areas should be protected from development (such as sensitive landscapes or habitats).

So, if you want to have your say in plans for the future of your city, town, village or neighbourhood it is important to get involved in the Local Plan. This is the best way to influence where and how development takes place. This guide will show you how.

Local Plans have to reconcile different interests

Local Plans have to mediate between different interests. It's probably too much to ask of the planning system to make everybody happy. But it does try to ensure that the interests of all those affected are taken into account and decisions are made in the wider public interest.

There will always be some important major projects – power stations, windfarms, motorways, railways, waste facilities, quarries – that the nation as a whole needs in order to keep society and the economy functioning. Undoubtedly these major developments can have a significant impact on those living nearby. But most planning is more local, and is focused on shaping cities, towns and villages. It is about deciding where and what kind of facilities we need for our own communities – our houses, shopping, leisure facilities, factories and offices, nature reserves and playing fields – and how we move about – by train, bus, car, bike or on foot.

30%

OF LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES HAD ADOPTED THEIR CORE STRATEGIES IN MAY 2011

Who prepares Local Plans?

Local Plans are prepared by the local planning authority – your district or unitary council, depending on whether you have a single- or two-tier local authority. Where relevant, local planning authorities may chose to develop a Joint Local Plan with a neighbouring authority. Minerals and Waste Local Plans are prepared by county councils or, where they don't exist, unitary authorities.

The Government expects that in preparing a Local Plan the local planning authority will seek to engage and work together with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses. This will ensure that the Local Plan reflects the vision and aspirations of the local community.

The role of town and parish councils and the public

Town and parish councils and the public have an important role to play in the Local Plan process. They are all invited to participate by making comments (sometimes referred to as '**representations**') on the draft plan. They may also be invited to participate in a consultation event, make comments at a roadshow or in response to a leaflet, or get involved in a citizens' panel. This guide will help you think about what you want to say, and to make your comments in the most effective way.

Statements of Community Involvement

Statements of Community Involvement set out how the local planning authority will engage local communities in plan making: *who* they will engage and *how*. In particular, they list the community groups and other organisations which will be contacted about Local Plan stages, and the methods of consultation which will be used. Hard-to-reach groups are identified, and methods of helping them get involved set out. There is an emphasis on '**front loading**' – getting people involved earlier on, to have a more meaningful input to the choices the plan will make.

What the Local Plan contains

The Local Plan should plan positively for the development and infrastructure communities need, setting out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include policies to deliver:

- housing, including affordable homes;
- retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- infrastructure for transport, minerals, waste, energy, telecoms, water supply and sewage treatment;
- education, health, police and community facilities;
- energy, including from renewable sources;
- protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape, wildlife, open space, listed buildings and archaeology; and
- protection of homes and property from flooding from rivers and the sea.

Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic. They should address the spatial and land use implications of economic, social and environmental change. Local Plans should set out the opportunities for development and clear guidance on what will or will not be permitted and where.

◄ *Local Plans can outline what kinds of development will be allowed in the countryside to support the farming economy*

Spatial planning

Spatial planning is also called 'place shaping' and has a wider focus than traditional land use planning. It's about identifying a vision for the future of a place which responds to local needs and circumstances, including community views, and is based on evidence. This vision is translated into priorities, policies and the identification of land for development. Spatial planning creates a framework for private investment and regeneration. By agreeing a delivery plan, it seeks to co-ordinate and deliver public-sector parts of the plan with other agencies. Spatial planning should set a positive framework for action on climate change, and contribute to sustainable development.

Local Plans must:

- Plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15-year time horizon, take account of longer term requirements, and be kept up to date.
- Indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations (e.g. nature reserves) on a proposals map.
- Allocate sites to promote development and other uses of land, providing detail on form, scale, access and the amount of development where appropriate.
- Identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the uses of buildings.
- Identify land which it is genuinely important to protect from development, for instance because of its environmental or historic value.
- Contain a clear strategy for the environmental enhancement of the area.

Plans that you may come across

Under the 2004 Act local planning authorities were required to have a Local Development Framework. This is a collection of local plan documents of which a Core Strategy is the central one. Other documents can include Site Allocations, Development Management Policies, Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Area Action Plans (all of which are optional).

The Government is streamlining the plan preparation process. Local planning authorities will now be required to have a **Local Plan**. As with Local Development Frameworks, Local Plans may be made up of a number of different DPDs. However, local planning authorities need prepare only one plan, and they can decide what the Local Plan should contain. They can choose to prepare other DPDs but must have a good reason to do so.

Different local planning authorities may therefore have in place, or prepare, a range of plans:

- The **Local Plan** (or **Core Strategy**) is the only plan that must be prepared. It sets out the strategic vision and objectives for the area – how it will look in 15–20 years' time, and what the key things are to be achieved. It sets out the plan's 'spatial strategy' – what the general location of development will be, including any significant areas of change or conservation, shown on a key diagram. The Local Plan can also identify strategic sites (allocations) of land needed for development, such as urban extensions to increase the size of a town or city, new settlements, or the locations of major regeneration or redevelopment schemes. The Local Plan can also include more general policies to guide how development takes place, what issues developers must take into account, and how development should look (Development Management Policies).
- **Site Allocations** DPDs set out which areas of land are planned for development (shown on a 'proposals map'), and what they will be used for.
- **Development Management Policies** can also be set out in their own DPD if they are not included in the Core Strategy.

6 Weeks
– THE MINIMUM TIME THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY MUST CONSULT ON ITS PUBLICATION STAGE LOCAL PLAN

- **Area Action Plans** are DPDs that guide the development of a specific site or location, for example a town centre, or other places where significant change is planned.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** provide detailed guidance on how to support the plans and policies in DPDs, for example guidance on design, or what facilities developers should plan for to accompany their developments (e.g. for sport and play). SPDs are not DPDs and do not require independent examination.

How to find out more

You can find out which plans your local planning authority wants to prepare, and when, in their **Local Development Scheme**, which you can find on the planning policy pages of their website. This should set out a programme for the preparation and review of the Local Plan. The timetables are a good starting point for planning your input to the Local Plan process.

Local planning authorities must advertise public consultations on the Local Plan, to make sure that everyone who wants to can get involved in its preparation ►

Top tip

The Local Development Scheme will tell you what plan(s) the local planning authority intends to prepare and what stage has been reached. You can use it to keep track of progress, and to work out when to get involved.

The monitoring report

Local planning authorities must report on the progress that has been made in carrying out the development planned in the Local Plan in a monitoring report.

This provides useful information on how development is progressing, such as the number of affordable homes which have been built in the area over the last few years. This information should be available on the local planning authority's website, and forms part of the evidence base on which the Local Plan is prepared.

IF IN DOUBT, SPEAK TO YOUR LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY – YOUR LOCAL PLANS TEAM WILL BE ABLE TO HELP

◄ *Supplementary Planning Documents could include policies about how to refurbish redundant buildings that are important architecturally to help bring them back into use*

What Local Plans can and cannot do

Local Plans can:

- Identify where development should take place, and when it should happen during the life of the plan.
- Decide the broad type of development that should be provided to meet local needs (e.g. housing, business, leisure, essential infrastructure).
- Mediate between competing demands for different land uses.
- Promote regeneration of town centres, derelict land or other areas.
- Protect special areas of the countryside and important buildings.
- Reduce risks to human health and well-being (e.g. from flooding).
- Help reduce our contribution to climate change and ensure new development is adapted to a changing climate.
- Reduce the need to travel by providing land for homes, schools, shops and businesses close together.
- Be flexible, to suit changing needs of business and communities.

Local Plans cannot:

- Ensure developments go ahead once planning permission is granted – this is decided by developers (and influenced by economic conditions).
- Decide in detail which type of shops or businesses are provided (unless there are good reasons to do so).
- Prevent a particular company or person from developing a site.
- Stop businesses, schools or hospitals from closing.
- Decide the quality and frequency of public transport services.
- Please everyone, all of the time.

Local Plans – why get involved?

◄ *Local Plans allocate sites for economic development*

Local Plans – getting involved

Local Plans – getting involved

Key stages of Local Plan preparation

The key stages of plan making and when to get involved are shown in the flow chart opposite.

When to get involved

The simple answer is the earlier the better! You will then be able to feed into the 'vision' of the plan – what you want your area to be like in the future, and the plan's 'objectives' (i.e. what the plan aims to achieve). The overall strategy of the plan is also decided early on – this identifies what and how much development is needed to meet local needs, and broadly where it should take place – it is known as the 'spatial strategy'.

Top tip

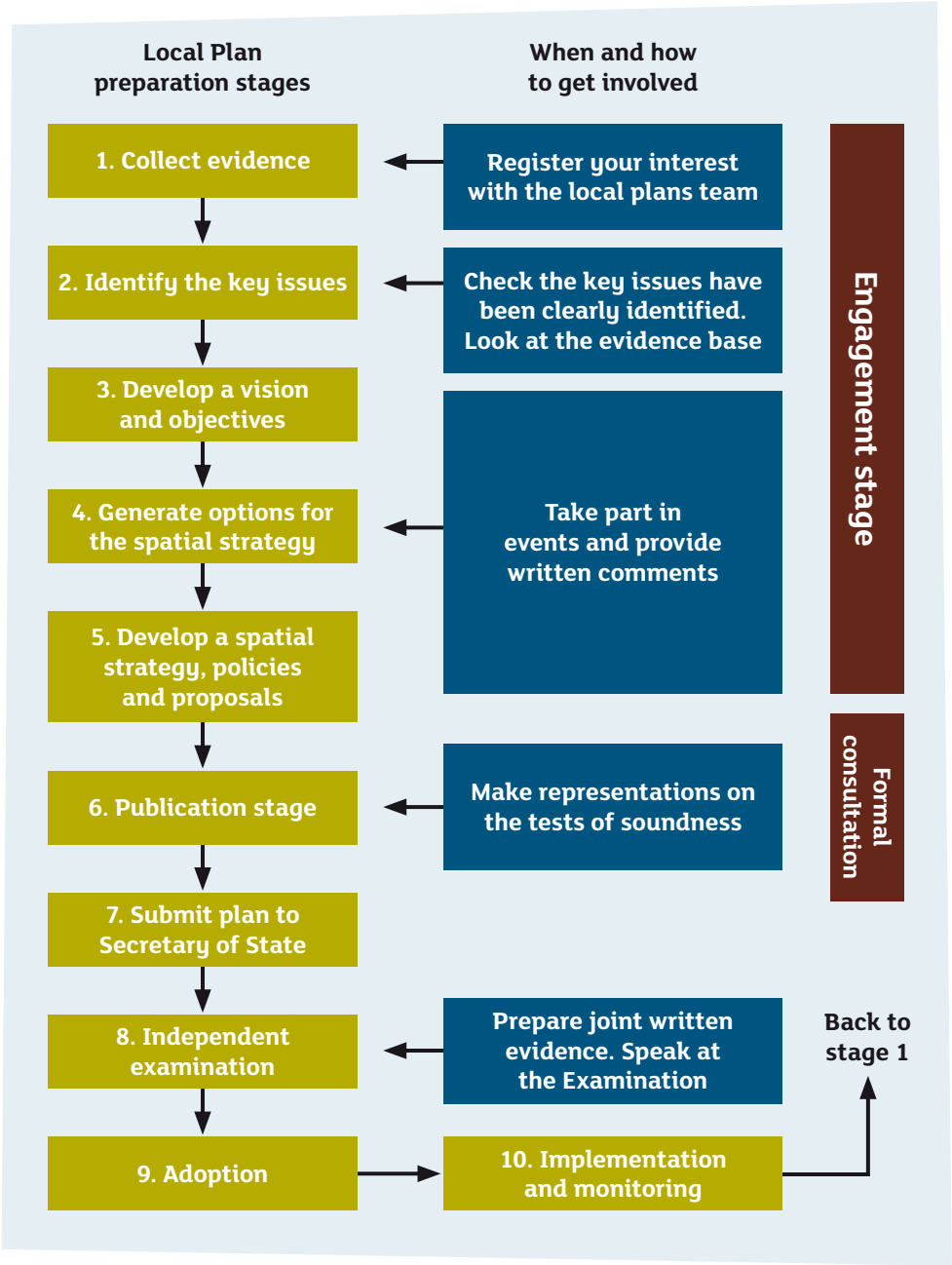
Have a look at your local planning authority's website and find the planning policy section. Look for 'Planning' on the home page, then 'Planning policy' or 'Local Plan'. Have a look at the latest consultations. If you have problems finding what you want, phone and talk to reception or the contact centre: staff there will be able to talk you through the process. Taking a little time to get familiar with the website will help you find key documents quickly, and save you time when it comes to making your comments.

How to get involved

Making effective comments

When you want to comment on the Local Plan it is important to make your comments in a way that can easily be taken on board by the local planning authority. This means keeping to the key **planning issues** – these relate to the development and use of land, and any environmental, social and economic issues which have land use implications.

Local Plans – getting involved



Planning issues include:

- The needs of businesses for land and premises.
- The need for housing locally.
- The need to provide essential infrastructure to support other development – to enable access and other connections, generate energy, deal with waste etc.
- The need for infrastructure to support communities, for example schools, parks, doctors' surgeries, village halls and other community facilities.
- Noise and other impacts on the 'enjoyment' of land (such as parks) and buildings such as homes and work places – this is often called 'amenity'. Impacts may also include dust, other air quality issues, vibration, wind and excessive shade (in areas where there are lots of tall buildings).
- Traffic and transport issues such as congestion, or the need for a new bus or railway station.
- Flood risk, water quality, water treatment.
- Impacts on nature conservation sites, important or sensitive landscapes, the open countryside, historic buildings, archaeological sites and other places which are valued by people.

Non-planning issues include:

- Private property matters (including house prices, covenants and party wall issues).
- The characteristics of a particular landowner or business proprietor.
- Which brand of shop can open in your town.
- Personal grievances.
- The right to a (private) view.

This list is not exhaustive!

Don't forget, the role of the planning system is to focus on land use issues and to act in the **public interest**.

The next thing to bear in mind is to back up your comments by referring to real **evidence**. This will give your comments more weight and substance. We provide more guidance on how to do this, and what evidence you might refer to in **Step 2** p.32.

It is easy to object to something you don't like. But what the local planning authority would like to know is what you would like to see happen instead to meet a particular need. So if you object to something in the Local Plan, be positive and **make a suggestion to improve the Local Plan** which would overcome your objection. In this way, you can really influence the final plan – your suggestion may be taken on board and your idea or words used in the final text.

Top tip

It is tempting to respond to a consultation exercise only when you don't like something. But it is equally important to let the local planning authority know when you do support a policy or proposal in the Local Plan. This will help the local planning authority to understand the range of people's views. It will also mean that the views of those people who object to something are not given precedence over those who are in favour, but decided not to respond.

Finally, consider if a **joint consultation response** would be helpful to you. If you can agree a response with other local groups, or agree to respond along the same lines, this is likely to be more effective – the local planning authority will see that a large number of people or groups share the same view.

Top tip

Don't simply bin that **consultation leaflet**! Local planning authorities often use these to contact all homes and businesses in the area at key stages of the plan-making process. They are a quick way to find out what is being consulted on, what the issues are, and how to make a comment. Leaflets are normally sent to libraries too.

Lost in local planning?
Use our navigation chart to find your way

This chart helps you to focus your efforts to suit your interests, and navigate your way around the eight-step guide which follows.

What is your interest in local planning?	Which stage to get involved in the Local Plan process	Where to find help in this guide
Are you interested in the 'big picture'? For example, what will the plan do about climate change, the need for a new railway station or road improvements, or the need for new development?	Vision/Objectives/spatial strategy/Transport and Energy Policies	Steps 1–5
Are you worried about the impacts of new development on your neighbourhood or the countryside?	Objectives/spatial strategy/ Development Management Policies	Steps 1–5
Do you want to have an influence on deciding which areas should be regenerated locally?	Objectives/spatial strategy	Steps 1, 2, 3 and 5
Do you want to find out if development is planned on some derelict land nearby?	Site Allocations/proposals map	Steps 1, 4 and 5
Do you live near a big facility which is due to close and want to know if there are plans to re-use the land?	Spatial strategy/Site Allocations/proposals map	Steps 1, 3, 4 and 5
Does your local area have a shortage of housing?	Objectives/spatial strategy/ Housing Policies	Steps 1–5
Are you worried about the future of community facilities in rural areas?	Objectives/Rural Policies	Steps 1, 2, 4 and 5
Do you need more shops locally? Is your local high street in need of a boost?	Vision/Objectives/Economic Development/Retail Policies	Steps 1, 2 , 4 and 5
Are you interested in nature conservation and biodiversity?	Check out the policy on protecting nature conservation sites/proposals map	Steps 1, 2, 4 and 5

Local Plans – eight steps for action

Local Plans – eight steps for action

STEP 1: Maximise your influence

Identify your interest

This guide aims to help you to focus your efforts, and limited time and resources, to get the most out of your Local Plan.

Your involvement is likely to vary depending on your interests – what are you most concerned about when you think about the future of your city, town, village or countryside? Are you interested in the bigger picture or is it a more local or specific issue? The navigation chart on p.28 will help you find your way around.

Getting together and sharing the load

Consider whether it would make sense to get together with town or parish councils, community groups or individuals to share the work and time needed to get involved in the Local Plan process.

You could benefit from sharing:

- Knowledge and experience – perhaps others have previous experience of the planning process and know who to contact for information.
- Expertise – do you know someone locally with planning or environmental expertise who might be willing to help look at the evidence base?
- Time – attending events and making comments can be difficult to fit in. Sharing the task with others can mean you can still have your say, but spend less time individually.
- Other resources – perhaps your town or parish council or community group has an agreement with the local library to use meeting rooms, or access to photocopying/ computer facilities.
- Enthusiasm – sharing your ideas with others can provide great motivation to action.

- A variety of viewpoints – perhaps you could involve your local school or college and test if the issues important to young people are properly reflected in the Local Plan.

Top tip

Keep in touch with the local planning authority. Call up and register your details with their local plans team. This way you'll be told when the next consultation stage is happening, and how to get involved. You may also be invited to a consultation event.

The way to maximise your influence is to attend events or workshops if you can and, most importantly, **make written comments** (representations) on each consultation exercise.

What to look out for

There are two main stages when the local planning authority will consult on the plan:

- the engagement stage; and
- the formal consultation stage.

These are shown in the flow chart on p.25.

The **engagement stage** covers the early plan-making stages, from collecting evidence to inform the plan and developing a vision and objectives, to setting out a spatial strategy, developing options, and writing policies and proposals. The Government expects local planning authorities to engage with communities to ensure the Local Plan includes a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the future of the area.

Once the local planning authority has drafted the Local Plan, at 'the publication stage', it must carry out a **formal consultation** exercise.

STEP 2: Influencing the issues, vision and objectives

At this stage the local planning authority is not required legally to consult the public, but they are strongly encouraged to do so – and in our experience almost all do.

Identifying the issues – the role of the evidence base

A key task for the local planning authority is to identify the key issues the Local Plan should respond to. What changes are expected over the next 15–20 years in your area? These may include a changing economic picture, changes to the structure or size of communities, and changes to the local environment. The Local Plan should address relevant issues set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

To understand how much change and what type of change is likely to occur the local planning authority will need to carry out or commission studies and build up an **evidence base**. Evidence will also be needed to help direct development to the most appropriate locations, whether for business, environmental or social reasons.

◄ *By engaging early in the plan preparation process, you can help determine what direction the future of development in your local area will take*

Top tip

The information forming the evidence base to the Local Plan will be published on your local planning authority's website. Phone up and ask if you can't find it.

What might be included in the evidence base for Local Plans?

Studies to identify local needs that the plan should provide for:

- Evidence of population change, local health issues and so on.
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment to identify how many homes are required of each tenure: open market housing and 'affordable housing' (e.g. shared ownership or social rented housing).
- Evidence of existing business needs and changes in the local economy.
- Research to identify the requirements of retail and leisure facilities, including the need for more land and floorspace.
- Infrastructure requirements (to cover transport, water, energy, telecoms, utilities, health and social care, waste management and recycling, flood defences, education, leisure, community infrastructure).
- Requirements for minerals, such as sand and gravel for the construction industry.
- Where relevant, information on the future use of defence sites, or other large local industrial or important sites (e.g. where these may be vacant and so available for redevelopment).
- Research to identify local needs for a range of open spaces including for sport and play, and locally derived standards.

Studies to identify existing and future characteristics in the local environment – these help the local planning authority to direct development to the most appropriate locations:

- Water Cycle Study to establish water supply and treatment capacity and identify any problems or issues (and development implications).
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to identify areas at risk of flooding.
- Evidence about the historic environment, used to assess the significance of heritage assets.
- Green Infrastructure Strategy to identify key networks of open space and where these should be protected or enhanced.
- A Landscape Character Assessment to describe the characteristics of the local landscape and which may include guidelines for development.

Studies to identify available land for future development to inform the choice of sites (allocations) in the plan – these help ensure developments can be delivered on the ground over the next 15–20 years:

- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to identify where land for housing is available during the plan period.
- Study to identify the existing and future supply of land to meet business requirements (alongside the SHLAA).

Commenting on the issues, vision and objectives

The local planning authority may consult on this stage of the plan through a variety of ways including an event or roadshow, with a stall at a local fair, festival or cultural event, or through a citizens' panel or other targeted methods. They may also consult more widely, such as through a leaflet to all homes, or articles in the press or in council magazines.

The local planning authority may hold a '**visioning exercise**' to help set the vision and objectives for the Local Plan. People from organisations which represent a broad range of local people are likely to be invited to come along and take part in a workshop. Organisations invited to the event may include: local councils, groups representing particular ethnic or faith groups, the local primary care trust, the police, the education authority, local business groups, local economic partnerships, local wildlife trusts, the local business improvement district, key local employers, representatives of the farming community and landowners, residents' associations, and county/district/ local councillors. The aim is to reach a wide cross section of the community. The event may also be used to test that all the key local issues have been identified.

If your local planning authority doesn't plan to hold this sort of event, you could ask your parish or town council to set up a local meeting or informal workshop where the planning staff can be invited to talk to your group and hear the community's views.

Get involved: Attend a visioning exercise or local meeting. It's an excellent opportunity to find out more about the Local Plan, and contribute to the vision and objectives.

By engaging with your local authority as they write your Local Plan, you could influence where major new housing development should take place in your area ►

Get involved: Make your comments at an event or roadshow, or write a written response to a more formal consultation exercise. See the box below for possible questions which may be asked by the local planning authority, or which you should ask to guide your response.

Commenting on the issues, vision and objectives

Questions to ask yourself:

- Have the right issues been identified? Is anything missing?
- Do you agree with the vision? If not, how should it be changed? Does it clearly relate to the needs and aspirations of people and communities in the local area, and local issues identified?
- Do you think the objectives will achieve the vision? If not, can you suggest changes?
- Are you happy that all the right things have been considered? If not, what other things would you like to be considered in the vision and objectives?
- Do the issues, vision and objectives flow from the Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out key local issues? If not, is it clear why not?
- Does the evidence used to frame the objectives seem reasonable? Are the objectives responding to a local issue/need for which there is clear evidence?

STEP 3: Comparing options for the spatial strategy

Drawing up options for the spatial strategy

The next main stage of Local Plan preparation is to draw up options for the spatial strategy. As we mentioned earlier, this identifies broadly where development should be located to meet local needs. Possible options might include:

- Concentrating development in urban areas on previously used (brownfield) land. This is sometimes called an 'urban capacity' option.

- A number of urban extensions on brownfield or greenfield sites.
- Development around public transport nodes (e.g. railway stations).
- Distributing development across the district/county, with most development in towns, but allowing for some development in larger villages too.
- Completely new settlements perhaps on previously developed land, such as former defence, prisons or health care sites which are no longer in use.
- A combination of these options may be proposed.

Commenting on options

This is a **key stage to make comments and have an influence on the plan** – once the spatial strategy has been decided the remainder of the process is about the detail. *If you have limited time and resources, make sure you comment at this stag*e. For a sample response see letter 1 in the **Appendix** of this guide.

Local business are also likely to get involved in consultation on a Local Plan in preparation ►

Commenting on the options for the spatial strategy

Questions to ask yourself:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
- Does the option respond to the need for development identified in the evidence base?
- Do the broad locations for development seem sensible? Are they backed up with clear reasons and references to evidence?
- Which is your preferred option for the spatial strategy (why)? Would it be best for the plan to include a combination of the options? If you think an option should be improved, explain how.

Top tip

Use the evidence base to inform and back up your comments. Talk to the local plans team if you do not fully understand what the options mean for you.

◄ *Religious groups are another section of the community who may want to respond to consultation on the Local Plan*

Get involved: The local planning authority may hold further events at this stage to consider possible spatial strategies for the area, and to get local people and organisations involved in the Sustainability Appraisal process which will run alongside and inform the plan.

The role of the Sustainability Appraisal

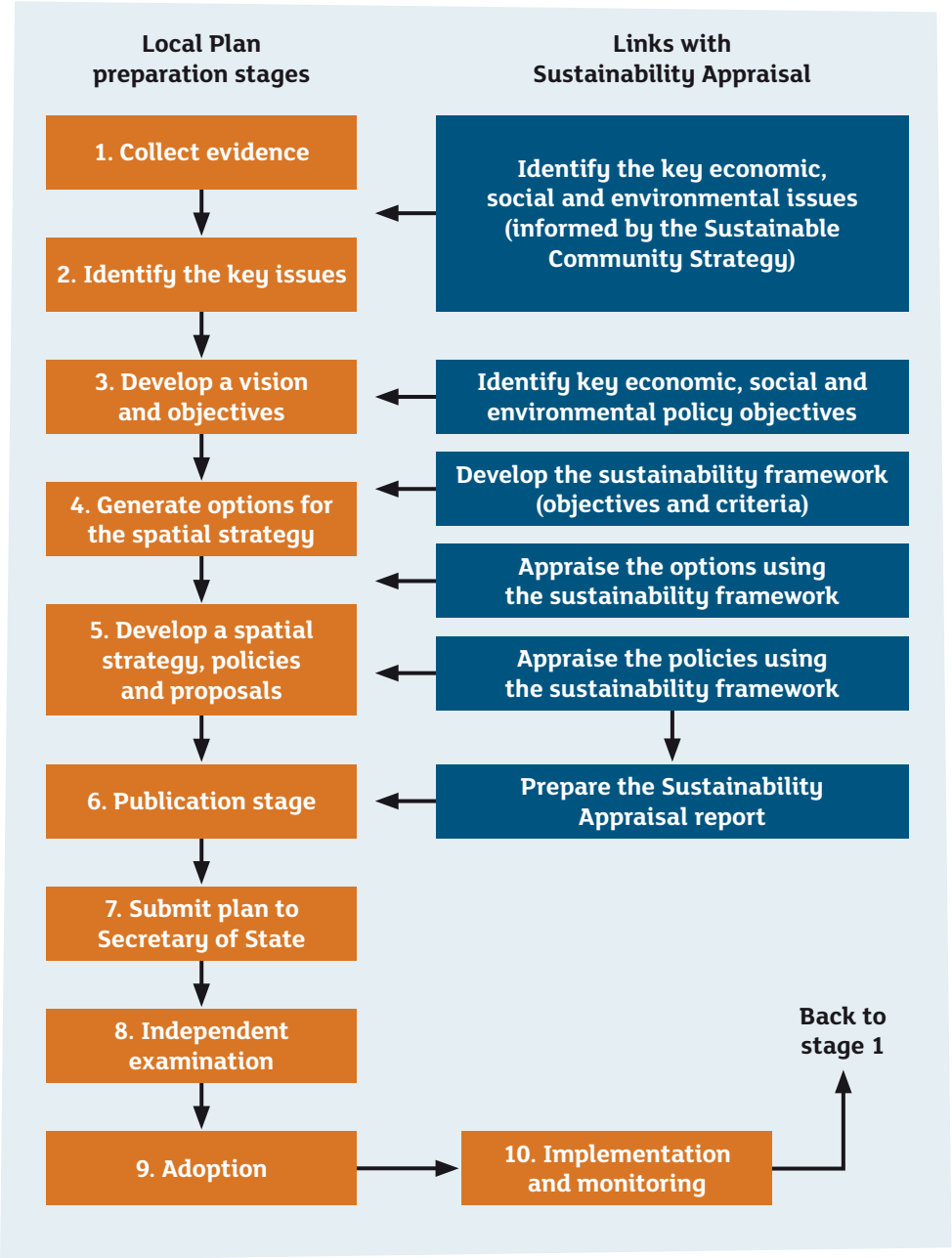
Local Plans are required to be subject to a process known as Sustainability Appraisal. This considers the likely social, environmental and economic implications of the plan, and whether these are likely to have positive, negative, neutral or uncertain effects on sustainability objectives. The sustainability objectives are informed by locally important issues which are normally identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Sustainability objectives might include:

- To provide everyone with an affordable home.
- To maximise access to job opportunities.
- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions by minimising the need to travel.
- To improve health and well-being in areas suffering from deprivation.
- To protect nature reserves.
- To ensure developments are adapted to cope with the effects of climate change.

The flow chart overleaf shows how the Sustainability Appraisal feeds into the Local Plan process – it provides a way of testing and challenging the plan, and of comparing options for where development should be located, or alternative policy responses to issues or problems.

A key requirement of the Sustainability Appraisal is to consider **options** or **alternatives** at each stage in the preparation of the Local Plan – and to explain clearly why the chosen option has been selected, and others rejected.

Local Plans – eight steps for action



Top tip

Sustainability Appraisals can be quite long and sometimes technical documents. But try not to be put off. The Sustainability Appraisal can help you understand the advantages and disadvantages of different options for development, and identifies the potential impacts. It is a good idea to refer to the Sustainability Appraisal to back up your comments. You will find the Sustainability Appraisal reports on the planning policy pages of your council's website. If you can't see them, contact your local plans team for help.

STEP 4: Understanding policies and proposals

A Local Plan will comprise a written document which will contain policies and proposals the purpose of which are explained in detail by further text (the 'reasoned justification'). It will also contain a proposals map.

Policies set out what development is planned and how this should be implemented:

- They may be strategic policies, setting out the overall direction, spatial strategy and priorities of the plan, and the requirements for different types of development (e.g. the overall amount of business space and the number of homes to be planned for).
- They may set out criteria which developments must comply with or take into account (e.g. design quality criteria, a sustainable design and construction policy, or a policy on meeting community needs).
- They may set out in detail how development should take place (Development Management Policies), for example explaining how development should take account of the local historic character.
- They may relate to defined areas where development will be resisted or where particular natural or historic assets will be protected.

Policies should provide a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal.

Proposals relate to specific sites to be developed or protected. Details should be provided of exactly what is proposed, though often a more detailed 'development brief' or 'master plan' will be prepared to guide the development.

Top tip

If you do not think that sufficient detail is provided to explain the proposal, mention this in your comments and say what changes need to be made.

Reasoned justification explains the reasons for the policy or proposal, and points to the evidence to support it. It is a legal requirement.

Get involved: You don't have to read every policy – focus on your key interests, and have a look at the spatial strategy and key priorities to get an idea of the bigger picture. However, do bear in mind that the plan will be designed to be 'read as a whole' – this means policies should not include repetition, such as including a requirement to design development to protect the local landscape in every proposal to develop individual sites.

The **proposals map** shows the precise boundaries of any sites proposed for development and any other designations or areas to which the policies of the Local Plan relate. This will be usually be detailed and will use an Ordnance Survey map base.

Top tip

The proposals map is a good place to start to find out if there are any significant developments proposed in your area.

Commenting on policies and proposals

You may have an opportunity to comment on policies and proposals as part of the 'engagement stage' of the Local Plan preparation – when the options are being considered, and preferred options identified. However, it is possible that you may not see the full text of the Local Plan until the publication stage (see **Step 5** overleaf). For sample responses, see letters 2 and 3 in the **Appendix** of this guide.

Commenting on policies and proposals

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is the policy clear? Is it obvious what evidence the policy is based on? What will be the effects of the policy? Will the policy achieve the vision and objectives of the plan? Will it support the things you want the plan to do?
- Have alternatives been considered to the policy or proposal? Is it clear what these are, and why they have been selected/rejected? This is a legal requirement.

Top tip

The Sustainability Appraisal will set out the advantages and disadvantages of the policies and proposals. This can be a handy short cut to pinpointing possible effects on issues you might be interested in, such as providing land for business uses which is easily accessible by public transport, protecting and providing for community facilities, or building enough affordable housing to meet local needs.

Top tip

Don't forget, if you disagree with a policy or proposal, can you suggest a better alternative which would overcome your objection?

STEP 5: Responding to the formal consultation on the publication version of the Local Plan

Once the local planning authority is happy with its Local Plan, it must publish it for a formal consultation period of at least six weeks, and make it available at the council offices, other appropriate locations and on its website. At this stage formal representations can be made in writing or electronically (e.g. via a website or email) (for a sample response, see letter 4 in the **Appendix** of this guide).

This is your last chance to have your say on the contents of the Local Plan. Even if you have made comments at an earlier stage, it will be worth looking again to see if your comments have been taken on board. If not, you may want to make your comments again as a formal representation. Importantly, all representations made at the publication stage are provided to the inspector who examines the plan (see **Step 7**).

Making representations on the publication stage Local Plan

At this stage you need to consider if the Local Plan meets the tests it will be examined on later in the process (see **Step 7**). These tests relate to the way in which the plan has been prepared (legal issues) and its *content*. The content of the plan (its strategy, policies and proposals) is assessed against the **'tests of soundness'**, which are shown in the box opposite.

◄ *Local Plans will probably include policies about renewable energy, including possible sites deemed appropriate for renewable energy development*

If you consider the plan to be 'unsound', you will be asked if you want to take part in the Examination – you can choose to appear or rely on your written representation (see **Step 7**). Also, be sure to ask if you want to be told when the Examination is to be held.

Commenting on the tests of soundness

Local Plans are required to meet the tests of soundness. This means they should be: positively prepared; justified; effective; and consistent with national policy.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is the plan **positively prepared**? Does the plan seek to meet the local needs for housing, land for businesses, community facilities, infrastructure (e.g. for transport, water, energy), education, shops, facilities for sport and leisure etc., which have been identified through the studies which make up the evidence base (see box on pp.33–34)?
- Is it **justified**? Is the chosen strategy the best one compared with the alternatives considered? Is it clear how the Sustainability Appraisal has informed the plan (the Sustainability Appraisal report should set this out, and can help you to compare alternative options)? Has the plan been prepared with participation of the community? Is it clearly founded on evidence – backed up by facts?
- Is it **effective**? Is there information on how the plan will be delivered during its life time (e.g. an 'implementation plan')? Does this say whether other delivery partners (e.g. strategic rail and highway authorities, the Environment Agency, water companies) are signed up to the plan? Is there an indication of when sites will come forward? Is it clear how the plan will be monitored? Is it flexible – able to deal with changing circumstances (e.g. what if a big site doesn't come forward for development when expected)?
- Is it **consistent with national policy** as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework?

Get involved: It is likely that you will be able to comment online, through a special consultation portal – these are normally quick and easy to use. However, don't forget, you can always write in if you prefer. If in doubt, call to check with the local plans team or contact centre.

STEP 6: The submission version of the Local Plan

Once the local planning authority has considered all the representations received at the publication stage, it can amend the plan before submitting it to the Secretary of State to be considered by an independent inspector at an '**Examination**'. This is called the submission version of the plan.

Often the local planning authority will make some minor amendments to the plan before they submit it, but only rarely are more substantial changes made. If more substantial changes are made they will be published for further consultation before the plan is submitted for examination.

The local planning authority is required to provide a written summary of all the issues raised, both during the engagement stage and publication stage to the inspector. They must also say how issues raised at the publication stage have been addressed in the plan.

STEP 7: Taking part in the Examination

The Local Plan will be considered by an independent Planning Inspector who will assess whether the plan has been prepared in line with the following requirements (a process known as independent examination):

- The 'duty to co-operate' – the local planning authority must co-operate with neighbouring districts, boroughs and counties, as well as other organisations including the local primary care trust, transport authorities and the Environment Agency.
- Legal and procedural requirements – has the local planning authority followed the rules for preparing Local Plans as set out

in regulations (such as formally consulting on the plan for at least six weeks at the publication stage)?

- The tests of soundness – as set out in the box on p.45.

The inspector will also consider all of the representations made and the evidence prepared by the local planning authority.

After considering all these matters, the inspector will decide if a hearing is required and if so what issues will be covered when. If a hearing is held participants are invited to take part in a round-table discussion of the issues, with the inspector asking questions and leading the debate.

The inspector has to concentrate on whether the plan meets the tests of soundness so will focus on this during the examination.

Get involved: If your objection has not been overcome by changes to the plan at the submission stage, you may want to appear at an examination 'hearing' where the inspector leads a round-table discussion, normally based around particular topics.

The Local Plan can also include policies about the standards that new houses should be built to, so for example ensuring that the buildings are energy efficient ►

STEP 8: Adoption

Following the Examination, the inspector makes recommendations to the Secretary of State and local planning authority on whether the Local Plan is 'sound' and should be adopted or any changes made. The inspector may find the plan 'unsound' in which case the local planning authority cannot adopt it without further significant changes. This would require further consultation and a re-examination. The Secretary of State can also 'call in' the plan and suggest changes, which would also be consulted on.

Top tip

You can ask to be told when the plan is adopted or any recommended changes are published.

Implementation and monitoring

In the long run the Local Plan will be judged on how it is implemented on the ground, ultimately through planning applications and developments – delivery is the key to success.

The Local Plan's policies for key development sites may be supported by development briefs and master plans, which set out how sites should be developed. These may be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) (see p.19). The local planning authority may also adopt SPDs on other issues, such as local requirements for community infrastructure.

Progress on implementing the Local Plan will be monitored and reported on by the local planning authority (see p.20).

Get involved: Look out for planning applications or master plans which seek to implement the Local Plan, and get involved in influencing the quality of development in your area. See *How to Respond to Planning Applications* for help (download it from: **www.planninghelp.org.uk**). If you'd like to get involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, see the next section of this guide for an introduction.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan provides a new way for local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and/or work. Their legal basis is provided by the Localism Act 2011.

Neighbourhood Plans give communities more direct power to plan the areas in which they live. Neighbourhood Plans can be used to:

- Develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood.
- Set planning policies for the development and use of land.
- Give planning permission for development the community wants to have.

Neighbourhood Plans therefore offer a powerful new planning tool for local communities. This section of the guide provides a brief introduction to Neighbourhood Plans.

Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

Unlike Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans are not prepared by the local planning authority. There are two types of body that can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan:

- Parish and town councils – in areas where a parish or town council exists, these are the only bodies who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Neighbourhood forums – where a parish or town council does not exist, only bodies that have made an application to the local planning authority can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Such a body is known as a neighbourhood forum.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

There are two main mechanisms for neighbourhood planning. Each will enable a community to achieve a different outcome and

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Your community could use a Neighbourhood Plan to allocate sites that would meet a local need for affordable housing ►

so communities should consider what they want to achieve and then decide which mechanism will enable them to do this:

- Neighbourhood Plans (which may be known as Neighbourhood Development Plans) will enable a community to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood by setting planning policies to shape the future development and use of land in their area.
- Neighbourhood Development Orders – will help implement a shared vision by granting planning permission, whether full or outline, to certain types of development or development in certain locations.

The process for developing Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders is the same.

What is the role of the local planning authority?

The local planning authority is expected to give assistance and advice on how to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. But the local planning authority cannot control the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process. Nor can it produce a Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of a local community.

The local planning authority has to agree and formally designate a neighbourhood area that is to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. The local planning authority can provide information and help to gather evidence to inform the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. It can also help with the consultation process.

The local planning authority will also be required to check the proposed Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that it meets all the relevant legislation and regulations. Once content, it will have to arrange for an independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan to take place. If the Neighbourhood Plan passes the examination, the local planning authority will be responsible for arranging a local referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan.

What is the relationship between a Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan?

Together, the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan comprise the development plan for the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan must conform generally with the policies and proposals of the Local Plan prepared by the local planning authority.

What can a Neighbourhood Plan contain?

A Neighbourhood Plan must be about the use and development of land and buildings. It can set out how much, what type and where development should take place. It can also have a say in how buildings should look (their 'design'). It cannot be used to prevent development that the local planning authority has identified as being needed in the Local Plan.

Typical things that a Neighbourhood Plan might include

- The development of housing, including affordable housing and including bringing vacant or derelict housing back into use.
- Providing for businesses to set up or expand their premises.
- Transport and access issues (roads, cycling, walking, disabled).
- The development of schools, places of worship, health facilities, leisure and entertainment facilities, community and youth centres and village halls.
- The restriction of certain types of development and change of use, for example to avoid too much of one type of use.
- The design of buildings.
- Protection and creation of open space, nature reserves, allotments, sports pitches, play areas, parks and gardens, and the planting of trees.
- Protection of important buildings and historic assets such as archaeological remains.
- Promotion of renewable energy projects, such as solar energy and wind turbines.

Planning policies – Neighbourhood Plans, Local Plans and the National Planning Policy Framework – can together ensure that there is a distinction between town and country, therefore allowing both to thrive ►

What is the 'Community Right to Build'?

Community Right to Build is a specific type of Neighbourhood Development Order. It allows a local community group to bring forward a small development for one or more purposes, such as new homes, businesses and community facilities, but it must be small scale in comparison to the size of settlement.

How can I find out more about Neighbourhood Plans?

There are certain procedures that you need to be aware of if you are interested in preparing your own Neighbourhood Plan. A separate eight-step guide published as part of this series of publications will help you understand what to do.

◄ *Neighbourhood planning could be used to protect important local green spaces from development*

Appendix

Sample Local Plan consultation responses

Notes

You will need to provide your contact details in addition to your comments. You may be able to complete an online form or questionnaire, or email/post comments direct to the local planning authority's local plans team.

1. Sample letter or email supporting a spatial strategy

Your comments:

To which part of the *West Moorshire Local Plan Consultation* does your comment relate?

Chapter: **2** Paragraph: Policy: **CP3**

Do you support? **X**

Or object?

Please give reasons for your support or objection

Lower Bridgemore Parish Council supports the proposed spatial strategy set out in **Core Policy 3**, in particular the definition and role of Local Service Areas. We support the flexibility of this policy approach, in particular the provision for development, which is outside but well related to settlement boundaries, that supports wider community aims.

Topic Paper 2 'Settlement Strategy' provides the evidence for this approach, which seeks to safeguard the role of Local Service Centres in providing for a significant rural hinterland, for example by meeting needs for affordable housing, employment opportunities (sites and premises) and community facilities. Our village is among a number identified in the council's Housing Market Strategy which would support small developments of market and affordable homes to meet local needs.

The Core Strategy states that settlement boundaries will be reviewed through later Development Plan Documents/Neighbourhood Plans, and notes that development is expected to take place beyond current settlement boundaries. We look forward to taking part in the process to review settlement strategies and identify appropriate sites for development.

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

2. Sample letter or email objecting to a strategic option

Your comments:

(Please use a seperate box for each comment)

To which part of the *West Moorshire Local Plan Consultation* does your comment relate?

Chapter: **4** Paragraph: Policy: **12**

Do you support?

Or object? **X**

Please give reasons for your support or objection

Policy 12: Proposed urban extension to the east of Uppertown

I object to the eastern half of the location identified for a proposed urban extension because the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment shows that part of the site is at risk of flooding and because the Sustainability Appraisal says that the meadows are important for wildlife. I would add that it is also an important area for local people to enjoy countryside walks, because it is unspoilt and has lots of footpaths open to the public. There are no other areas like this on this side of Uppertown.

The Sustainability Appraisal shows that an alternative location for an urban extension to the south of Uppertown would not have these sorts of impacts and therefore should be preferred.

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

3. Sample letter or email supporting a proposal to regenerate a brownfield site on the edge of town

Your comments:

(Please use a seperate box for each comment)

To which part of the *West Moorshire Local Plan Consultation* does your comment relate?

Chapter: **5** Paragraph: Policy: **5.6**

Do you support? **X**

Or object?

Please give reasons for your support or objection

I support the proposed regeneration of the former print works site in West Brayfield for a mix of uses including housing, retail and employment, with a network of new public spaces to link into the existing network of green infrastructure and public footpaths and cycle routes (Policy 5.6). This site has been derelict for three years now, and it is good to see plans to reuse it.

This development would provide much needed premises for small businesses to start up and expand, as identified in the council's Employment Study (para. 10.5). It would provide market and affordable homes to meet local needs, particularly those of young families and the elderly, as identified in the council's Housing Market Strategy (para. 3.4).

I am pleased that sustainable transport issues will be addressed in the master planning process, including the need to extend bus route P43 (which used to serve the print works), and the requirement for convenient walking and cycle routes through the site to connect with bus stops and existing safe routes to schools. It will be important to ensure these requirements are implemented to avoid increasing traffic on local roads.

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

4. Sample letter or email objecting to the Publication Plan

Your comments:

(Please use a seperate box for each comment)

To which part of the *West Moorshire Local Plan Consultation* does your comment relate?

Chapter: **4** Paragraph: Policy: **12**

Do you support?

Or object? **X**

Are you commenting on legal or procedural grounds? **No**

Tests of soundness

Are you commenting on whether the Plan:

Has been positively prepared

Is justified **X**

Will be effective

Is consistent with National Policy

Please give reasons for your support or objection. Please provide details of what change(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound.

Uppertown Town Council considers the Plan to be unsound for the following reasons:

1. The Sustainability Appraisal report does not clearly show how the Sustainability Appraisal has informed the choice of options in the Local Plan for the urban extension on the eastern side of Uppertown, in particular why the option to the south of the town was rejected at an earlier stage of the plan preparation.

2. While the proposed urban extension has been redrawn to avoid the areas at most risk from flooding as set out in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, we remain concerned about this issue, as some of the site would still appear to be at risk from flooding.

Appendix: Sample Local Plan consultation responses

To make the Plan 'sound' in this respect we would expect to see:

1. Clear explanation for the choice of location for the proposed urban extension to the east of Uppertown, and for the rejection of the option to the south of the town.

2. Clear reasoning and evidence to support the proposed urban extension to the east of Uppertown in terms of flood risk and recreation impacts.

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Planning policies can make sure that any new development protects and enhances the unique character of an area

Glossary

Affordable housing

Affordable housing is not available on the open market. It is available as social rented, affordable rented or as shared ownership housing, and is managed by a Registered Social Landlord, who may be the local authority.

Brownfield/previously developed land

Previously developed land, often called brownfield land, is land that was developed but is now vacant or derelict, and land currently in use with known potential for redevelopment.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge which accompanies planning applications for built development. Many local planning authorities are currently consulting on their scale of charges. The money is pooled to fund infrastructure.

Community Right to Build

The Community Right to Build, implemented through Community Right to Build Orders, allows a local community group to bring forward a small development for one or more purposes, such as new homes, businesses and community facilities, but it must be small scale in comparison to the size of settlement.

County council

The upper tier of the two- or three-tier county shire local authority structure in England. County council responsibilities include transport, schools and minerals and waste planning.

Development plan

A development plan sets out the policies and proposals for the development, conservation and use of land and buildings in a particular local planning authority area. The development plan is the most important consideration for local planning authorities when they decide on a planning application.

The development plan generally includes Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that are part of a local planning authority's Local Plan. This includes waste and minerals documents prepared by county councils. The Localism Act 2011 will change the development plan in two key ways. The Regional Strategies that have been part of it since 2004 will be abolished. Any Neighbourhood Plans that have been prepared covering any part of the local planning authority area will become part of the development plan if they've received enough support in a referendum.

Development Plan Document

Development Plan Documents (DPDs) are plans and strategies written by a local planning authority that form part of the Local Plan. They form part of the formal development plan, so planning

decisions must be taken in line with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Because DPDs form part of the formal development plan there are strict rules about the level of public consultation that must happen when putting them together. They must also undergo Sustainability Appraisal before adoption by the relevant council.

District council

The lower tier, or where parish or town councils exist, middle tier, of the two- or three-tier county shire local authority structure in England. District council responsibilities include planning, waste collection and provision of leisure facilities.

Government planning policy

National planning policies that local planning authorities should take into account when drawing up development plans and other documents and making decisions on planning applications. In the past these policies have been included in Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The Government is expected to replace existing guidance with a new National Planning Policy Framework, which is expected to be in place in spring 2012.

Green Belt

Green Belt is a defined area of countryside around a town or city which is protected from 'inappropriate' forms of development – as defined in government planning policy on Green Belts. There are Green Belts throughout the country, but not in every county. Green Belts aim to stop urban sprawl and the merging of settlements, preserve the character of historic towns and encourage development to take place within existing built-up areas. Quality or appearance of land is not a factor when deciding whether to designate it as a Green Belt.

Greenfield site

Land not previously used for development. Greenfield sites are usually land last used for agriculture or forestry and are generally found next to or outside existing built-up areas.

Highway authority

Highway authorities are responsible for producing the local transport plan and for managing existing or proposed new local roads in the area. In most places, the local highway authority is part of the county council, the metropolitan council or the unitary authority. Transport for London is the highway authority for London.

Land use planning

The planning system largely provides the framework for how land is used and developed. The system aims to make sure land is used in the public interest. It also makes sure that facilities such as roads, schools and sewers are built where they are needed.

Local authority

An umbrella term for the administrative body that governs local services such as education, housing and social services. There are three main types of local authority structure in England:

1. Two- or three-tier 'shire' counties consist of a county council, under which sits a number of district councils, in turn under which in many cases sit parish or town councils. Local public services are divided between the tiers.

2. Unitary authorities and metropolitan boroughs are governed by one authority responsible for most major services. Many unitary authorities are two-tier authorities however, with parish and town councils in place.

3. There's a two-tier local authority structure in London, with 32 London boroughs sitting beneath the Greater London Authority. Although it is legally possible to establish a parish council in London, at the time of writing none exist.

Local Development Scheme

This sets out the documents that will make up the Local Plan, their subject matter, the area they will cover, and the timetable for their preparation and revision. Local planning authorities must prepare and maintain the Local Development Scheme, and publish up-to-date information on their progress.

Local Plan

A portfolio or folder of documents setting out the planning strategy for a local planning authority area. Since the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and until recently, this type of plan was known as a Local Development Framework. The Government now uses the simpler description 'Local Plan'. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaced old-style local plans, structure plans and unitary development plans. The key difference between the pre- and post-2004 systems is that new-style local plans are really a 'folder' of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), each addressing different issues. This is in contrast to the old-style plans which consisted of one Development Plan Document, supported by supplementary guidance.

The Local Plan identifies where future development should take place to meet local needs for homes, businesses, shops and other services, plus the infrastructure to support them. It also decides which areas should be protected from development because they are important to local people or have environmental or heritage qualities that should be conserved.

Local planning authority

The local government body responsible for formulating planning policies, controlling development and determining planning applications. This could be a district

council, unitary authority, metropolitan council or National Park Authority. When development involves minerals or waste, the county council or unitary authority is normally the local planning authority, and is referred to also as the minerals planning authority or the waste planning authority.

Localism Act 2011

A major piece of new legislation which includes wide-ranging changes to local government, housing and planning. Significantly, the Act abolishes regional planning, and introduces Neighbourhood Plans to the development plan.

Material consideration

A factor which will be taken into account when reaching a decision on a planning application or appeal. Under section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, decisions on planning applications 'must be made in accordance with the [development] plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise'. The courts ultimately decide what constitutes a material consideration. However, case law gives local planning authorities a great deal of leeway to decide what considerations are relevant, and how much weight should be given to them, each time they decide on a planning application. In practice, government planning policy is often the most important material consideration, other than the development plan. Government policy may override the development plan if it has been consulted on and published more recently.

Planning is the best tool we have for making sure development needs are met, while protecting the environment from unnecessary damage

Metropolitan authority

Metropolitan authorities are essentially the same as unitary authorities. They provide a one-tier, or where parish or town councils exist two-tier, structure of local authority in England. The responsibilities of metropolitan authorities include education, planning, waste disposal and social services.

Minerals and Waste Development Plan documents

Following the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, these will progressively replace Minerals Local Plans and Waste Local Plans. They contain the authority's policies on disposing of waste and on the working and apportionment of minerals.

Neighbourhood Development Orders

Neighbourhood Development Orders can be developed by communities and grant planning permission without the need to submit a planning application to the local planning authority. They have to go through a similar process to Neighbourhood Development Plans before being adopted.

Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plans, or Neighbourhood Development Plans, were introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The term may also be used by some to refer to Neighbourhood Development Orders, which were also introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and are a second tool to enable neighbourhood planning. Communities will be able to prepare neighbourhood planning documents, outlining how they envisage their area developing in the future. Details of how neighbourhood planning will work in practice are still being ironed out – go to **www.planninghelp.org.uk** for up-to-date information.

Parish or town council

Parish and town councils are the tier of governance closest to the community. Around 30% of England's population is governed by a parish council, predominantly in rural areas. Some urban areas, and notably Milton Keynes, are also parished. Parish and town councils are elected bodies and have powers to raise taxes. Their responsibilities vary, but can include provision of parks and allotments, maintenance of village halls, litter control and maintenance of local landmarks.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 was a major piece of planning legislation, which amended much of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In particular, the 2004 Act made significant changes to the system of development plans and introduced 'sustainable development' as an objective of the planning system.

Proposals map

A proposals map should be a spatial representation of the Local Plan. It should, therefore: identify areas that

are protected, such as nationally protected landscape and internationally, nationally and locally designated areas and sites, and Green Belt land; show areas at risk from flooding; allocate sites for particular land use and development proposals included in any adopted Development Plan Document (DPD); and set out the areas to which specific policies apply.

Ramsar site

A Ramsar site is an area of wetland designated under the international Ramsar Convention of 1975. The convention aims to conserve and protect the ecology of wetlands of international importance. Ramsar sites receive special protection in the planning system.

Regional Spatial Strategy or Regional Strategy

Regional Spatial Strategies were introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and currently form part of the development plan. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 combined Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Economic Strategies to create Regional Strategies. Regional Strategies address planning issues that cross over local planning authority boundaries, for example energy provision, longer distance transport, and protection of the natural environment at a larger than local scale. The Localism Act 2011 enables the Government to abolish these strategies.

Secretary of State

The Secretary of State is the most senior government minister responsible for the work of his or her department. The government department responsible for planning is the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Spatial planning

Spatial planning is also called 'place shaping' and has a wider focus than traditional land use planning. It's about identifying a vision for the future of a place which responds to local needs and circumstances, including community views, and is based on evidence. This vision is translated into priorities, policies and the identification of land for development. Spatial planning creates a framework for private investment and regeneration. By agreeing a delivery plan, it seeks to co-ordinate and deliver public-sector parts of the plan with other agencies. Spatial planning should set a positive framework for action on climate change, and contribute to sustainable development.

Spatial strategy

The spatial strategy identifies what and how much development is needed to meet local needs, and broadly where it should be concentrated.

Statement of Community Involvement

Statements of Community Involvement set out how the local planning authority

will engage local communities in plan making: who they will engage and how. In particular, they list the community groups and other organisations which will be contacted about Local Plan stages, and the methods of consultation which will be used. Hard-to-reach groups are identified, and methods of helping them get involved set out.

Statutory consultee

A statutory consultee is a body the local planning authority must consult if a planning application could affect their interests. For example, the Highways Agency must be consulted on applications that could affect a major road, and the Environment Agency must be consulted on development that would affect a river or culvert.

Supplementary Planning Document

Supplementary Planning Documents (or SPDs) are prepared by district or unitary authorities, and form part of the Local Plan for an area. SPDs usually provide more detail on policies in Development Plan Documents (DPDs), for example on design or local affordable housing policy. They are not a part of the formal development plan, but are a material consideration when deciding on a planning application. Because they are not part of the development plan, SPDs do not have to be consulted on as extensively as DPDs, and do not undergo Sustainability Appraisal or independent examination.

Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability Appraisal assesses the economic, environmental and social impacts of a proposed policy or plan, to ensure that it would contribute to achieving sustainable development. Development Plan Documents (DPDs) have to undergo Sustainability Appraisal, but Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) do not.

Sustainable Community Strategy

Sustainable Community Strategies are prepared for every local authority area. These provide a strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. They set out the issues which are important to local people, and how they might be tackled, to move towards a 'vision' of how the place should be in the future.

Unitary authority

Unitary authorities provide a one-tier, or where parish or town councils exist a two-tier, structure of local authority in England. The responsibilities of unitary authorities include registering births, marriages and deaths, waste collection and disposal, social services, and provision of social housing.

Glossary

Planning should be a creative process, where input from all sections of the community leads to an exciting vision for the future of the town and countryside where you live

Looking for further advice?

For more information about the planning system, and how to get advice and help, see the Planning Help website: **www.planninghelp.org.uk**

Other sources of information include:

The Planning Advisory Service website includes all sorts of useful information regarding plan preparation and Sustainability Appraisal. It also hosts the Department of Communities and Local Government *Plan Making Manual*. See **www.pas.gov.uk**

The Local Government Group and Planning Advisory Service have produced a guide for ward councillors on neighbourhood planning. See **www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/1256514**

The Planning Portal has lots of information on the planning system, and hosts information provided by the Planning Inspectorate on the latest Development Plan Documents submitted for examination. See: **www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans**

Planning Aid England provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. See **www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk** and in London, **www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk**

This guide is also available online. Visit **www.planninghelp.org.uk** to download a copy.

A short e-learning course to help you put this guide into practice is available at **www.ntselearning.co.uk**. The course is free and available to everyone – simply register on this site to begin.

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Planning explained is part of a suite of materials produced by CPRE in partnership with NALC to help local communities shape where they live.

The other documents in this series are:
How to respond to planning applications: an 8-step guide and *How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning*.

All three can be found at **www.planninghelp.org.uk**

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