

# Local Plans: The Impact of the Double Helix on Local Authorities

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# Agenda:

- Introduction: A little bit about me & PAS
- Local plan-making: What is the 'double helix'?
- Scene setting: The current planning 'hot topics' & what's going on
- The current 'legacy' system
- The new plan-making system
- Impacts and what councils need
- Supporting councils
- Key takeaways

## About me:

2014 – South Gloucestershire Council - Planning Enforcement Officer

2018 – Cotswold District Council – Planning & Enforcement Officer → Senior Enforcement Officer → Principal Enforcement Officer

2023/24 – Forest of Dean District Council - Principal Policy Officer → Policy & Ecology Manager

2025 – PAS – Consultant



- 20+ year-old improvement programme – planning reform
- Central Government funded, part of local Government family
- **A sector-led approach** to policy implementation and performance improvement:
  - Interpret & respond to change
  - Performance improvement and innovation
  - Share ideas and examples of what works best
  - Promote good member & officer relationships



# Local Plan-Making: What is the 'Double Helix'?

# Local Plan Collisions

- 2026 – a very busy and complex time
- ‘Double helix’ of 2 systems
- New Regs switch on – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026
- Legacy system deadline – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2026
- 2 legislative frameworks
- Some LPAs caught by the 2 systems:  
‘Legacy’ EiPs vs new system ‘Backstop 1’



# Scene Setting: The Wider Planning Context

# Planning: The Hot Topics





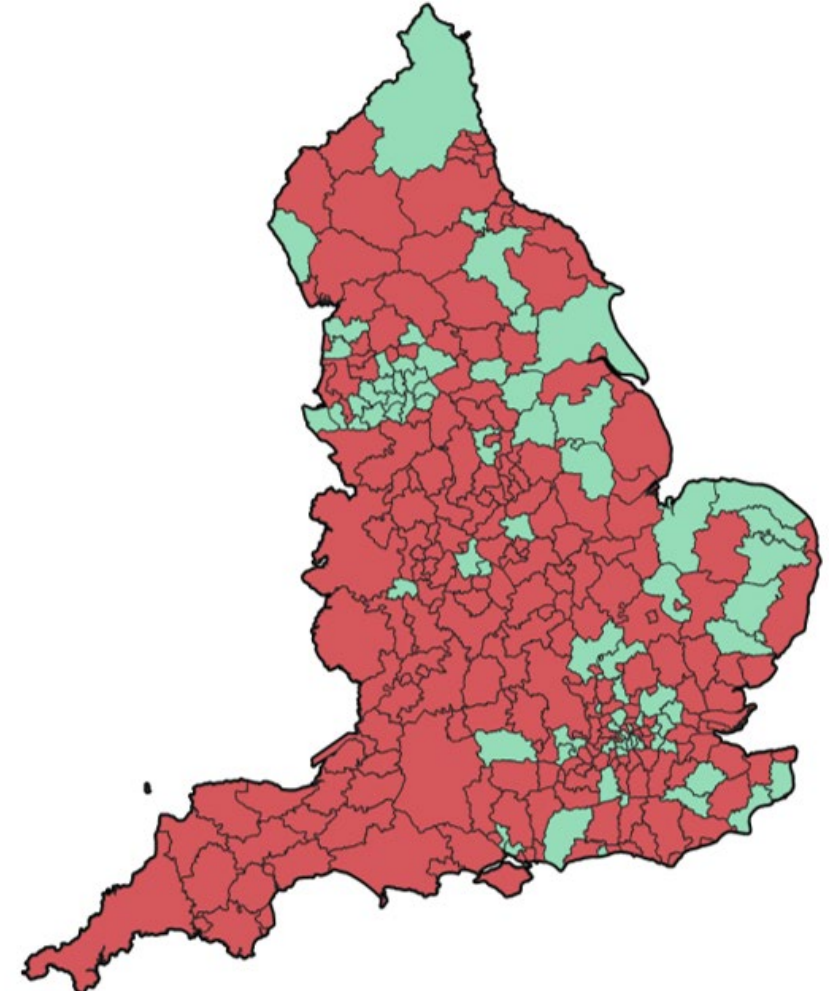
# Local Plan-Making: What's Going On?

- Focus of New System: 'Speeding up', 'streamlining', and 'modernising';
- Ambitious infrastructure & housing targets
- Updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – increased housing numbers
- The New System: Targets, performance, removing 'blockers'
- <30% up-to-date local plans
- Adopted up-to-date Local Plans = more control.
- More and more Ministerial interventions (Spelthorne, South Tyneside, Stockport, Solihull, Bucks)
- So, big push to get local plans up-to-date.

## Key

### Local Plan Status

-  Adopted 5 or more years ago or no adopted local plan
-  Adopted less than 5yrs ago

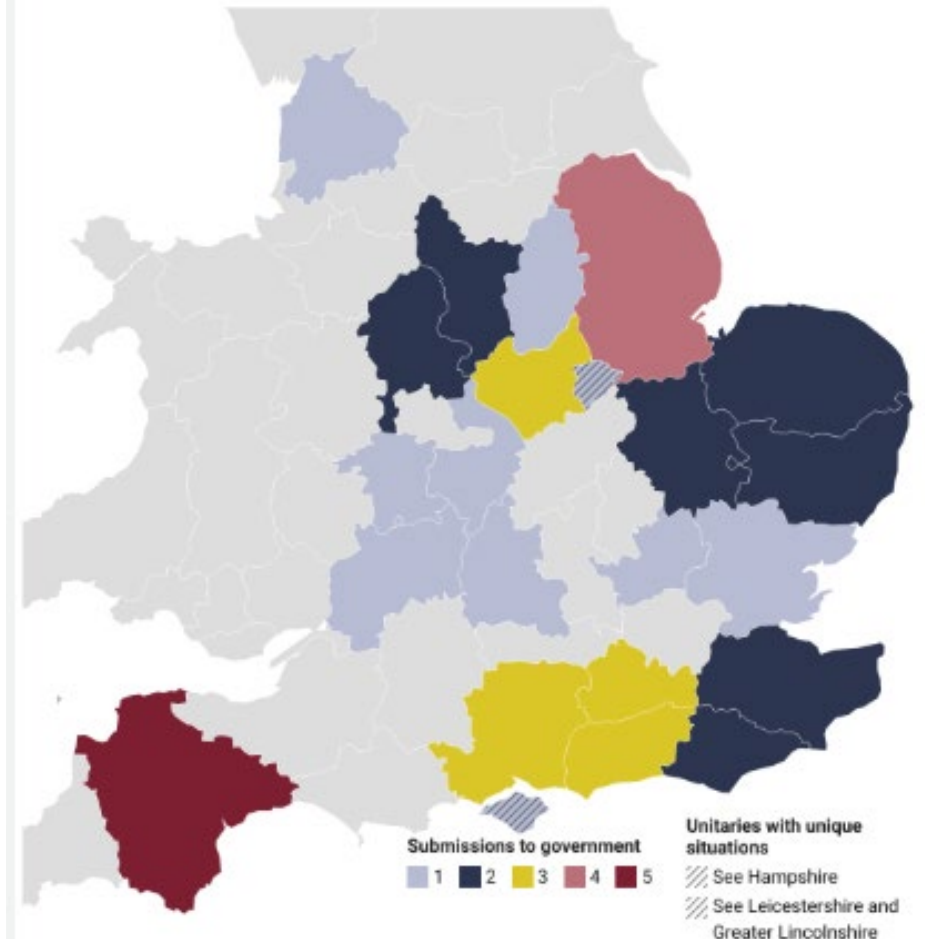


# LGR: Changing the Geography of Planning

- Moving from two tier systems to unitary authorities – fewer but larger councils
- Rapid timeline for change:
  - Submissions of proposal from LAs made in late 2025 (competing proposals in many areas)
  - Government decision on new boundaries expected Spring 2026
  - Elections for shadow authorities take place in May 2027
  - Vesting day 1 April 2028, become operational
- Aim to create simpler structures, stronger financial resilience and alignment with strategic governance

## Reorganisation map

Explore LGC's reorganisation map to find out how many interim plans have been submitted to the government and what the options are.





# The Current 'Legacy' System

# 'Legacy' System Plans

- 'Guillotine' date of 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2026
- No time to delay
- Importance of careful project management
- Team focus: publication & examination readiness



- Challenges:
  - Gathering robust evidence base
    - Meeting housing need (DtC)
  - Political appetite (in the face of LGR)

# The New Plan-Making System

# New System - Go, Go, Go!

## 'Have' to go first (backstop 1)

- 35-40 (max) authorities
- Plan (current system) submitted by March 2025 and with <80% LHN
- Most are at examination or main mods
- Will have to start a new plan by 30<sup>th</sup> June and reach gateway 1 by 31<sup>st</sup> Oct
- This will mean planning in both systems simultaneously

## Want to go first

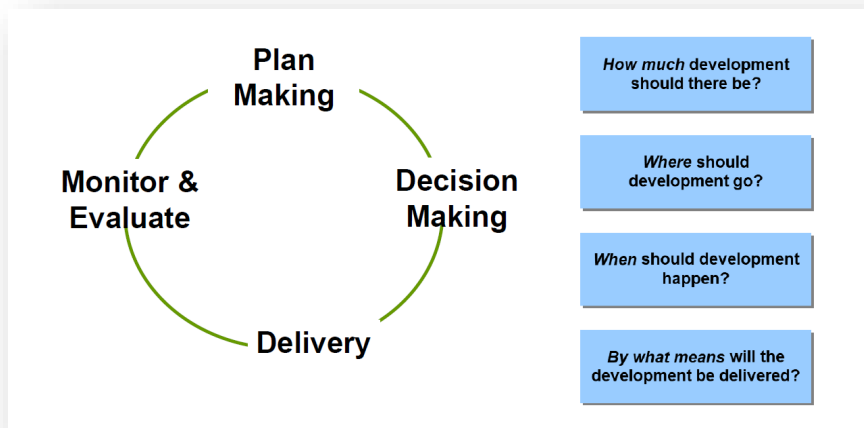
- ??? Authorities being approached for timescales
- Plan (current system) any stage
- Start a new plan by 30<sup>th</sup> June and reach gateway 1 by 31<sup>st</sup> Oct

## Everyone else

- ??? Authorities being approached for timescales
- Plan (current system) any stage
- Start a new plan by 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2026 and reach gateway 1 by April 2027

# Local Plans: Big Changes?

## Stays the same

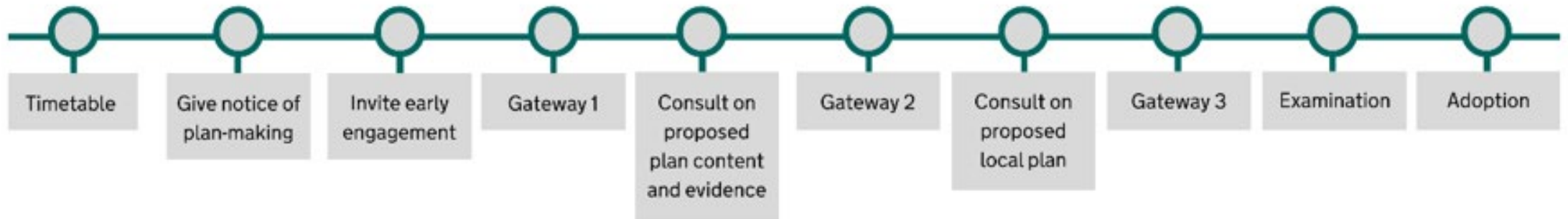
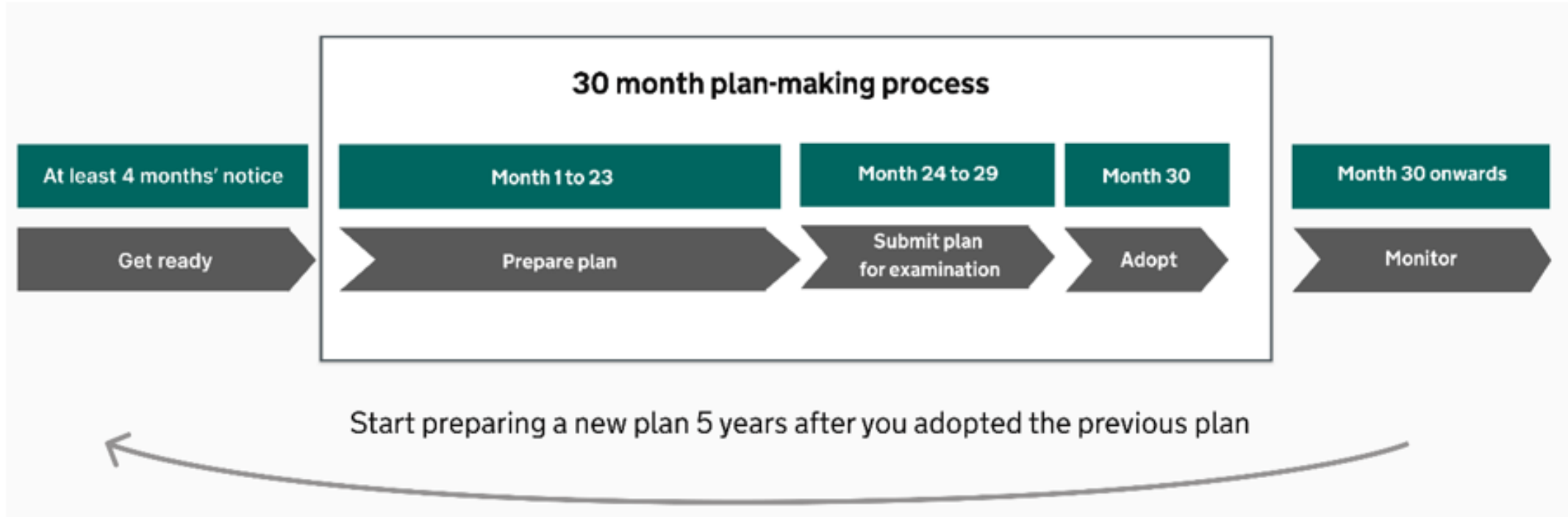


Many elements remain the same – setting vision/strategy and allocating land to meet corporate objectives, undertaking public consultation, producing evidence and policies.

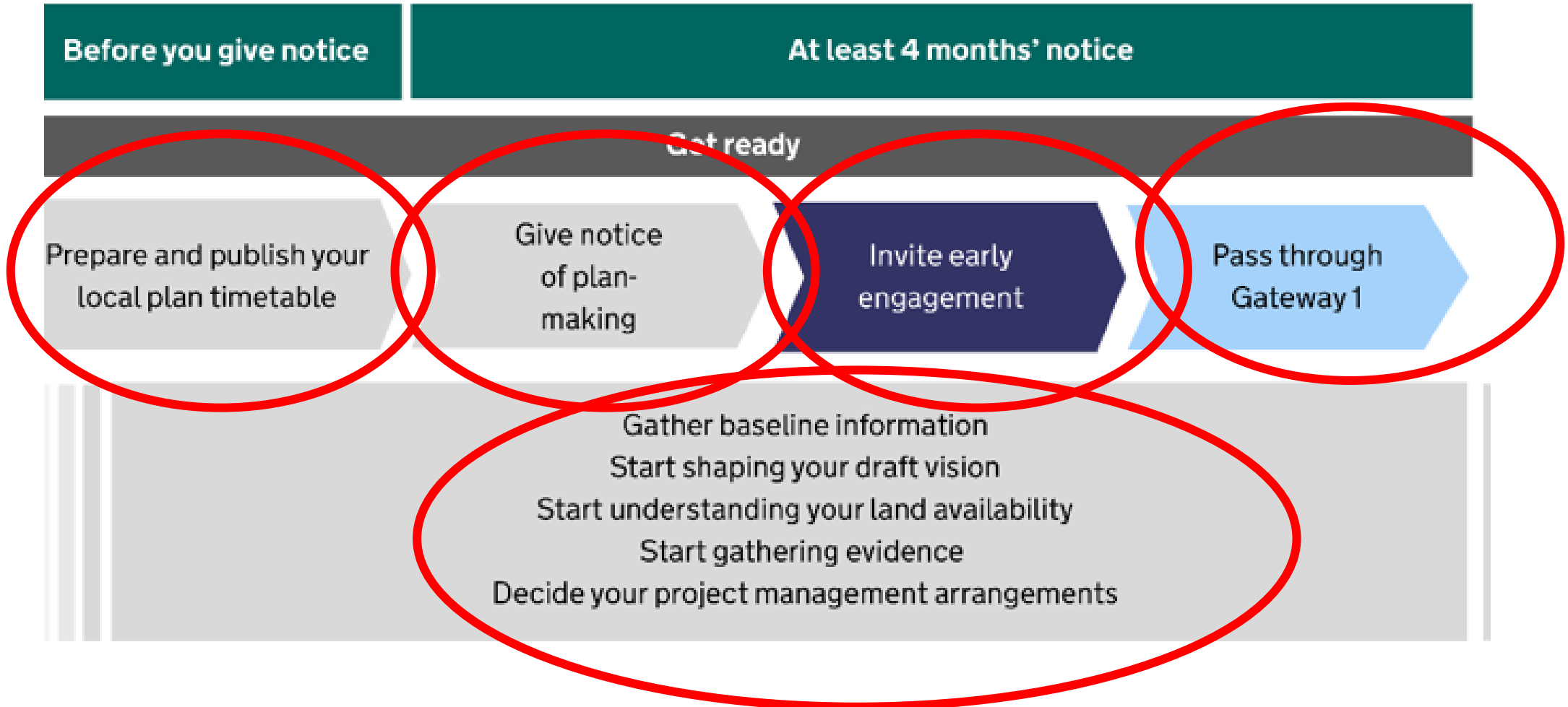
## Changes or New Processes

- 30-Month Timetable: Local planning authorities must prepare and adopt new-style local plans within a strict 30-month timeframe.
- Three-Gateway System: A new process involving three checkpoints for assessment:
  - Gateway 1: Self-assessment of readiness.
  - Gateway 2: Consultation on plan content and evidence.
  - Gateway 3: Final check before examination.
- Digital-First Approach
- Abolition of 'Duty to Cooperate'
- 5-Year Review Cycle: Plans must be reviewed at least every 5 years to ensure they are up to date
- SA – out, SEA - in

# 30 Months of Plan-Making



# Before the 30-Month Process Starts



# Impacts and What Councils Need

# Impacts +/-

Challenges:	Opportunities:
<b>Ambitious</b> timescales;	'Backstop 1' = <b>Pioneers of planning</b> ;
<b>Uncertainty</b> ;	<b>Route-mapping</b> the new 30-month period;
<b>No 'tried &amp; tested' route</b> ;	Establish <b>best practice</b> examples;
Increased <b>pressure</b> to deliver;	<b>Culture</b> change required;
Potential for a <b>lack of political appetite</b> ;	<b>Alignment</b> with SDSs;
Risk of <b>government intervention</b> .	<b>Certainty</b> for future development.

# What Councils Need

- Time to understand – what policy means in practice;
- Time to adopt – space to pilot without fear of failure;
- Time to make it work – stable, consistent policy;
- Time to improve it – genuine feedback loops with government.



# Supporting Councils

- The [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)
- CULP guidance
- PAS:
  - ✓ Local Plan Leaders Network – forum, webinars & group calls
  - ✓ PID
  - ✓ ‘Legacy’ Local Plan Project Management Toolkit & Guidance
  - ✓ New Plan System Local Plan Project Management Toolkit & Guidance (watch this space)
  - ✓ 1:1 Surgeries & Masterclasses
  - ✓ Dissemination of learnings as LPAs progress

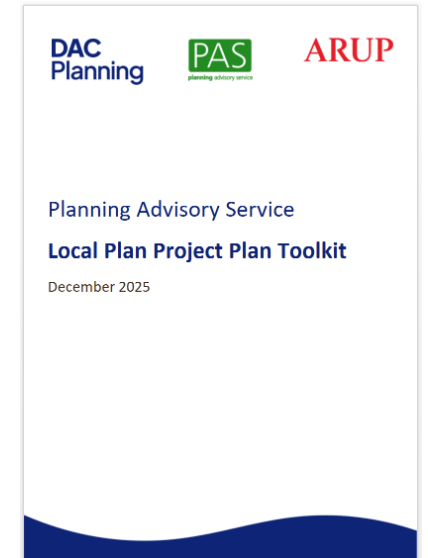


Home > Housing, local and community > Planning and building > Local Plans

Collection

## Create or update a local plan using the new system

Information and resources for local planning authorities on preparing a local plan under the new plan-making system.



### Local Plan Leaders Network

This is the network for Local Plan Leaders which PAS will be supporting to allow local plan officers to share information and ask advice between planning officers. This will be particularly useful for LPAs who are aiming to submit their local plan before December 2026, under the present local plan system, but we will also cover support in both the present and future plan making process. This network will be relevant to Heads of Planning Policy, Local Plan Managers or Team leaders with the responsibility for the delivery of the local plan including staff, budgets and work programmes for their local plan.

Set up people: AG AL AF AH AT AR AM AC AF AP AH AS AW AC AV AT AB AR AK AM AC AC + 3 Just for

Message Board	Docs & Files	Schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gypsy &amp; Traveller provision in all in Milton Keynes we are working towards a...</li> <li>severe impacts on road network As part of developing our evidence base and...</li> <li>Local Housing Need figures Question — H, Does anyone have a link to...</li> <li>YOA data for housing completion figures Hello, here in North East Lincolnshire we rely on...</li> <li>New Training materials - can you help test them out?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Plan...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TUE, JUL 22 Local Plan Leaders Drop In July - Evidence base across both systems 10:00am - 11:00am</li> <li>THU, AUG 14 Local Plan Leaders Drop In - August 2:00pm - 3:00pm</li> <li>THU, SEP 24</li> </ul>

# Key Takeaways

- A lot of change!
- Varying confidence & morale
- Authorities feel overwhelmed by simultaneous reform;
- Local plans – potential to stall – proceed, pause or restart?
- Strong appetite for support... and PAS is here!
- Clear ask: stability, clarity and detail.

# Thank you!

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