

## Introduction

### Principles of plan-making

This guide sets out the key principles of good plan-making.

Although there have been significant changes in the planning system, the main principles of good plan-making remain the same: a plan-led system, rooted in sound evidence and community involvement. These principles are encapsulated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The changed context for plan-making as a result of Neighbourhood Planning, the need to plan for growth and meeting the Duty to Co-operate means more demands being made on the role of the plan in setting the context for decision making on proposals. In doing so, the plan helps to guide investment and provides certainty to developers and the community on key decisions about the nature and role of places.

PAS has worked with many local authorities over the past few years on helping them to get plans in place. This document uses this experience to focus on the key issues and give you a clear picture of what needs doing, when and by/with whom in developing a local plan (including its constituent plans).

The Principles of Plan Making covers:

1. Establishing the Plan's Vision, Objectives and Strategic Options – seeking to ensure that these are clear, realistic, locally distinctive and spatial in planning terms.
2. Refining and Testing the Plan Options – applying baseline evidence in testing the robustness of the strategic options.
3. Assembling and Using Evidence – justifying proposals and policies through sound evidence.
4. Developing Plan Policies – identifying the range and key messages and targets of policies likely to be appropriate to the plan. Effective Engagement – presentation of clear spatial choices about development by setting out what, where, when and how it is to be delivered.
5. The Role of Sustainability Appraisal – providing checks and balances on plan preparation and the procedural requirements.
6. Managing the Plan Process – project planning (including legal requirements), partnership working, resource management, implementation, monitoring and review.

These issues have been divided up to aid clarity but in practice, they will often be undertaken in parallel and iteratively. Where a plan is being revised, specific parts of the guidance can be used to help steer that process.

Where PAS has developed more detailed guidance on these topics, this is indicated. When developing plans it is also useful to remember the NPPF tests used by the Planning Inspectorate, namely that plans should be:

- Positively prepared (i.e. having regard to objectively assessed needs);

- Consistent with national policy (i.e. interpreting the NPPF at the local level);
- Justified (i.e. through the exploration of alternatives); and
- Effective (i.e. deliverable).

These tests form the basis for the Soundness Self-Assessment Checklist. This checklist is for you to use to ensure you have followed procedures and produced relevant documents. You can find the checklist on our [website](#).