

Local Plans – the two-system helix
PAS Conference
26th February 2026

Local Plans the two-system helix Panel discussion

- **Arthur Young – MHCLG** Deputy Director for Development Plans
- **Simon Berkeley - PINS** Professional Lead for Local Plans
- **Patrick Conroy - South Gloucestershire Council** Strategic Planning Policy and Specialist Advice Manager
- **Tim Mills – Rushmoor Borough Council** Executive Head of Property and Growth

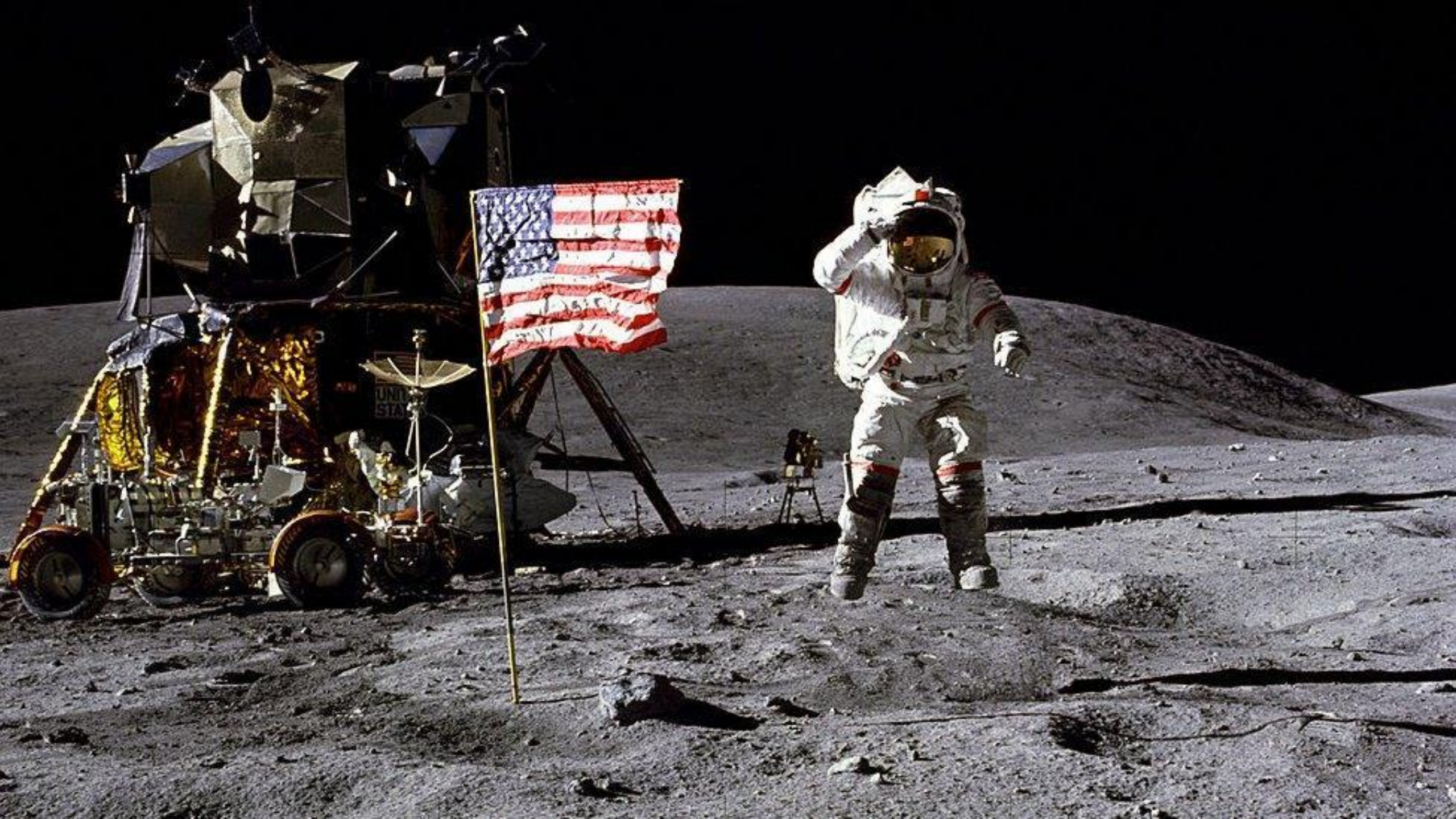




Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Local Plans Update

Arthur Young – Deputy Director | Development Plans

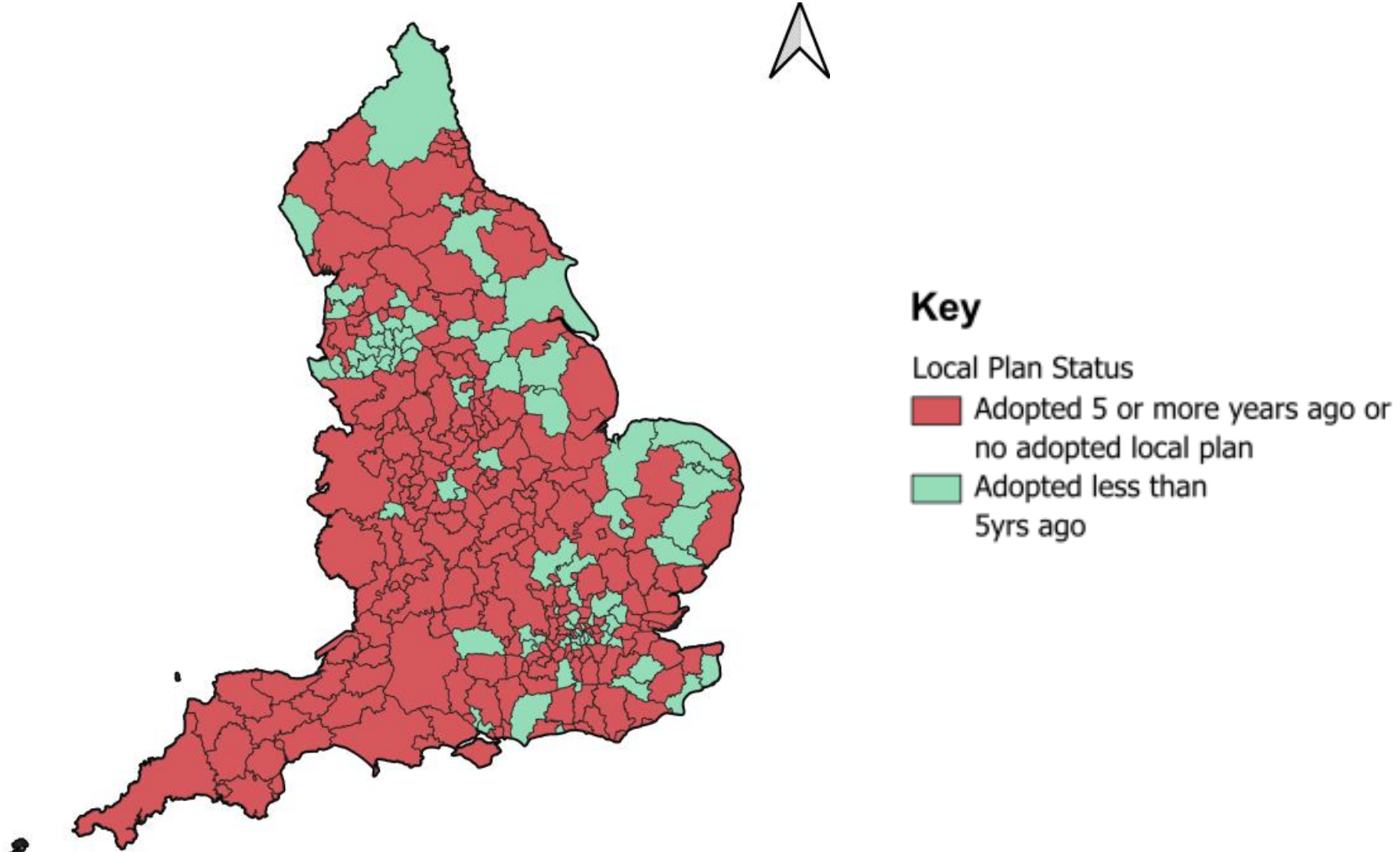






Local plan coverage in England

Data as of end of January 2026





Government's view of plan-making and reform



The plan-led approach is, and must remain, the cornerstone of our planning system.

Local plans are the best way for communities to shape decisions about how to deliver the housing and wider development their areas need.

In the absence of an up-to-date plan, there is a high likelihood that development will come forward on a piecemeal and speculative basis, with reduced public engagement and fewer guarantees that it will make the most of an area's potential. [...] the current system is optimised neither for speed nor for community participation.

The government is therefore clear that more fundamental reform to the system is needed to ensure that local plans are faster to prepare and simpler for end users to access and understand.

Matthew Pennycook MP

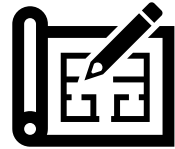
Minister of State (Housing and Planning) 27 November 2025



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
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Recap: reforms to plan-making so far...

Where we have come from to where we are going



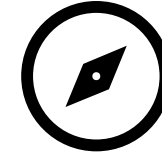
July 2023

Government consults on
plan-making reforms and
implementation



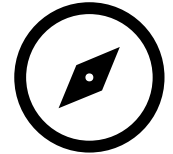
February 2025

Government responds
to consultation on plan-
making reforms and
implementation



November 2025

Create and Update a
Local Plan (CULP)
website launched with
Regulations Explainer



Early 2026 (and beyond)

Secondary legislation for
'switching on' the new
plan-making system

Continued roll-out of
CULP guidance to
support LPAs

Funding support to LPAs



May 2022

Levelling Up and
Regeneration Bill
introduced to
Parliament to
introduce a new plan-
making system



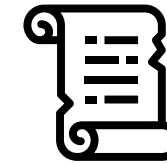
October 2023

Levelling Up and
Regeneration Act gains
Royal Assent



March 2025

Planning and
Infrastructure Bill
introduced to
Parliament with
proposals for
spatial development
strategies



December 2025

Planning and
Infrastructure Act
gains Royal
Assent



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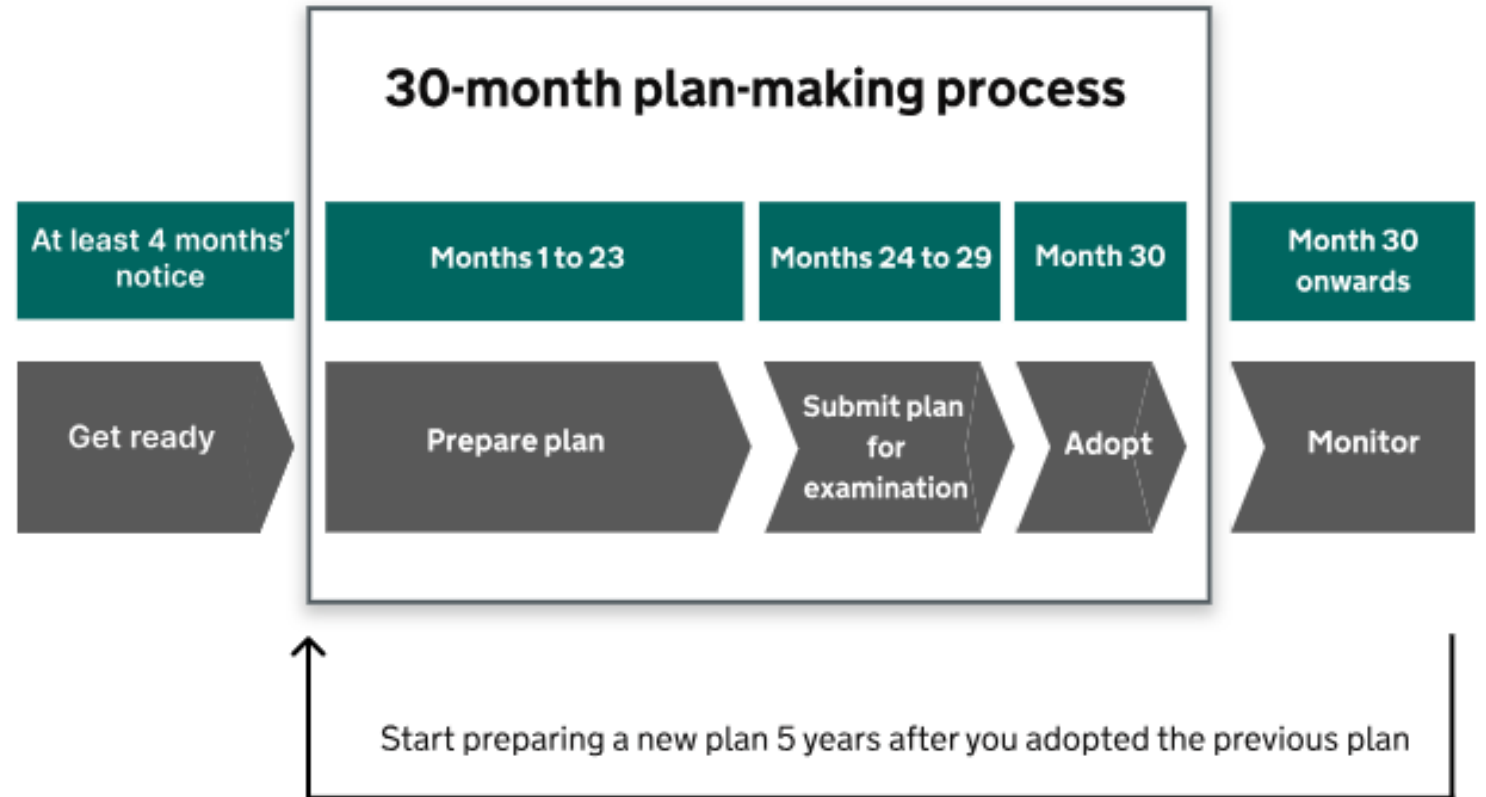
Easier, quicker, simpler

The new 30-month plan making process

Local plans and minerals and waste plans are expected to be prepared and adopted within 30 months. This will begin from the point at which the authority passes through Gateway 1 and formally commences plan preparation.

The overall plan-making period will be structured into clearer, more distinct stages, with details of the key activities expected to take place at each stage detailed in new guidance. This will support more effective work planning and deliver more efficient, consistent ways of working across different local authorities.

Authorities will be expected to prepare a Project Initiation Document to help them get ready for plan-making. This will, amongst other things, set out governance, resourcing, and project management arrangements to support timely plan delivery.





Easier, quicker, simpler

The regulations that underpin the new plan-making system



Guidance

Plan-making regulations explainer

Published 27 November 2025

Applies to England

Contents

[Context](#)

[Local plan-making process](#)

[Preparation, form and content of local plans](#)

[Local plan timetable](#)

[Notice of intention to commence local plan preparation](#)

We have published this guidance now so that LPAs can see the direction of travel for the new plan making system. We will review the guidance and make any necessary revisions and updates as the new system is implemented, and related regulations and policy are confirmed.

In February 2025, the government published the response to the consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms set out in the Levelling-up and

We published a summary of what the new regulations will contain in addition to a suite of resources on ‘Create or Update a Local Plan’ last year, providing plan-makers with the information they need to familiarise themselves with the new system in advance of it coming into effect early this year.

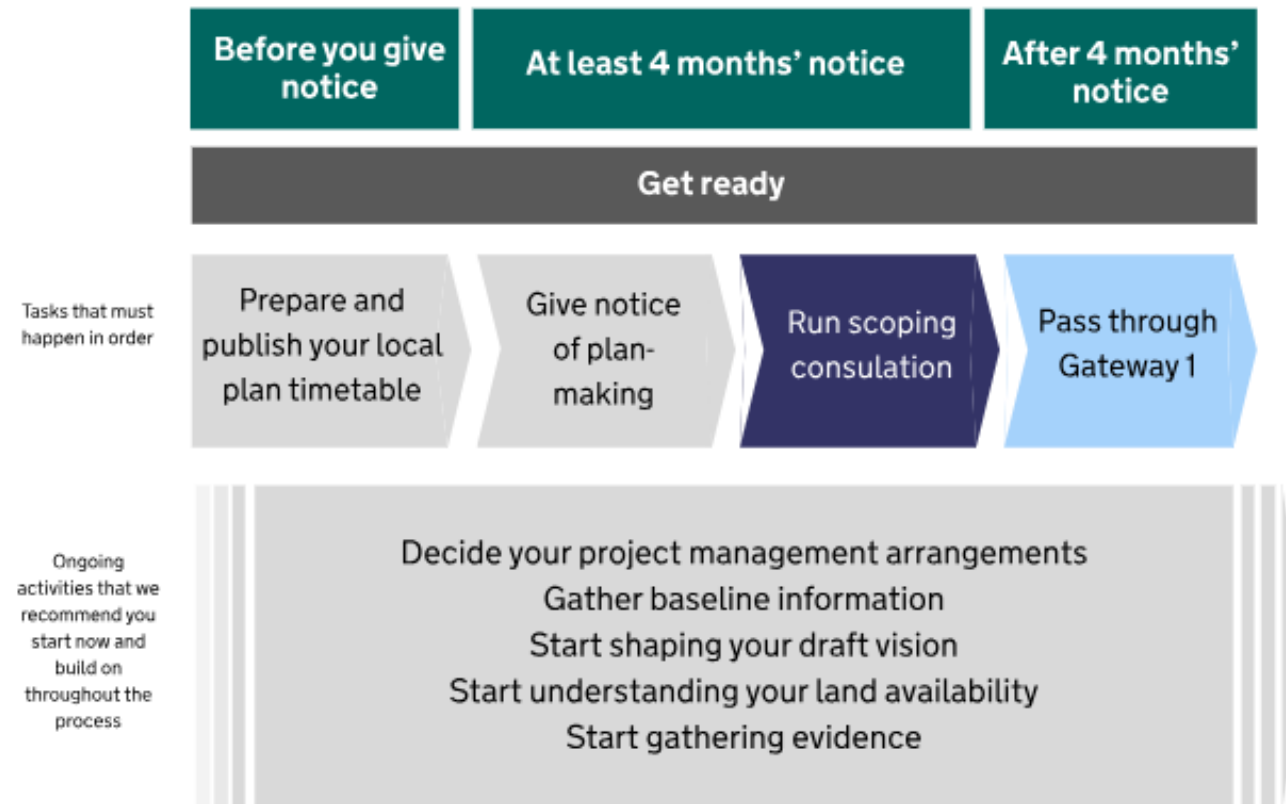
Government will shortly lay the regulations that will underpin its new approach to plan-making. This will support faster preparation of plans and more frequent updates, in line with the government's aim of universal coverage of up-to-date plans that reflect local needs.



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The new 30-month plan making process

Before the 30-month process starts



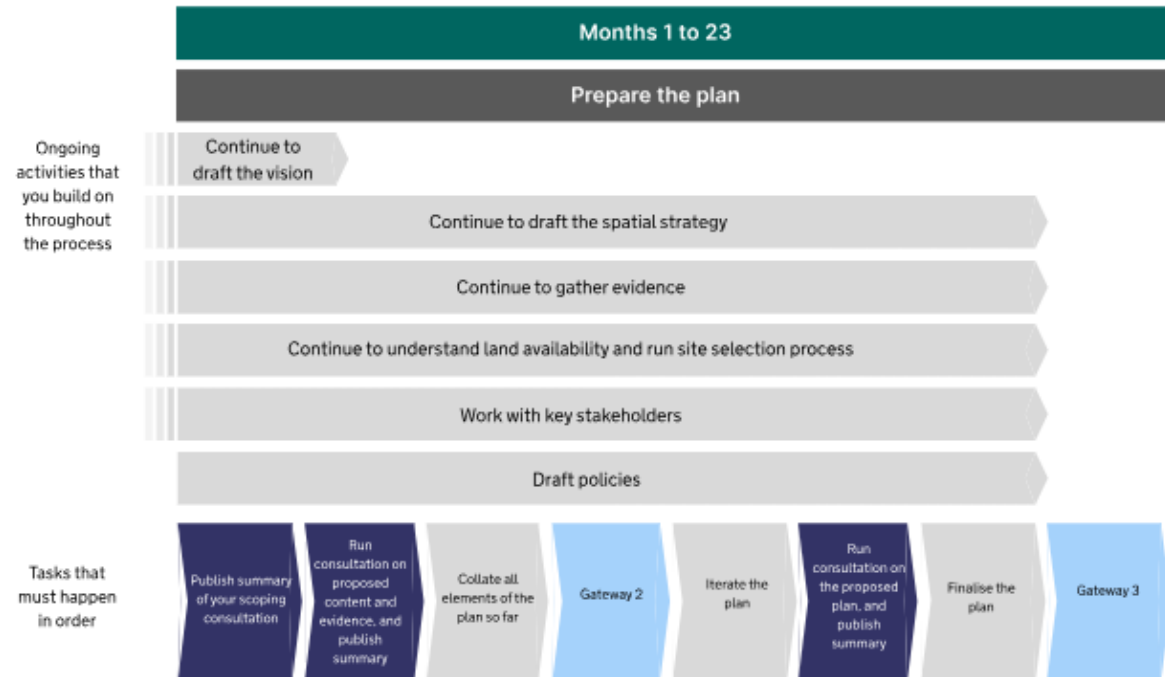


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The new 30-month plan making process

Months 1 to 23: prepare the plan

At the point you pass through Gateway 1, the 30-month timeframe begins and you can start preparing your plan.

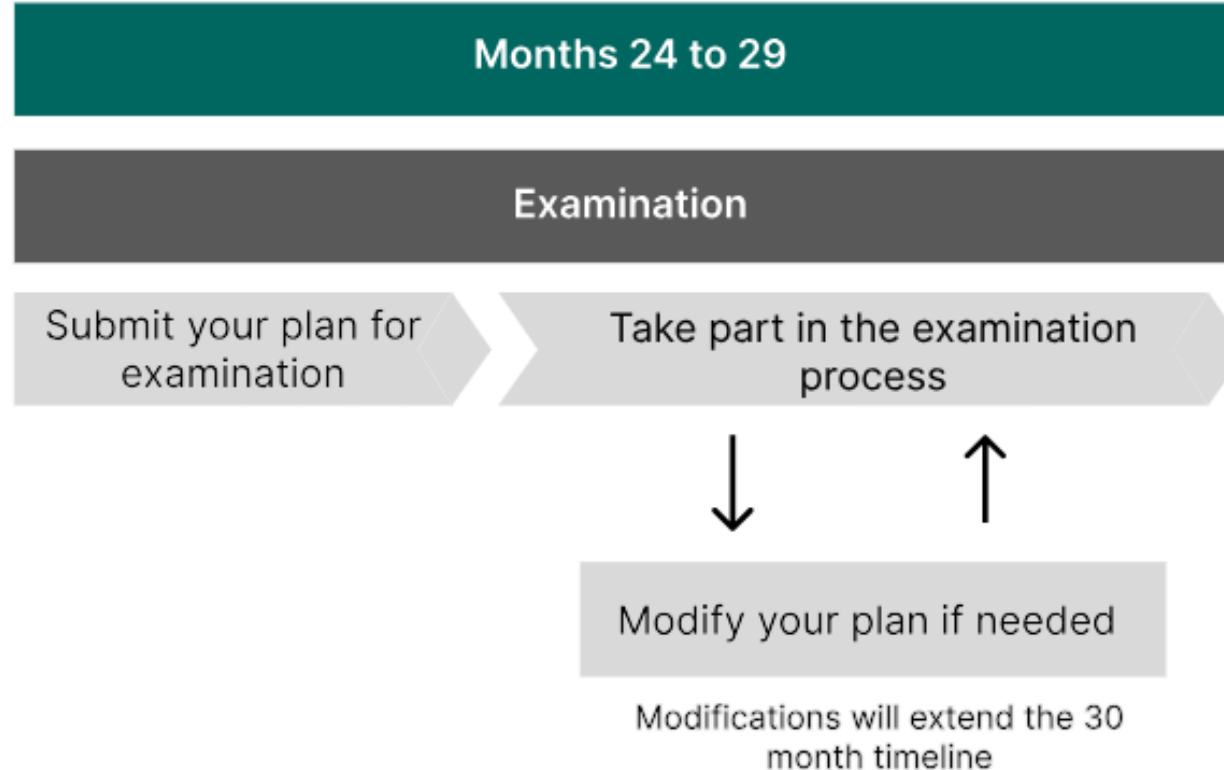




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The new 30-month plan making process

Months 24 to 29: submit your plan for examination

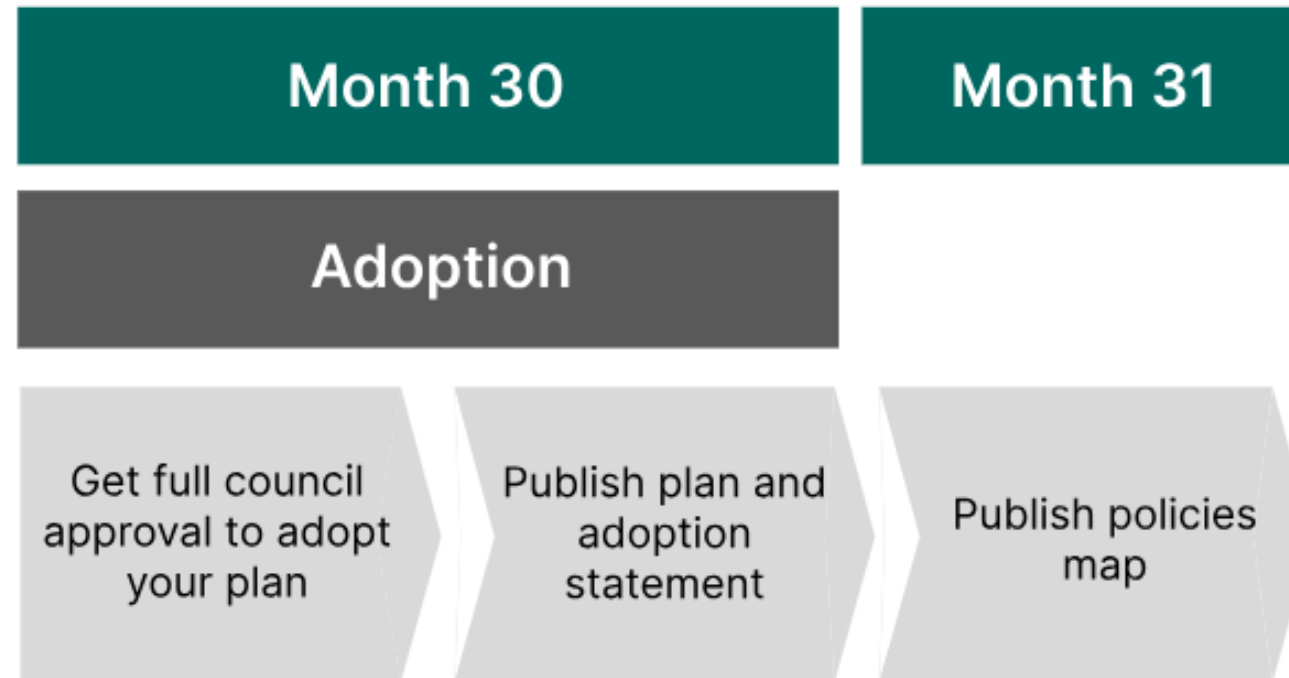




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The new 30-month plan making process

Month 30 to 31: adopt plan and publish policies map





What we have provided so far...

Landing page for the new system (two collection pages – one for the legacy system and one for the new system of plan making)

A raft of new CULP guidance to support LPAs under the new plan-making system including:

- 30-month local plan process: an overview
- Getting ready to prepare a new plan
- Give notice of your plan making
- Gateway 1 what you need to do

Headline announcement that a minimum of £14.1million will be available to support local plan implementation in 2025/26



What's next? (1)

The next series of releases that we are looking to make over the coming months

Launching an exemplar Model Local Plan - this will comprise guidance and templates aimed to illustrate what new local plans will need to include and look like.

More CULP guidance to support LPAs in the early stages of plan-making including:

- Statement of Compliance & Statement of Soundness
- Create a local plan timetable
- Making your local plan documents publicly available
- What to include in your local plan
- Documents to be prepared in your local plan
- Engaging the public when preparing a local plan
- Requirement to Assist
- ...and more!

Data standards + guidance:

- Development Plan: timetables and housing requirements



What's next? (2)

Releases that we are looking to make over the rest of 2026

Developing a **sites identification forms service** which is a digital service that will look to standardise how site information is submitted, assessed and shared.

Developing a **site assessment service** which will be a centralised digital tool that supports LPAs through the site assessment stage, helping teams review, compare and manage site information in a consistent and transparent way.

More CULP guidance and templates to support LPAs in the early stages of plan-making including preparing a local plan evidence base and the tests of soundness.

Data standards + guidance:

- Sites
- Policies Map
- Annual Monitoring Report key data



Notes on the current plan-making system

Plan-making under the existing system to end by 31 December 2026

Submitting an existing system plan

- For plans progressing to adoption under the existing plan-making legal framework, the final date for submission for examination will be 31 December 2026.

Duty to co-operate

- Regulations will have the effect of abolishing the Duty for the current plan-making system, by not saving this provision for plans progressing to examination in the existing system by 31 December 2026.
- LPAs should continue to collaborate across their boundaries, including on unmet development needs from neighbouring areas, and we expect PINS to continue to examine plans in line with the policies in the NPPF on 'maintaining effective co-operation'.

PINS advisory visits

- A useful tool that LPAs have access to with PINS to discuss any potential issues that could arise as part of examination



Spatial Development Strategies

Working out the geographies following the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

The Planning and Infrastructure Act contains provisions that:

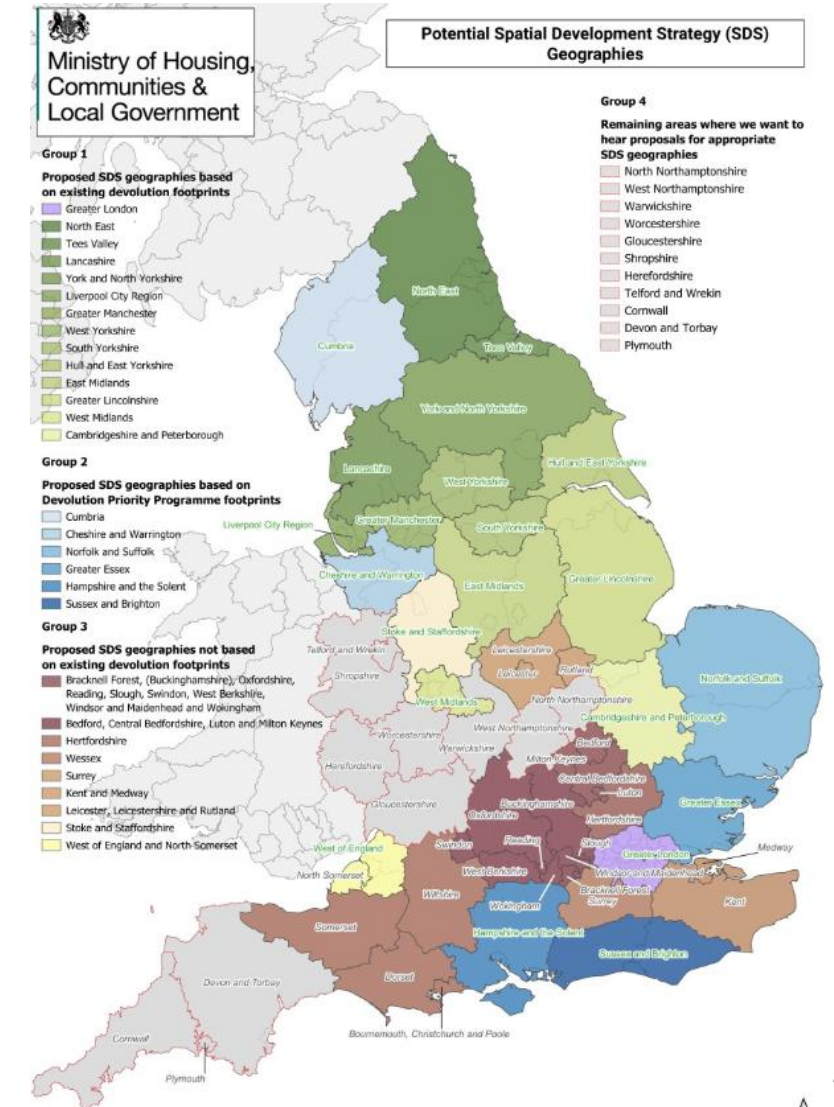
- place a duty on combined authorities, combined county authorities, upper-tier county councils and unitary authorities to prepare a SDS for their area.
- enables the government to establish “strategic planning boards” to prepare SDSs on behalf of specified groupings of these authorities. These provisions will be brought into force this summer.

We launched our **consultation on the proposed geographies over which spatial development strategies (SDSs) should be produced**. The consultation closes 26 March – we encourage all local authorities to respond.

The three types of geographies being consulted on:

- 1) Mayoral Strategic Authorities already exist, or are set to be implemented;
- 2) Where we believe that there is general agreement for strategic working which reflects the sensible geography criteria in the English Devolution White Paper
- 3) where no such arrangement or proposals exist in the grey areas, we are welcoming views on how SDS geographies may work.

We will follow up with a further consultation on where Strategic Planning Board (SPB) will be established through secondary legislation, alongside more detailed engagement and discussion with relevant authorities.



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Go, Go, Go – New System

Help us fill in the gaps on the map

'Have' to go first (backstop 1)

- 35-40 (max) authorities
- Plan (current system) submitted by March 2025 and with <80% LHN
- Most are recently adopted, at examination or main mods
- Will have to start a new plan by 30th June and reach gateway 1 by 31st 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 30th June and reach gateway 1 by 31st Oct


Backstop 2

- ??? Authorities being approached for timescales
- Plan (current system) over 5yrs old or at any stage
- Start a new plan by 31st Dec 2026 and reach gateway 1 by April 2027

Everyone Else?

- Everyone else???????
- Recently adopted plans (apart from the backstop 1 group) who can wait for their plan to be 4yrs 8mths old

 Plans that need to go first which reached examination on or before 12 March 2025 which are providing less than 80% of LHN in their emerging plan (aka. transitional backstop plans, "Backstop 1")

 Plans which want to go first. The authority has told PAS it wants to go first and meet the backstop one dates and has applied for local plan implementation funding which requires the backstop one dates to be met.

