

Northumberland Local Plan

Interim Local Development Scheme 2025 to 2028

March 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS should set out what Development Plan Documents, which will comprise the Local Plan for an area, are to be produced by the Council, their content and broad timetable for preparation. The purpose of this LDS is to explain how and when the Council will prepare documents which form part of the Local Plan for Northumberland.
- 1.2 This interim Northumberland LDS covers the period 2025 to 2028. It replaces the Northumberland LDS which came into effect in March 2023. Given that plan making regulations for the new plan making system set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2024) are yet to be published, the LDS is interim in nature. It will be updated once these regulations are in place.

What is a Local Plan?

- 1.3 All local planning authorities are required to have an up-to-date Local Plan. The Local Plan sets out the strategic priorities for development of an area and covers housing, commercial, transport development and environmental protection. They must plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the strategic priorities. A Local Plan also includes a Policies Map which illustrates the geographic extent of policies and proposals on a map base.
- 1.4 In addition, there are a number of documents which support a Local Plan, including:

Local Development Scheme (LDS)	The timetable for the preparation of local development documents (this document).
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	Sets out the Council's approach to engaging with local communities during plan preparation and when consulting on planning applications.
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)	Provide additional advice and information relating to specific policies or proposals in a Development Plan Document (DPD).
Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)	Sets out the progress in terms of producing DPD and implementing policies.

- 1.5 Through the Localism Act the Government introduced 'Neighbourhood Plans'. These are prepared by Town and Parish Councils or by specially designated neighbourhood forums in areas without a Parish. There is not a statutory requirement for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. The scope of the plan is determined by the Town and Parish Council in consultation with their communities. Neighbourhood Plans must take account of national planning policy and be in general conformity with the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans are not Development Plan Documents and therefore cannot be included in this LDS. However, once made, or approved by referendum, they will form part of the Development Plan for the area. Further information on Neighbourhood Plans currently being prepared within Northumberland can be found on the Council's website¹.

What is a Local Development Scheme?

- 1.6 The LDS provides the starting point for local communities and stakeholders to find out about the Council's timetable for preparing the various documents which the Council intends to produce as part of the Northumberland Local Plan over a three year period. The LDS describes:
- The content and geographic area to which each of the documents relates;
 - The timetable and key milestones in their preparation; and
 - The interrelationships between each document.

What is the existing Northumberland Development Plan?

- 1.7 The Northumberland Development Plan comprises the Northumberland Local Plan, which was adopted on 31 March 2022, which covers the whole of County, excluding the Northumberland National Park, which is a separate local planning authority; and a number of neighbourhood plans. At the time of writing there are twenty-seven 'made' neighbourhood plans across Northumberland.
- 1.8 Planning law states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications, along with Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

¹ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx>

2. The Northumberland Local Plan

What DPDs will be produced and what will they contain?

- 2.1 As set out above, the Northumberland Local Plan 2016 - 36 (NLP) was only adopted on 31 March 2022. Housing delivery across the local plan area has been at historically high levels over recent years, and the Council can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land. As such, the NLP remains up to date.
- 2.2 As set out in the NLP, there was an expectation that at least a partial early review of the plan would be undertaken to reflect changes to the NPPF which came about following the submission of the plan. PPG also sets out that there will be occasions where significant changes in circumstances mean it is necessary to review relevant strategic policies, earlier than the statutory minimum of 5 years. With the reintroduction of rail passenger services on the Northumberland Line in December 2024, increased demand for large employment sites in southeast Northumberland from emerging and high value sectors, and a significant uplift in the Local Housing Need number for the county following revisions to the standard method in December 2024, the Council has commenced an early review, or re-evaluation of the NLP. It is anticipated that the review will conclude by summer 2025. The review will inform any decisions about updating the plan or preparing a new one. Given the significance of changes to national policy and to local circumstances, it is anticipated that it will be necessary to embark on the preparation of a new Local Plan.
- 2.3 On this basis, a draft timetable for the preparation of a new plan is set out in Appendix 1. Any future development plan documents will be prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA). However, regulations to implement plan making reforms set out in the LURA are not yet in place. There are also wider planning reforms underway (including proposed National Development Management Policies) which are integral to Plan preparation. Therefore, the draft timetable presented, is not only subject to the outcome of the ongoing review, but also the publication of planning regulations and wider reforms. The Interim LDS will be updated once there is greater clarity in relation to these matters.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that a full new style Local Plan will be prepared. It will:
- Set the strategic planning policies of the Council;
 - Provide the planning principles to guide future development and planning decisions in Northumberland from 2025-2045;
 - Set the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2045;
 - Include strategic allocations as well as detailed land allocations and designations; and
 - Include site specific proposals for the development, protection, and conservation of land.

- 2.5 The Council's previous LDS dated March 2023 set out the intention to prepare a separate Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan (GTTSLP). While updated evidence in relation to the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, has been prepared, the Council no longer intends to prepare a specific GTTSLP. The updated Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTTSANA) identified no need to allocate permanent pitches and only a modest need to provide transit sites. In the light of this, the Council considers it would be better use of resources to progress any transit sites directly through a planning application route. If allocations are required, they will be brought forward as part of a wider plan update or a new local plan.
- 2.6 The previous LDS also set out an intention to update the NLP in relation to open space. While the updated Open Space Assessment has been prepared and will be material in the determination of planning applications, any policy update will be undertaken through a wider update of the plan or the preparation of new Local Plan.
- 2.7 The NLP sets out the intention to prepare a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide additional information and guidance. The LURA sets out provisions to phase out SPDs and replace them with Supplementary Plans (SPs), though regulations in relation to these are also awaited. Given the expected changes to SPDs and that work has commenced on a review of the NLP, it is not proposed that any SPDs are progressed at this time.

Northumberland Design Code

- 2.8 The LURA sets out that Supplementary Plans will have greater weight than SPDs, and that they will be required to be tested through independent examination. Work is underway on the preparation of a Northumberland Design Code. Pending the reforms, this may take the form of a SP or may be integrated into a new Local Plan. This will be kept under review and the LDS updated at the right time, as necessary.

How will the Development Plan Documents be prepared?

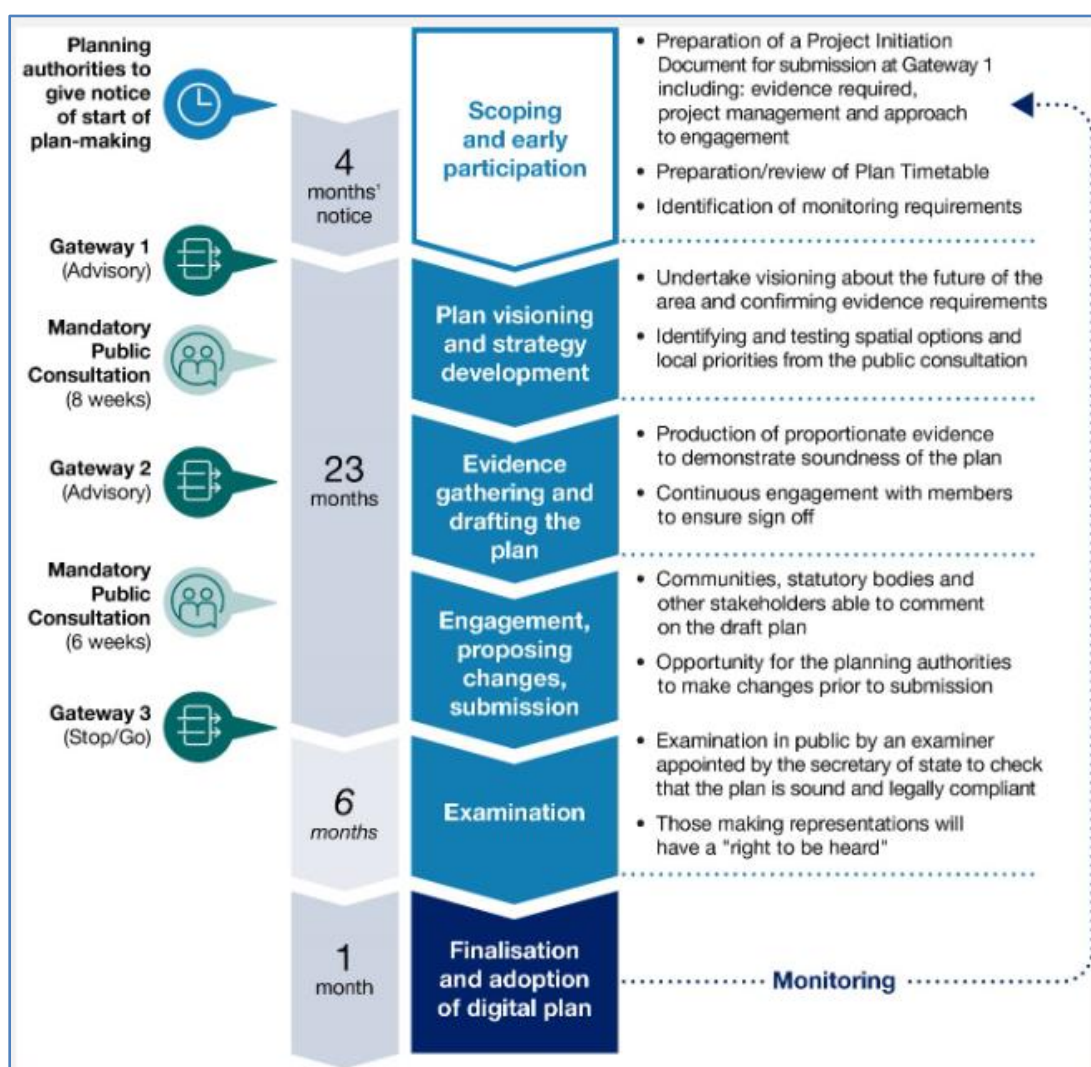
- 2.9 The Government does not set out precise details of how the Council should prepare Development Plan Documents. Current Regulations² do however prescribe certain stages where the public are to be consulted. Given that any future DPDs will be prepared in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 7³ of the LURA, these regulations will not apply. However, early, and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses will be essential. While new regulations are awaited, guidance from the previous Government which was subject to

² [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 SI 2012 No. 767](#)

³ [Schedule 7 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#)

consultation in 2023⁴, sets out a number of stages and a timeline for preparing a new local plan, and some of the requirements at each stage. The following table is from that document.

- 2.10 The stages set out that there will be an early participation stage in which the public and stakeholders, including statutory bodies will be invited to participate. During the later stages, there will be two formal public consultations. The Gateways represent points where the Council will engage with the Planning Inspectorate to ensure plan making is on track. While the first two gateways are advisory, the third and final mandatory gateway will determine whether the plan progresses to examination.



⁴ [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms)

3. Supporting information

- 3.1 The Government expects local authorities to use effective programme management techniques to progress the delivery of Local Plans. This section of the LDS explains the arrangements that are in place to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the Northumberland Local Plan. Key areas are:
- The development of a sound and robust evidence base;
 - The approach to community and stakeholder engagement;
 - Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment;
 - Resources;
 - Programme management;
 - Risk assessment; and
 - Monitoring and review.

Evidence base

- 3.2 The NLP was informed by a substantial evidence base. Any new plan must be based on a proportionate, but sound and robust evidence. A number of new and updated specialist studies will need to be prepared. Consultants will be used for this work, if the Council does not have the specialist skills required, or the capacity needed to undertake the work. This evidence base will also provide baseline data to help inform the monitoring and review process of Local Plan documents.
- 3.3 The Council is required to work with neighbouring local planning authorities and stakeholders when preparing Local Plans. The Government expects Councils to plan strategically across administrative boundaries under the Duty to Co-operate⁵. The Council will seek to undertake joint evidence base work with adjoining authorities where appropriate. The English Devolution White Paper⁶ envisages all areas in England producing spatial development strategies. This will require combined authorities and constituent authorities to work collaboratively on housing need and infrastructure.
- 3.4 The key evidence base studies to support the implementation of the current NLP or the preparation of a new Local Plan will be presented on the Council's website.

Community engagement

- 3.5 Greater and more effective community involvement is a key feature of the planning system. The Government stresses the importance of early and meaningful engagement

⁵ [National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, Paragraphs 24.](#)

⁶ [English Devolution White Paper, December 2024](#)

and collaboration in plan preparation. Northumberland County Council adopted a revised Statement of Community Involvement in February 2015. This sets out the arrangements for public consultation on both plan preparation and all planning applications made to the Council. The Statement of Community Involvement is due to be reviewed and updated. This will be undertaken as part of the local plan review process or during the scoping and early participation stage.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 3.6 The preparation of Development Plan Documents will continue to be informed by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). This is an iterative process that develops alongside the preparation of a Development Plan Document through which the economic, social, and environmental effects of the plan being prepared are assessed. It incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environment Assessment.
- 3.7 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is undertaken on all emerging Development Plan Documents in order to ensure that policies and proposals will not, either individually or cumulatively, have a significant effect on the integrity of European designated sites.
- 3.8 The SA and HRA requirements are expected to be replaced by a new simpler Environmental Outcomes Report (EOR), but again secondary legislation and regulations associated with the LURA are awaited.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.9 Councils are also required by legislation to prepare an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to ensure that policies in Development Plan Documents do not discriminate against protected groups and that opportunities are taken to promote equality. The EqIA will also run parallel with each of the stages of a Development Plan Document being prepared or reviewed.

Resources

- 3.10 The Planning Service is responsible for the preparation of the Local Plan documents and all related guidance. Planning Policy Officers provide the resources to support the delivery of the Development Plan Documents identified within the LDS. External consultants will be commissioned where the need for specialist services, additional capacity, or the need to provide a critical friend is identified.
- 3.11 Partnership working across the Council will be essential to the success of the Local Plan documents being prepared due to the cross-cutting nature and relationship with other plans and strategies. Specialist staff from other functions of the authority will also contribute to the Local Plan documents such as strategic housing, public health, and climate change.

- 3.12 The cost of producing the Development Plan Documents identified within the LDS will need to be met from existing and future service budgets. This budget however is limited and any opportunities to secure additional funding and support will be exploited. The Council will use shared financial resources wherever possible to produce evidence base studies that will be required both across Council Services and with adjoining Local Authorities.

Programme management

- 3.13 The Council's Cabinet is responsible for authorising the preparatory stages of the Local Plan process, for example approval of Development Plan Documents for consultation and Full Council is responsible for the decision making stages such as submission and adoption of Development Plan Documents.
- 3.14 The Local Plan Member Working Group makes recommendations to and offers advice to the Cabinet on the preparation of Local Plan documents.

Risk Assessment

- 3.15 A risk assessment has been prepared that is monitored and reviewed during the period of the LDS by senior managers. The risk assessment includes proposed mitigation and contingency measures that may need to be implemented in order to ensure that sound Development Plan Documents are prepared and developed in a timely manner.

Impact	Proposed action(s)
Staffing Issues: Staff recruitment, retention, and vacant posts; Lack of suitably trained staff; Reduced capacity (long term absence) (un-programmed work)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction in quality and quantity of evidence base• Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge• Increased workload for existing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply council HR policies including appraisal, recruitment, and sickness management• Provide staff training and development• Second appropriately experienced staff• Use consultants and other temporary solutions as appropriate• Commission specialised studies• Local Plan recognised and prioritised as a Corporate Policy

Financial Resources: Budget insufficient for planned expenditure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in quality and quantity of evidence base • Reduced ability to commission specialist studies • Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Plan recognised and prioritised as a Corporate Policy • Expand partnership working to draw upon skills and resources within other organisations • Monitor closely expenditure on commissioned studies and other work
Corporate Issues: Change in Council priorities; amendments to decision making process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional work to evidence base and redrafting of documents • Increased workload and costs for unprogrammed work • Increased number of representations to consultation documents • Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge • Credibility of plan making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Plan recognised and prioritised as a Corporate Policy • Cross party member Local Plan Working Group established • Commission specialised studies • Ensure that Council plans and strategies, including the Corporate Plan and Local Plan are aligned
Information technology issues: The inability of the Council to support required technology to deliver a digital plan.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk that new plan will not conform with new digital requirements • Risk that consultation processes are unnecessarily cumbersome and time consuming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT are engaged in plan making process at the earliest opportunity to identify issues • Work with suppliers to overcome issues.
External Influences and timing: Failure of partners to deliver to agreed programme; changes in national or regional policy, the tight timeframe for preparing a new plan.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional work to evidence base and redrafting of documents • Increased time without updated policy coverage • Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close liaison with partners in preparation of LDS and work programme • Engage partners commitment to deliver through joint working and linkages with other strategies, programmes, and projects

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain liaison with Planning Inspectorate • Review LDS if necessary
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Monitoring and review

- 3.16 The Council has a duty to monitor its activities and to report on those activities to its residents and other interested parties by way of an Authority Monitoring Report.
- 3.17 Rather than presenting a single annual report containing a wide range of complex information, a number of smaller topic-based releases will be published on a continual basis at the earliest opportunity.

Glossary

Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) - Reports on how the Council is performing in terms of the Local Plan. It includes a review of the Local Development Scheme's timetable and monitors the success of Local Plan policies.

Development Plan - This includes adopted council development plan documents such as the Northumberland Local Plan and any 'made' neighbourhood plans setting out the policies for the development and use of land.

Development Plan Documents (DPDs) - DPDs are adopted plans and documents that form part of the development plan. Once adopted, planning decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DPDs include Local Plans.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Undertaken to ensure that equality issues are considered throughout the Local Plan process, and that it promotes equality and diversity and does not adversely affect or discriminate against any of the protected Equality groups.

Evidence Base - The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development. It includes a wide range of numerical data and other information, including, surveys, studies, discussions, and consultations.

Habitats Regulations - A set of government regulations (currently the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)), which sets out requirements within England regarding the protection and enhancement of important natural assets, giving expression to various international Conventions and national statutes.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) - A three year programme identifying the development plan documents to be produced and the timetable for their production.

Local Plan - The documents and maps that make up the plan for the future development of a local area such as Northumberland.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - A Government document that sets out nationally important planning issues..

Neighbourhood Plan - A plan prepared for a defined area by a "qualifying body," a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum. When made a neighbourhood plan will form part of the Development Plan.

Northumberland National Park - Designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, the designation seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the park, and to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. The Park sits entirely within the boundary of Northumberland but is a separate local planning authority area.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – This sets out the Council's approach to involving the community in the planning process and development management decisions.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) - Non-statutory documents which add further detail to the policies in statutory documents such as the Local Plan – e.g. providing guidance on design in general or on the development of specific sites. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration but do not form part of the development plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - The process of weighing and assessing policies for their global, national, and local sustainability implications in relation to the environment, the economy and society, incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Appendix 1: Northumberland Local Plan profile and provisional timetable

Profile of the Northumberland Local Plan	
Title	Northumberland Local Plan
Role and content	<p>The Northumberland Local Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the strategic planning policies of the Council; • Provide the planning principles to guide future development and planning decisions in Northumberland from 2025-2045; • Set the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2045; • Include strategic allocations as well as detailed land allocations and designations; and • Include site specific proposals for the development, protection, and conservation of land. • The Local Plan will include a policies map identifying the detailed land allocations and designations
Status	Development Plan Document (DPD)
Chain of conformity	Consistent with national planning policy as well as Northumberland County Council policy documents.
Geographic coverage	Northumberland County, excluding the Northumberland National Park area.

Northumberland Local Plan Draft Timetable and Milestones	
STAGE	DATES
<p>Evaluation of current Northumberland Local Plan</p> <p>This review will include consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consistency of plan policies with the new NPPF and PPG • The effectiveness of policies • Changes in circumstances since the NLP was prepared. • Duty to cooperate engagement <p>A review of the evidence used in the preparation and implementation of the current NLP will also be undertaken as part of this process.</p>	<p>January 2025 to June 2025</p>

The subsequent stages, and their timelines are subject to the outcome of the above review and the publication of new plan making regulations.

Scoping and early participation stage Activities will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of a Project Initiation Document • Review of the Local Plan timetable • Identification of monitoring requirements • Notification of the public and stakeholders of plan making and an invitation to participate. • Preparation of an updated Statement of Community Involvement • Early evidence gathering and analysis including a “call for sites”. <p>An invitation to participate in the plan making process will be issued, and at least 4 months’ notice will be given to stakeholders and the public prior to the formal start of plan preparation at Gateway 1.</p> <p>This notification will not occur before the Local Election on 1 May 2025.</p>	May 2025 to November 2025
Gateway 1 – Formal start of 30-month plan preparation period	[Provisional] November 2025
Main plan preparation stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan visioning and strategy development • Evidence gathering and drafting the plan • Engagement, proposing changes. <p>This will include two public consultation exercises and the Gateway 2 check.</p>	[Provisional] November 2025 to October 2027
Submission of Local Plan and Gateway 3	[Provisional] October 2027
Examination	[Provisional and subject to Planning Inspectorate capacity] October 2027 to April 2028
Finalisation and adoption of digital plan	[Provisional] May 2028

Arrangements for production	
Organisation lead	Director of Housing and Planning
Political management	Cabinet and Full Council with input from Local Plan Cross-Party Member Working Group throughout production
Resources	Planning Policy Team, with technical, legal, and administrative support from other teams and consultants as required
Community and stakeholder involvement	To be undertaken in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (which will be updated) and regulations for the new plan making system (when published).