

The New Plan-Making System: an overview

Local Plan Task Group - 10/02/2026

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Why are there significant changes to plan making system?

- The Government are introducing significant planning reforms to help speed up the production of local plans to help achieve their aim of building 1.5 million homes within this Parliament;
- Support the re-introduction of strategic plans;
- Average timescale of preparing a local plan was around 6.5 years;
- Many local plan policies were out of date as soon as plans were adopted due to updates to National Policy;
- Only 13% of LPAs have an up-to-date Local Plan under the current system;
- Many LPAs were facing challenges with meeting their growth requirements.



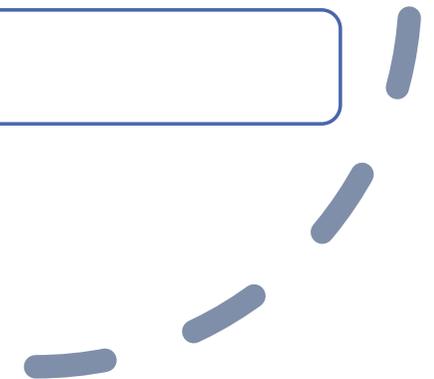
How are the changes being introduced?



These reforms are driven by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, new planning-system regulations, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2025. They're aiming to ensure more LPAs have up to date local plans and enable more consistency in both plan making and decision making at a national and local level.

What are the new changes to the policy structure ?

- 1 • National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance
- 2 • Spatial Development Strategies
- 3 • Local Plans
- 4 • Supplementary Plans
- 5 • Neighbourhood Plans



The Introduction of Spatial Development Strategies



New Local Plan 30-Month Timeline

- **Faster Adoption** – LPAs will be required to prepare and adopt new local plans within a 30-month period. All authorities must prepare a Project Initiation Document and a local plan timetable. Publish these and keep them up to date.
- Authorities will need to start preparing a plan in the new system no later than 30th June 2026 if they fall under the transnational arrangements set out in the NPPF (2024) – which includes BCKLWN.
- A 4-month ‘pre-notification period’ between 30th June and 31st October enables authorities to undertake early work and notify of intent to start.
- Formal 30-month process starts after Gateway 1 (31st October 2026).
- **Standardised Process** – the process includes early engagement (scoping consultation) and 3 new ‘Gateway Assessments’ are now required prior to submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination (by PINS).

Three-Gateway System

- New stop/go checkpoints are introduced called "Gateways" to ensure plans are robust and can proceed to the next stage. These milestones are instigated through the plan making process, and a Planning Inspector is appointed for Gateway 2 and Gateway 3.
- **Gateway 1:** Self-Assessment of the Plans Scope and Strategic Priorities.
- **Gateway 2:** Assessment of Draft Plan and evidence base
- **Gateway 3:** Readiness for examination.

Other Key Changes: MB1



Duty to Cooperate is no longer a separate legal test. However, engagement with consultees remains crucial for a plan to be found 'sound'. As does cooperation with neighbouring authorities.



Digital First Approach – the new system mandates the use of digital tools and standardises data formats to make plans more accessible and transparent.



Local Plan Vision – Plan must include a “vision” supported by no more than 10 measurable outcomes.



National Decision-Making Policies –New style local plans will be focused on site allocations and polices to meet need; they will not include general development management policies. 'Development plan policies which are in any way inconsistent with the national decision-making policies in the new NPPF, once in place, should be given very limited weight.



Supplementary Plans (SPs) will replace Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These will be used to focus on single or linked site issues that need addressing between plan making cycles. These will be subject to an examination.

Slide 8

MB1 Orange box - I would say that "Duty to cooperate" is no longer a legal requirement, but engagement with consultees remains crucial for a Plan to be found sound"

Michael Burton, 2026-01-20T12:23:18.137

LB1 0 Amended it to this, thank Mike

Luke Brown, 2026-01-20T12:30:30.892

What does this mean for us – our proposed timetable



What are we doing to prepare?



Undertaking work on spatial options for growth



Undertaking work on an entirely new evidence base



undertaking a 'call for sites' consultation



Preparing a timetable and PID for the new plan



Investing in digital communications and AI technology



Working with key infrastructure & service providers to understand important issues



Working with other departments to help streamline internal processes.