

Appendix 1 : The future of plans and plan making consultation response

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

Yes

Additional reference to Health, Climate Change and Heritage would be supported.

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?

Yes, plans must contain a vision. Measurable outcomes will need to be carefully considered with additional resource required to monitor the plan. Examples of the key diagram would be useful

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

Agree.

It is also important to acknowledge the role that locally derived environmental designations have to play in complementing allocations for growth in recognition of the sensitives and significance of local landscapes and settlement morphology. Examples being Special Landscape Areas and Green Wedges successfully used in areas of West Northamptonshire based on robust evidence.

Conversely, whilst the Council considers that there is a clear benefit in having national development management policies for a consistent approach to issues nationally and to streamline the scope of local plans and allow them to focus more on locally specific issues, given the statutory weight proposed for these policies it is essential that these are properly tested and examined in a similar way to local plans to demonstrate that they contribute to delivering sustainable development. There must be suitable consultation and testing of these policies before they are implemented.

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?

Agree that in principle a standardised approach to structure, layout, supporting text and policy could be beneficial and assist in the plan preparation process.

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

No

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?

Agree with the need to prepare plans in an efficient and timely fashion. Raise observation in relation to the six month examination deadline based on experience and the resourcing of PINS. Also note that the plan preparation process is identified as taking up 23 of the 30 months followed by six months for examination with 1 month thereafter remaining to adopt the plan. Of the 23 months 18 weeks are allocated to the proposed Gateways assessments further reducing the time available.

Also make observations in respect to the reliance on private sector specialists in terms of evidence base, costs and timings and the resourcing of planning policy teams. Concern that this proposed timescale could result in less ambition in the plan making process.

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?

Agree

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

HENA data. Transport modelling data. Strategic Land Availability Assessments. Constraint's mapping. Although how would the cost of this and licencing agreements be dealt with?

Will applicants be expected to make submission in a standard format too?

How will this work in terms of accessibility?

Financial implications for all of the above.

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?

Agree that these are some of the challenges of the plan making process. Care needs to be taken to not disincentivise those who currently engage and do not have access to digital services.

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?

Agree that these represent areas for consideration

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?

No Comment

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?

Agree

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?

No

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?

None

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?

See Question 8 above

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?

Yes in principle but raise concerns of how this would work in practice. There is ambiguity in the paragraphs of the consultation in relation to this including, the role of the gateway assessments and what 'regularly released' data means. Also the nature of consultation and examination is such that new evidence is likely to be introduced.

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?

Yes in principle, again however the ambiguity of the consultation is such ("this would not prevent planning authorities choosing to publish wider materials to help to explain decisions taken") that further information is required.

A similar requirement should be placed upon others taking part in the local plan examination too?

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?

Agree

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

Query the timing/nature of the 3rd gateway assessment immediately before examination? Also the overall length of the Gateways which could remove 18 weeks from the 30 month timetable.

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?

Broadly. Need to be mindful of consistency and continuity through the process and the retention and availability of inspectors.

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

No.

If this is the case further thought needs to be given to how the local plan process is funded.

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?

Speeding up the process is supported; however it is important that this is not at the expense of democracy.

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?

Six months may provide adequate time in most cases to address any issues, however the risk in making this a maximum in all cases is that some plans may need to be withdrawn that could have progressed if a slightly longer time frame were permitted.

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?

This is supported in principle, however, there should be some flexibility to adapt these as plan preparation progresses. Whilst it's important to be ambitious, as engagement is central to plan preparation, it is also important that the gateway process recognises that authorities have limited resources.

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?

As this participation is part of the plan preparation process it is unclear why it would sit outside of the timeframe, therefore the timeframe should be extended to include this.

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

Yes, continuing the existing approach of front loading the plan preparation process would be helpful.

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?

In principle this is supported, provided this is not overly prescriptive, otherwise there is no scope for planning authorities to develop engagement strategies that best suit local circumstances.

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

Yes, this would be helpful.

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

This seems sensible.

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.

This seems reasonable

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

These seem sensible, although some are already reported so, so it is important that we do not duplicate reporting systems

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?

Any further reporting should be a matter for the local authority to decide, based on what is important locally.

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?

This seems to be needlessly creating a complicated system that will inevitably lead to challenges around process rather than the substance of planning documents. Provided that the Council undertakes all necessary processes regarding consultation, evidence gathering etc, it is unclear why the proximity of sites is important.

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 introduction of Supplementary plans will inevitably raise questions about what should be in the plan and what can go into the supplementary plan, particularly given that different procedures are proposed but both plans will have the same weight. This will need to be resolved in the guidance.

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?

See response to question 34. It is unclear why a supplementary plan would be attributed the same weight as a plan that had been through a full process, including two stages of consultation.

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.

Introducing alternative routes for examination will inevitably lead to challenges, which will slow down plan making, so it would be better if all plans were examined by a person appointed by the Secretary of State.

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?

See responses to other questions regarding supplementary plans having the same status as a local plan but having different processes.

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?

None identified

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

No views at this stage. Because this is such a different approach to plan making it is important that it is tested in a number of areas, before being rolled out more widely.

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?

This should have limited impact, as the purpose of plan making is to ensure that there is a sustainable pattern of development.

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

It is not considered feasible that every local authority in the country can produce plans in accordance with the phased timetable, they each have their own issues to deal with, including other priorities, staffing levels and funding issues. Councils should therefore have flexibility to start their plan when it best suits them.

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

Yes, this seems sensible

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?

Please provide a free text response to explain your answer where necessary. Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impacts identified?

No comments

