

APPENDIX 1 Draft Response to consultation on plan-making implementation

[Plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation)

Chapter 1: Plan content

Question 1: Do you agree with the core principles for plan content? Do you think there are other principles that could be included?

The principles and goals set out regarding the approach to new style local plans look appropriate, and would provide a clear structure focusing on where plans can add value.

One of the principles referred to is that plans will need to “set out a detailed approach to monitoring”. We agree the need for effective monitoring; we would stress the need for the approach to monitoring to be proportionate including making best use of automated data approaches, enabling effective evaluation of policies whilst minimising the burden of collecting monitoring data.

Question 2: Do you agree that plans should contain a vision, and with our proposed principles preparing the vision? Do you think there are other principles that could be included?

Plans should include a vision. Our adopted and emerging local plans seek to provide a vision and objectives that the plan is seeking to achieve, shaped by engagement with communities. It is agreed that such visions should form a golden thread through the local plan.

There are specific aspects of the vision which are not clear. It refers to more specific visions than currently and setting measurable outcomes underpinned by the

evidence base. Does that include quantum of development and strategy, and potentially strategic sites? There is reference to a key diagram that sets out the vision spatially for the area - at what point in the process is that anticipated?

It is agreed that the local plan should link with other plans and strategies operating in an area, but it would not be practicable for it to be seen as the 'parent' document.

Local development management policies

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed framework for local development management policies?

The principle of local development management policies having appropriate justification, and where possible linked to implementation of the vision, is entirely appropriate. It will be important that evidence requirements are robust but proportionate to speed up plan making. The scope of national development management policies has yet to be published. It remains important that local authorities have flexibility to plan for the needs, opportunities and particular characteristics of their areas.

Templating and digital efficiencies

Question 4: Would templates make it easier for local planning authorities to prepare local plans? Which parts of the local plan would benefit from consistency?

We would support the principle of using templates to prepare local plans, although there still needs to be flexibility to reflect local circumstances and promote innovation. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service have been exploring digital innovation through preparation of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. This includes looking into policy templates compatible with digital data standards and that

link effectively with digital mapping. This includes creating templates for local development management policies and for site allocation policies. We are also looking at representation templates through our DLUHC Digital Innovation project. We would be pleased to work with DLUHC to share our experience.

Question 5: Do you think templates for new style minerals and waste plans would need to differ from local plans? If so, how?

Minerals and Water plans have to deal with different issues, so template variations are likely to be necessary.

Chapter 2: The new 30-month plan timeframe

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposal to set out in policy that planning authorities should adopt their plan, at the latest, 30 months after the plan preparation process begins?

In our response to the previous consultation we highlighted that a 30 month programme may be possible in many areas, but in complex areas with a large range of complex and often competing issues, where there is a strong desire to achieve high quality consultation and engagement, deadlines should not be imposed in a way which undermine the quality of plan making or penalise those areas where LPAs are committed to plan making but have to address these challenges.

The consultation proposes a number of steps which have the potential to speed up plan making. A 30 month period for the formal plan stages may be possible, but it will depend on how successfully they are implemented. It also depends on issues like having sufficient skilled staff available, a problem which has been acknowledged by government. There are going to be factors which influence when key milestones can happen, such as pre-election periods, which could reduce flexibility to perfectly meet the timeline. Some of the periods set out are optimistic, such as one month from end of examination to adoption.

The system will need to acknowledge variables occurring or issues arising which are beyond the ability of the plan making authority to control. For example where development relies on external infrastructure provision outside the council's control. There are likely to be situations where despite the best efforts of all parties it is not practicable.

The proposed approach is that evidence gathering takes place once the 30 month period has started and following the visioning stage. However, some evidence may be necessary to help inform the development of the vision and much of the evidence base takes time to prepare and could usefully start earlier in the process. Allowing flexibility for some evidence preparation in the earlier stages would be helpful.

The scoping and early participation stage

Question 7: Do you agree that a Project Initiation Document will help define the scope of the plan and be a useful tool throughout the plan making process?

Having a Project Initiation Document (PID) is good practice in project planning, so would be a helpful addition to the process. Most authorities would already produce this kind of information, either as part of issue and options reports or consultation statements at the early stages of plan making, but there is merit in creating a standard approach to where it can be found.

The PID would have an important role, setting out the approach to consultation for the plan, in effect taking on the role of statements of community involvement which provide a baseline for the approach and the Statement of Consultation which documents plan specific issues and the on-going process. We note that requirements to produce a Statement of Community Involvement is to be removed. Having a single place where a planning authority sets out its approach to public consultation still has merit.

At paragraph 50 the consultation document states, ‘Planning authorities will need to “notify” and “invite” views on what the plan should contain and feedback on key issues that should be addressed.’ Most authorities have interpreted the current similar regulations by carrying out an issues and options consultation, which can be an extensive exercise focused around potential policy areas, considering alternatives, taking a year or more to draft, consult, and consider results. Guidance needs to be much clearer about how this stage should be undertaken if many of the goals set out are to be achieved.

Chapter 3: Digital plans

Question 8: What information produced during plan-making do you think would most benefit from data standardisation, and/or being openly published?

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service are seeking to be a front runner in digital planning. We are currently part of the DLUHC Proptech Round 3, carrying out a project exploring efficiencies in consultation and processing feedback, using the opportunities provided by the Greater Cambridge Local Plan project.

We are already developing standardised policy templates to enable a digital plan approach linked to GIS data. Through our Proptech project we are exploring proformas and data standards for receiving representations. We already publish in full all comments and material received through consultations, but there are opportunities to make this more efficient and effective to speed up plan making.

There are opportunities for data standard approaches to some evidence, and for monitoring outcomes. Examples include Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments, where most authorities uses templates to receive and collate site based information. The Environmental Outcomes Report process also provides an opportunity for standard templates.

Some of the references to 'digital' approaches in the document are not very clearly defined. Wide use of the word without being specific could lead to little change. It needs to be clearer how the proposals relate to accessibility standards that guide how webpages must be presented. On mapping, more could be done on the relationship between proposals maps and OS data and licencing to make it easier for councils to publish and share mapping data. Further opportunities to support user self service, where the councils publish data in a data format, should be explored.

Listening, understanding and removing barriers

Question 9: Do you recognise and agree that these are some of the challenges faced as part of plan preparation which could benefit from digitalisation? Are there any others you would like to add and tell us about?

Greater Cambridge has a very active plan making programme and we do recognise many of the challenges and problems listed in the consultation. Our last local plan examinations took four years to complete. Digitalisation can play an important role in speeding up the process.

One challenge not listed is the volume and variety of formats of information received through consultations. Whilst we provide online portals for submissions, we still receive thousands of emails and attachments in a variety of formats. The majority of this comes from planning agents. Processing this volume adds a huge amount of time and cost to the plan making process. Validation requirements reduce this variation in the area of planning applications. Standard formats that can be efficiently processed should be a requirement, whilst also providing appropriate measures to avoid digital exclusion and engage with under-represented groups. If standard templates are to be established, DLUHC will also need to consider how authorities respond if they have not been followed. There is nothing in current regulations where we can turn back comments provided in unsuitable formats. Clarity/guidance on what representations should contain at each consultation stage would assist in reducing overproduction of evidence or repetition of submissions, which would benefit both authorities and representors.

In relation to digital mapping the complexity of OS licence agreements can hinder the sharing of information in digital formats, and it should be improved.

We support the move towards digital plans and the flexibility they give to users of the plan to navigate quickly and easily. However, the intention behind the comment that “plans are static and PDF-based meaning they go out of date quickly” (paragraph 71) is not clear. A Local Plan is the version adopted following examination and can't change until the next formal review.

Learning and building on best practice, innovations and investment

Question 10: Do you agree with the opportunities identified? Can you tell us about other examples of digital innovation or best practice that should also be considered?

We agree with the opportunities identified, and are seeking to apply them to preparation of plans in Greater Cambridge. There should also be more done to enable accessible and free access to data from other public bodies, such as Defra, Environment Agency, Natural England and others.

There are other examples that could be listed: Webinars, how to videos, FAQ's, audio points to guide any element (better inclusion).

It also needs to be clear who will update and maintain these many digital products. The availability of hardware and software, high quality networks, and IT support will vary around the country. This variation will need to be considered when designing systems. Training for local authorities will also need to be provided.

Question 11: What innovations or changes would you like to see prioritised to deliver efficiencies in how plans are prepared and used, both now and in the future?

Many of the options suggested have the potential to assist and to speed up the plan making process. New system toolkits and other advice would be a helpful early publication.

More could be done to support authorities and simplify the process of publishing open data, for example in GIS formats, where there are still complex OS licencing issues to address.

It's not clear whether consideration has been given to how this relates to neighbourhood plans. There may be opportunities to provide further digital tools to support plan making. This could also mean neighbourhood plans are more digitally available and can be integrated more effectively with the wider development plan.

Chapter 4: The local plan timetable

Question 12: Do you agree with our proposals on the milestones to be reported on in the local plan timetable and minerals and waste timetable, and our proposals surrounding when timetables must be updated?

Publishing and keeping up to date a plan making timetable is an important role for plan makers. The current requirements around a Local Development Scheme do add a degree of complexity which can make providing simple information a complex process. Changes to add flexibility and simplify the process could therefore be helpful. A timetable template would also be a useful addition. Clarity on when the timetable should first be published would be helpful.

Question 13: Are there any key milestones that you think should automatically trigger a review of the local plan timetable and/or minerals and waste plan timetable?

A review and potentially an update after each milestone reached would be a sensible approach.

Chapter 5: Evidence and the tests of soundness

Question 14: Do you think this direction of travel for national policy and guidance set out in this chapter would provide more clarity on what evidence is expected? Are there other changes you would like to see?

In our response to the consultation on national planning policy changes in spring 2023, we highlighted that the Greater Cambridge area is under significant development pressure, and its plans are heavily scrutinised including by promoters of high value sites. The volume and complexity of evidence needed for plan making is therefore very high, creating significant costs for the authorities and extending the plan making period. More should be done to make the plan making process proportionate and to help authorities deliver plans. There still also needs to be flexibility to prepare evidence based on local circumstances, and this may need to start prior to the 30 month period especially if relevant to development of the vision.

We welcome efforts to make the plan making process more proportionate. The success will depend on many factors, including how the new process plays out in high pressure areas like Greater Cambridge. The direction of travel in para 89 contains some useful approaches, subject to seeing the full intention when the NPPF review is consulted on.

Details of the approach to Environmental Outcomes Reports is required alongside these proposals to understand in full the proposed evidence burden for plan-making.

Standardisation of key evidence and data

Question 15: Do you support the standardisation of evidence requirements for certain topics? What evidence topics do you think would be particularly important or beneficial to standardise and/or have more readily available baseline data?

Technical processes like Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments would benefit from guidance and a proportionate methodology. Carbon Impact Assessment was referenced in the Spring consultation, and if this is a requirement a clear and implementable methodology will be essential.

There are parts of plan-making, particularly in relation to built form and creating a vision for an area which are unique to local conditions and should not be standardised. There is a danger if standardisation is taken too far it will undermine the delivery of plans based around a local vision. During preparation of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan we have explored the unique characteristics of the Cambridge economy, which has necessitated a bespoke approach to evidence, including on housing need associated with forecast economic growth. If standardisation is taken too far it could undermine the ability to reflect local circumstances.

Freezing of data or evidence

Question 16: Do you support the freezing of data or evidence at certain points of the process? If so which approach(es) do you favour?

A challenge of plan making is that new evidence and sites are submitted to each consultation, including at the submission stage. We also often receive requests to consider new information between consultations. A clear approach providing a window for evidence to be submitted would provide clarity and certainty for all involved.

An evidence freeze at an appropriate point would also be helpful. For example, a call for sites process is a useful stage of plan making, allowing interested parties to highlight sites for consideration. Submissions take a significant time to process and assess, but this can be compounded with changes, and additional sites being submitted very late in the process.

It will also be necessary to freeze the evidence regarding need for jobs and homes at an appropriate point.

Regulations

Question 17: Do you support this proposal to require local planning authorities to submit only supporting documents that are related to the soundness of the plan?

Our experience in Greater Cambridge is that only submitting documents linked to demonstrating soundness is already normal practice. The list can still be extensive and wide ranging. For example a topic paper may reference several external sources of evidence to justify a policy. There should also be flexibility to respond to local circumstances.

Chapter 6: Gateway

Question 18: Do you agree that these should be the overarching purposes of gateway assessments? Are there other purposes we should consider alongside those set out above?

The principle of gateways is a useful addition to the process. They offer an early check regarding compliance of the plan with requirements, potentially giving greater certainty that the plan is capable of successfully passing examination, and potentially reducing the risk to local authorities of carrying out abortive work.

The overarching purposes (ensuring the plan sets off in the right direction, ensuring compliance with legal and procedural requirements and (wherever possible) supporting early resolution of potential soundness issues, and monitoring and track progress) are all appropriate goals.

The goals do not include seeking to offer advice to improve a process of support to a local planning authority in its plan making. It would be hoped that the process may be productive in a way that if an issue is identified causing concern or preventing progress, constructive advice is provided to assist the LPA to overcome it.

Key expectations

Question 19: Do you agree with these proposals around the frequency and timing of gateways and who is responsible?

Having a proportionate review at each stage would seem appropriate, although their true impact on timetabling, resource needs, and effectiveness is likely to come out of the pilot testing process. It's also going to be key that organisations required to carry out the reviews are resourced appropriately, or there is a risk that plans are delayed.

Having the third gateway undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate would be appropriate, effectively checking legal compliance prior to the start of an examination could avoid examinations needing to be paused shortly after they had commenced which has happened in some areas. It is agreed that other organisations, such as the Planning Advisory service, could have a significant role in the earlier gateways, as long as their advice is fully consistent with the expectations of planning inspectors. On complex issues there may still need to be input from the inspectorate at the earlier review stages.

Process and scope

Gateway 1, 2 and 3

Question 20: Do you agree with our proposals for the gateway assessment process, and the scope of the key topics? Are there any other topics we should consider?

The scope of Gateway 1 is extremely broad. Many of the issues referenced will be choices of the Local Planning Authority, for example around scope for local development management policies. Care will need to be taken to avoid reports stepping into decisions that should be made locally, and stay focused on whether a process is sound and won't lead to issues at later stages. It refers to including a headline position on delivering new homes based on the standard method and recent Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results and, where possible, describing the high-level options available to deliver development needs in the area. In Greater Cambridge our evidence concludes that in order to support the particularly strong economic growth, housing need is higher than the standard method. Where there are local circumstances that suggest housing need that departs from the standard method, it is important that there is early engagement given the implications for vision and spatial strategy.

Gateway 2 refers to compliance with Neighbourhood Priorities Statements, but doesn't mention Neighbourhood Plans. If a community chooses to do a full Neighbourhood Plan instead of Priority Statement they should also be taken into account.

Gateway 3 is effectively a legal and procedural soundness check prior to examination, and the consultation proposes a logical scope. We assume this would be after the council had considered representations and agreed the plan it wished to submit, such that a council decision may be to submit the plan subject to the successful outcome of the gateway 3 process.

Funding

Question 21: Do you agree with our proposal to charge planning authorities for gateway assessments?

The context for this question is government providing funding to support addressing planning backlogs, skills gaps, and additional burdens related to biodiversity net gain. Any additional costs have potential to impact on Local Planning Authorities ability to fund plan making and delivery. If not funded directly by government, costs would need to be proportionate.

Reflecting our response to the previous question, the Gateway 1 and 2 reviews need to be proportionate if it is not to be overly costly. There should still be scope for a planning authority to ask for additional support beyond the core elements if they choose to do so.

Chapter 7: Plan examination

Speeding up examinations

Question 22: Do you agree with our proposals to speed up plan examinations? Are there additional changes that we should be considering to enable faster examinations?

Taking steps to rationalise the examination process is important. Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council's adopted local plans involved a four year examination. This had significant impacts in terms of resources, delayed site delivery and led to issues regarding five year housing land supply.

Reviewing the Matters, Issues and Questions process is appropriate. Parties currently submit significant amounts of additional evidence during the examination accompanying their matter statements which could have been submitted as part of representations on the submission plan.

Related to this point, the proposal to provide the opportunity for third parties to submit a short statement in writing which can be considered by the Inspector, where they do not wish to attend a hearing, will need to be carefully controlled if it is not to be an opportunity to submit further evidence that was capable of being submitted in original representations. Consideration will need to be given to how the right appear will be managed within a six month programme in areas where there is a lot of interest.

Modification consultations are proposed to be reduced to three weeks. This would create challenges for Local Planning Authorities if issues were significant enough to warrant consideration of a response through a committee process. From our experience other parties like Parish Councils need time to take decisions though meetings, and in some cases have found six week periods challenging. If the period were to be set at three weeks inspectors should seek to give sufficient warning when this is coming up so Councils can give notice to interest parties.

Measures which are to be implemented will need to be very clear in legislation and guidance to avoid the risk of legal challenge.

Examination pause

Question 23: Do you agree that six months is an adequate time for the pause period, and with the government's expectations around how this would operate?

It would depend on the nature of the pause and the scale and nature of the work needed in that period. For example, if the requirements to address an issue was to identify additional sites, it would require those sites to be selected and agreed by members. Public consultation may also be appropriate, but it's not clear if that would be part of the 6 month period, or addressed by the modifications process which itself has the potential to add additional time. Clear agreement of what work is needed

and clear understanding of all parties would be vital, and therefore the suggestion of a hearing before the pause to establish this would be a useful step, allowing dialogue on the matter.

There may also be circumstances where a partial inspectors report should be issued, where it could resolve issues related to housing supply for example.

Chapter 8: Community engagement and consultation

Planning and monitoring the engagement approach

Question 24: Do you agree with our proposal that planning authorities should set out their overall approach to engagement as part of their Project Initiation Document? What should this contain?

Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have sought to deliver high quality and engaging public consultations, drawing on opportunities provided by digital media, but also a range of other methods to avoid digital exclusion.

Our digital engagement has often been quoted as good practice, and our learning through recent consultations may be helpful to DLUHC when development new tools.

The consultation document proposes to replace the role of Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) with a section within the Project Initiation Document. We have taken this sort of approach in our Local Plan Statement of Consultation, which elaborates on how we will meet our commitments in the SCI and provides specific details for each plan making stage. It is then used to document the outcome of each consultation, and success of the measures which were taken in terms of their reach.

The problems with SCI's the consultation highlights are fair, but its role in providing a one stop document setting out how Council's will undertake planning consultation

and what communities should expect should not be ignored. It is not clear how the other parts of an SCI are to be dealt with if they are to be no longer required, in particular the approach to planning applications.

A focus on early participation

Question 25: Do you support our proposal to require planning authorities to notify relevant persons and/or bodies and invite participation, prior to commencement of the 30 month process?

The start of our plan making processes has always involved consultation with communities on the issues that the plan needs to address, and we think this should continue.

Greater clarity is needed on what 'baseline information' is anticipated by paragraph 144.

There is some inconsistency in terms used in this section of the consultation. The question refers to consulting 'relevant persons and/or bodies'. This might include 'communities', and 'statutory bodies'. There is also reference to mirroring the current regulation 18 requirement of inviting participation from 'residents and businesses within the local authority area'. Meeting this broader requirement does not seem consistent with the potential options suggested in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the consultation, which imply a more focused approach and potentially a more limited list of stakeholders. The purpose and scope needs to be clear if it is to provide clarity.

The main roles of this stage are described as inviting views on the issues the plan needs to address, in order to help shape the plan's vision before it is drafted, as well as testing how the community wish to be engaged. The scale and resources needed to run such a consultation should not be underestimated. Paragraph 145 implies it may be possible to launch a consultation four months before the first gateway to meet the notification requirement, and that it would be possible to run a consultation,

processing the results, and using them to prepare the gateway one report, all within that period. This would not be practicable. The reality is likely to be that running a comprehensive consultation, processing the results, and using it to shape the PID could take 6 months to a year.

Question 26: Should early participation inform the Project Initiation Document? What sorts of approaches might help to facilitate positive early participation in plan-preparation?

Early participation can help inform the Project Initiation Document. We have tried a range of measures in Greater Cambridge, from social media, webinars, youth engagement, and a Big Debate attended by around 300 people. Local Planning Authorities should be able to shape the consultation process to reflect their local area and vision for the plan.

A more standardised approach to consultation

Question 27: Do you agree with our proposal to define more clearly what the role and purpose of the two mandatory consultation windows should be?

Defining more clearly has the potential to provide clarity for all parties, but the consultation proposals do not yet achieve that goal.

The consultation describes the purpose of the first formal consultation as ‘To ensure that communities can meaningfully influence the plan, we expect that questions asked at this consultation will focus on validating the vision for the area and test the broad options for the plan, including the key spatial choices.’ This remains open to interpretation. What does it mean by the broad options? Does it include establishing the development needs and what should be planned for? Is this focusing on key strategy choices? How does it relate to current requirements to test ‘reasonable alternatives’? Will this be informed by the requirements of the Environmental Outcomes Report regulations?

Currently many Local Planning Authorities will publish preferred options and / or draft plans at the regulation 18 stage, in order to shape the detail of the plan prior to the proposed submission stage where making changes is more difficult. We consider that the plan making approach should include more detail in the first formal consultation regarding the council's emerging choices around development needs, development strategy, sites and policies, otherwise they would only be available at the final consultation stage. This is particularly relevant to location of development, whether there could be exceptional circumstances justifying Green Belt release, and key strategic sites, as well as smaller sites where it is also important for local communities to have the opportunity to influence the plan before it gets to the proposed submission stage.

The second stage of the consultation is referred to as enabling comment on the draft plan. Given it is a consultation on the plan itself, more information is needed on why the consultation describes that, 'key to its success will be ensuring that questions are well-structured and targeted'. Is it envisaging a set of questions accompanying the draft plan rather than a form asking for support or object, and changes which are sought? Given these representations will form the basis of the examination this sort of clarity will be needed, and reference to a model template would seem more appropriate.

Question 28: Do you agree with our proposal to use templates to guide the form in which representations are submitted?

Yes. The Greater Cambridge Planning Service secured funding through the DLUHC Proptech Round 3 to explore opportunities to make carrying out consultation and processing feedback more efficient and effective, building on our experience gained through the production of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. We are exploring issues including templates and processing of digital evidence submissions. We would be happy to work with DLUHC on this specific issue.

Chapter 9: Requirement to assist with certain plan-making

Table 2 Proposed prescribed public bodies

Question 29: Do you have any comments on the proposed list of prescribed public bodies?

National Highways should be specifically listed.

At the moment authorities have to maintain databases of contacts. There are opportunities for efficiency improvements here, for example a single consultation portal where an authority could highlight it is consulting and notification is automatically given to all of these bodies.

Proposed approach

Question 30: Do you agree with the proposed approach? If not, please comment on whether the alternative approach or another approach is preferable and why.

If a 30 month plan making process is going to be practicable for a Local Planning Authority then the timely and sufficiently resourced engagement of all the organisations listed in the consultation will be required. It's not entirely clear what formally notifying will do if that doesn't happen. It should also be clarified that as they are required to assist they will not be charging local authorities. It would be helpful to clarify if this could be combined with the notification of the start of plan making as required at least 4 months ahead of the start of the formal process, which in areas where there are complex issues could be much earlier.

Chapter 10: Monitoring of plans

Table 3 Monitoring of plans

Question 31: Do you agree with the proposed requirements for monitoring?

The adopted plans in Greater Cambridge have a large number of detailed indicators, which were added during the examination as required by the planning inspector. Monitoring indicators related to SEA outcomes also adds to the list. This takes place alongside production of detailed housing trajectory evidence to defend a five year housing supply. Producing Authority Monitoring Reports annually is a useful exercise but it needs to be proportionate. Identification of a number of key standard indicators would be helpful, which would be supplemented by a selection of key local indicators related specifically to delivery of the local vision.

The proposals need further thought around their practicalities. Paragraph 171 says that the minimum requirements (i.e. the yearly monitoring of the standard metrics) should take place annually and be published on the anniversary of plan adoption. This suggests that each local authority will be reporting at a different time in the year, depending on when the plan is adopted. Therefore how will you be able to compare nationally? The monitoring of completions is done on a set yearly basis, and authorities are used to returning their housing completions figures for April-March years every September in the Housing Flows Reconciliation Form. It would make more sense to have everyone reporting on the same monitoring years at the same time. Otherwise each time an authority adopts a new plan, it would have to change its monitoring year.

Paragraph 172 says that the vision set out by each authority will be underpinned by evidence and based on measurable outcomes that authorities can monitor and report against. This raises questions about what will be in a vision that can be so specific and measurable, as such issues would normally be addressed in policy.

Question 32: Do you agree with the proposed metrics? Do you think there are any other metrics which planning authorities should be required to report on?

The core metrics referenced seem a reasonable set that could be supplemented locally as necessary. Some of the references in the consultation lack clarity, and will need to be clearly defined if they are to be collected on a comparable basis nationally.

For example, only some of the indicators are clear whether they relate to permissions or completions, and there appears to be a mix of both e.g. you have net additional dwellings completed and net affordable dwellings completed, but then homes permitted on brownfield land - why is this not also completions? And then for Gypsy and Traveller site provision and employment floorspace it doesn't say either permitted or completed.

Chapter 11: Supplementary plans

Preparation procedure

Question 33: Do you agree with the suggested factors which could be taken into consideration when assessing whether two or more sites are 'nearby' to each other? Are there any other factors that would indicate whether two or more sites are 'nearby' to each other?

The criteria for assessing whether sites are near seem reasonable, and need a degree of flexibility to reflect local circumstances.

Supplementary Planning Documents will no longer be prepared in the new system. Clarity regarding how the sorts of issues that were routinely dealt with by these would be helpful. The consultation in Figure 6 provides two options for existing SPDs that the content could either be fully or partially absorbed into a new local plan, or it could remain as 'local guidance' in full or partially. There have been many court

cases on the weight that can be given to local guidance in light of the legislation requirements around supplementary planning documents. It should be made clear whether the reference to 'local guidance' relates only to adopted SPDs or whether it is intended that new local guidance could be prepared alongside local plans under the new system. If so, Government guidance will need to be clear how local guidance should be approached and any weight that it can be given in decisions and ensure that it would not run the risk of challenge that it should have been prepared as a supplementary plan, as has happened with informal guidance that the courts have concluded should be prepared as SPDs.

Question 34: What preparation procedures would be helpful, or unhelpful, to prescribe for supplementary plans? e.g. Design: design review and engagement event; large sites: masterplan engagement, etc.

The procedures need not be overly prescriptive, as it should be for the local planning authority to determine the level of engagement reflecting the proposals and local circumstances.

Consultation

Question 35: Do you agree that a single formal stage of consultation is considered sufficient for a supplementary plan? If not, in what circumstances would more formal consultation stages be required?

A single formal consultation stage is appropriate. This of course does not prevent an authority carrying out informal consultation and engagement leading up to this if they consider it appropriate to the proposals being developed.

Examination

Question 36: Should government set thresholds to guide the decision that authorities make about the choice of supplementary plan examination routes? If so, what thresholds would be most helpful? For example, minimum size of development planned for, which could be quantitative both in terms of land use and spatial coverage; level of interaction of proposal with sensitive designations, such as environmental or heritage.

A clear threshold would have the benefit of providing clarity to all parties, particularly for large, complex regeneration sites. This could depend on the relationship with the requirements for Environmental Outcomes Reports which are yet to be known.

Question 37: Do you agree that the approach set out above provides a proportionate basis for the independent examination of supplementary plans? If not, what policy or regulatory measures would ensure this?

It does provide a proportionate basis, but clarity and examples will be needed, otherwise the interpretation will be clarified through the courts. This includes how being in broad conformity with the local plan will be considered.

Chapter 12: Minerals and waste plans

Question 38: Are there any unique challenges facing the preparation of minerals and waste plans which we should consider in developing the approach to implement the new plan-making system?

No comment, as we are not a minerals and waste planning authority.

Chapter 13: Community Land Auctions

How will Community Land Auction arrangements align with other systems of developer contributions?

Question 39: Do you have any views on how we envisage the Community Land Auctions process would operate?

No comment.

Question 40: To what extent should financial considerations be taken into account by local planning authorities in Community Land Auction pilots, when deciding to allocate sites in the local plan, and how should this be balanced against other factors?

Financial considerations could be a consideration in the sense that they will enable delivery of infrastructure, but it is crucial that they do not undermine delivery of sustainable development and the wider aims of the planning system. It should not undermine other requirements such as the responsibilities under the Climate Change Act.

Chapter 14: Approach to roll out and transition

Proposals around protection from speculative development

Question 41: Which of these options should be implemented, and why? Are there any alternative options that we should be considering?

This is a specific question around the waves authorities will be grouped into, and whether this should be fixed or provide flexibility. Given that there may be circumstances arising within an area that need a bespoke approach, flexibility would be the preferred approach. It would not be reasonable to stop a council from producing a plan if they wish to do so because they are not listed as being part of a wave.

Chapter 15: Saving existing plans and planning documents

Question 42: Do you agree with our proposals for saving existing plans and planning documents? If not, why?

Yes. It is important adopted local plans remain in force until replaced by new style local plans. Supplementary Planning Documents are not mentioned but should also remain live.

Equalities impacts

Question 43: Do you have any views on the potential impact of the proposals raised in this consultation on people with protected characteristics as defined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010?

There is a strong focus on digital, and the use of standard templates. This could support making information accessible, though making information follow a standard for screen readers for example. Avoiding digital exclusion must also be an important consideration when preparing plans and carrying out consultations.