



planning advisory service



# **PAS topic papers for councillors**

**Strategic Priorities, policies and plans**

**last update: February 2020**

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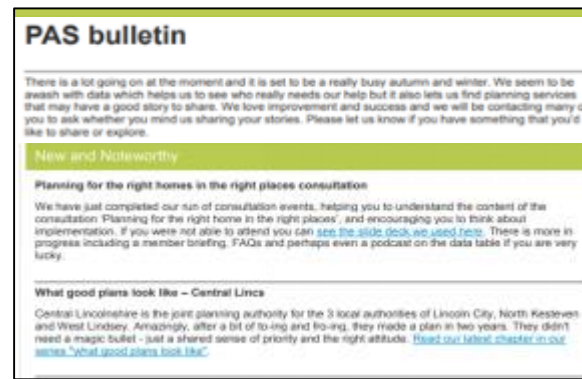
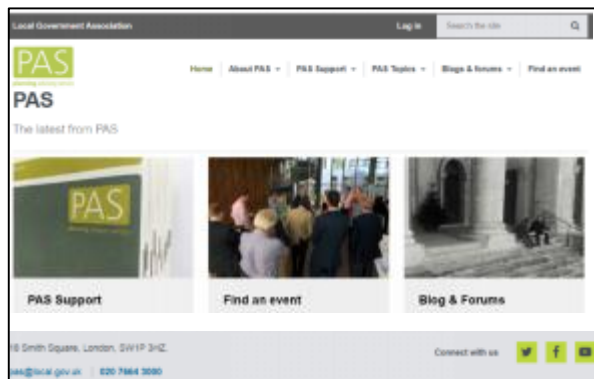
# PAS core briefings ...

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# What is PAS ?



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

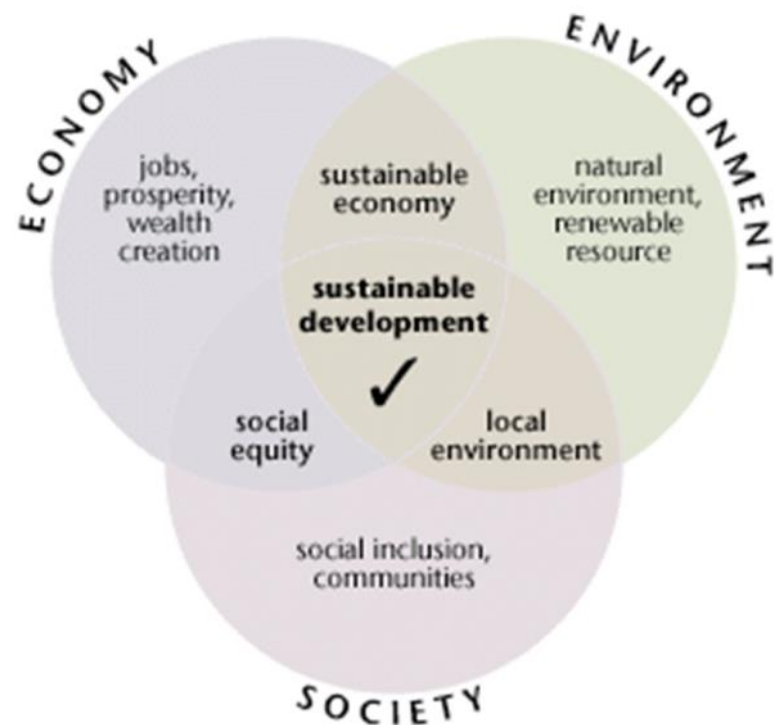


# Overview

- Plan Making - What is strategic planning?
  - Benefits of joint working
  - Developing a sound strategic plan
  - Member Roles
-

# Planning in England is policy-led

- “The planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.”
  - 2019 National Planning Policy Framework



# Unless....

“....any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

or

“....that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area”

# Planning Policy in England

- national policy
  - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
  - National Policy Statements
  - G&T policy
  - Planning Practice Guidance
- local policy
  - development plan for individual authorities or jointly or spatial development strategy for Mayors or CAs
- neighbourhood policies
  - neighbourhood plans

# Key principles of the NPPF

- Plans should:

“positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change”

“strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas..”,

NPPF

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# Why good plan-making matters

Having a robust Plan in place helps to:

- Move from plan-making to place-shaping;
- Provide certainty for communities, developers and the council;
- Focus council on delivery;
- Access more funding and attract investment;
- Manage conflict!



# Strategic Planning and the NPPF

- ‘Strategic Planning’ is not mentioned in the NPPF or PPG
- NPPF Paragraph 17

*The development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority’s priorities for the development and use of land in its area. These strategic policies can be produced in different ways, depending on the issues and opportunities facing each area. They can be contained in:*

- a) **joint** or individual local plans, produced by authorities working together or independently (and which may also contain non-strategic policies); and/or
  - b) a spatial development strategy produced by an elected Mayor or combined authority, where plan-making powers have been conferred.
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# Strategic Planning...what do we actually mean?

- Seen as an overarching framework
  - It's two or more Local Planning Authorities working together
  - Can cover some or all of the strategic policy areas
  - It can include the allocation of development sites or growth locations
  - Often referred to as a Joint Spatial Plan (JSP)
  - Or it could be a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) if a Combined Authority
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# How could a Strategic Plan sit



# What's different to Local Plans?

- **In principle it's the same process:**
    - Will undertake a regulation 18 and 19 consultation
    - Plan is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate
    - Will be examined by an Inspector
    - An evidence base is required
  - **Except that...**
    - The plan is across more than one authority area
    - High level considerations...doesn't have to cover all policy areas
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# Risks of not having an up-to-date Plan coverage in place

- Difficult to defend inappropriate development
  - Priority in favour of 'sustainable development'
  - Increased 'planning by appeal' likely
  - Threat of Government intervention to remove plan making powers from an LPA
-

# What's being done already?

- South West Hertfordshire JSP
- South Essex JSP
- Greater Exeter
- Oxfordshire JSP
- Greater Manchester Spatial Framework
- Greater Nottingham

## **SDS's:**

- London
  - Liverpool
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# What's the benefits?

- A more efficient way to meet the Duty to Cooperate
  - Can allow resources to be shared
  - To plan better for an area as considerations for housing, employment and infrastructure are across a wider geographical area
  - Has the potential to save time across the authorities involved but this can depend on decision making timescales
  - Plan without boundaries
  - Plan over a longer times scale than a Local Plan
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# Effective Cooperation

- Duty to Cooperate was introduced by the Localism Act
  - A tool for delivering strategic planning at a local level
  - **Requires** councils and public bodies
    - to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in relation to planning for strategic issues particularly on infrastructure and unmet development needs
    - work collaboratively to ensure that strategic priorities across local authority boundaries are properly coordinated
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# Demonstrating Effective Cooperation

## Statement of Common Ground

“In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policymaking authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these. These should be produced using the approach set out in national planning guidance, and be made publicly available throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency”

Paragraph 27, NPPF

- These are “working” documents that should show progress towards agreements between neighbouring LPAs and other public bodies.
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# Developing a sound plan

- ✓ Address the key priorities for the area
  - ✓ Plan positively
  - ✓ Develop a robust and credible evidence base
  - ✓ Co-operate with neighbouring areas (outside of the strategic plan area)
  - ✓ Focus on reasonable alternatives
  - ✓ Undertake a comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal
  - ✓ Stakeholder engagement
  - ✓ Viable and deliverable in practice
  - ✓ Be clear on Plan coverage for area and timescales
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# What to consider when undertaking a strategic plan?

1. Political Leadership
  2. Corporate Buy-in
  3. Setting the project structure
  4. Creating an appropriate governance structure
  5. Collaborate to form a vision
  6. Form a professional team
  7. Is the Plan deliverable?
  8. Testing the Plan against the vision
  9. Promoting the benefits of the Plan
  10. Monitoring and Evaluation
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# The role of Members

- You have a vital **leadership** role to play to produce a **robust** Strategic Plan for your area that has **buy in** from all parties
  - Key challenge is to listen to the views and aspirations of your constituents and **balance** this with the evidence and professional advice of your planning staff in order to **plan** for, and **meet**, the **development needs of your area**
  - Remember the whole geographical area being considered
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# Robust and credible evidence base

- The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by **relevant** and **up-to-date** evidence. This should be **adequate** and **proportionate**, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals.

# Evidence base (examples)

- Housing need assessment
  - Housing types assessment
  - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) or Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability
  - Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating scoping and SEA)
  - Annual Monitoring Report
  - Five Year Land Supply Assessment
  - Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment
  - Employment land review
  - Transport Assessments
  - Retail assessment
  - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study
  - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
  - Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment
  - Green Belt Review
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# Prioritising evidence gathering



“Policies need to be justified. Evidence to underpin policies can be taken from a wide variety of sources... Strategic policy-making authorities will need to consider carefully the need to commission evidence that will add delay and cost to plan production”

Planning Guidance

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# Meeting housing need

“To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a **local housing need assessment**, conducted using the **standard method in national planning guidance** – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals.

In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.”

# Housing need type & tenure

A plan can also determine the type of housing required by the different elements of the community such as:

“affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes”

NPPF

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# 5 year housing land supply

- LPAs must identify and keep up-to-date a deliverable five year housing land supply
  - in the absence of plan coverage and / or a five year supply, the Council is prone to predatory planning applications
  - the presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the Framework
  - How will the strategic plan deal with housing delivery?
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# Green Belt

- Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.  
....Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. ”

NPPF

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# Role of the Green Belt

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

# Sustainability Appraisal

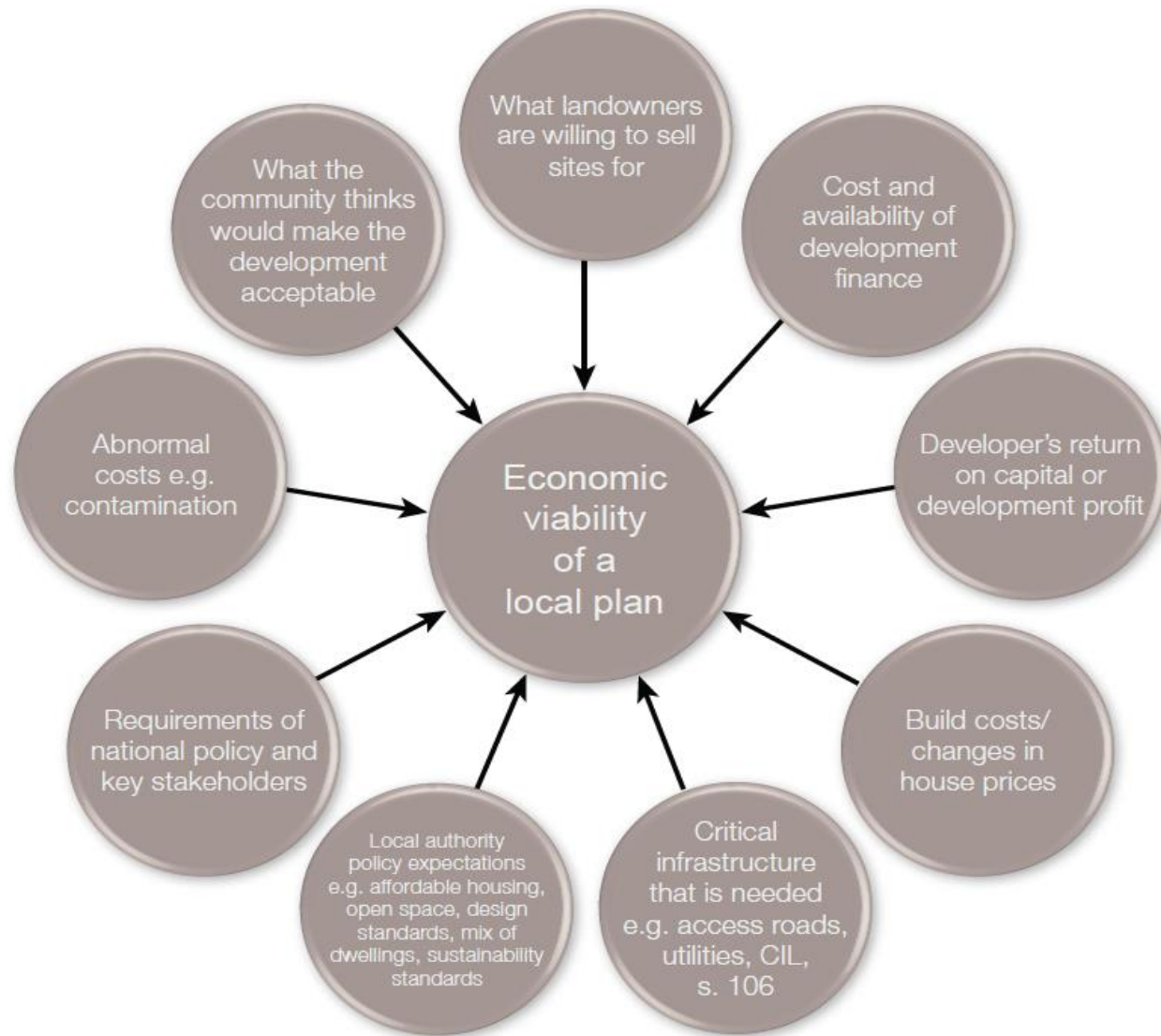
- How sustainable is our plan?
- Undertake SA at key stages in the plan-making process



# Viability and deliverability

- Strategic plan content must be tested to show that they are both viable and deliverable through cost and impact
  - For plan-making, this means:  
Ensuring that the **cumulative impact** of local standards and policies - when added to nationally required standards - does not put implementation of plan at risk
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# Whole Plan Viability





# Stakeholder engagement

- Requirement of planning legislation
  - Helps to create more realistic & deliverable plans
  - Views & knowledge of community form an important part of any plan making process
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# Who to engage?

- **Neighbouring Planning Authorities:** Statement of Common Ground and Duty to Cooperate
  - **Regulatory agencies:** The Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England
  - **Physical infrastructure delivery agencies:** highways authority, Highways Agency, utilities companies, Network Rail, public transport providers, airport operators
  - **Social infrastructure delivery agencies:** local authority education dept, social services, primary care trust, strategic health authority, the Police, charities/NGOs
  - **Major landowners** including public bodies
  - **Housebuilders** and other developers
  - **Minerals and waste management industries**
  - **Under 25's** as those most affected by a long term plan
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# How to engage?

- **Early** and **continuous** engagement
  - Understand the organisation
  - Identify responsible individuals
  - Invest in creating partnerships
  - Find out what others feel the Strategic Plan can do for them
  - Use interactive sessions
  - Think about the wider geographical area being represented
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# Engagement challenges

- Ensuring early and constructive engagement with neighbouring authorities
  - Engaging communities and developers on strategic issues
  - Ensuring agencies will deliver
  - Involving 'hard to reach' groups
  - Balancing 'breadth' and 'depth' of engagement
  - Making best use of resources
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# Examination

When an authority has a complete strategic plan they publish this plan for public consultation and then submit the plan for examination.

Strategic plans are examined by independent inspectors to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether they are sound.

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# NPPF Soundness Test

- **Positively prepared** - based on a strategy that seeks to meet at least minimum needs and is informed by agreements with neighbouring LPAs
  - **Justified** - an appropriate strategy, when considered against reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence
  - **Effective** - deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities
  - **Consistent with the NPPF** - enable the delivery of sustainable development
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# Stay in touch: we are at [local.gov.uk/pas](http://local.gov.uk/pas)

## PAS

We provide high quality help, advice, support and training on planning and service delivery to councils. We help local government officers and councillors stay effective and up to date. We have a 'sector led' improvement approach, where local authorities help each other to continuously improve.



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