



planning advisory service



# **The role of District Councillors and the local plan process**

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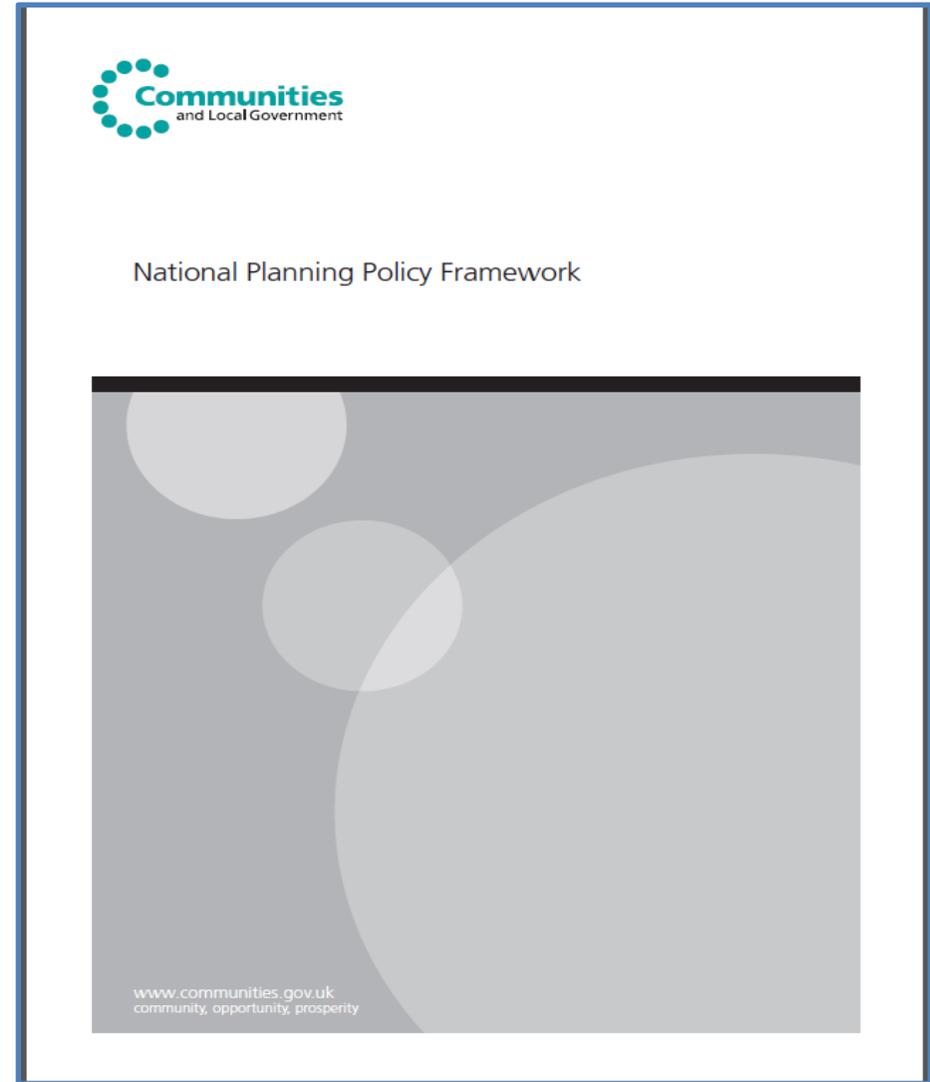
**[www.pas.gov.uk](http://www.pas.gov.uk)**

# Aims

- Context
  - National Policy and sustainable development
  - Importance of local plans
  - PAS role
- Key issues
  - Sustainability appraisal
  - Setting the level of development
- The Councillor role

**N**ational  
**P**lanning  
**P**olicy  
**F**ramework  
**NPPF (March 2012)**

**P**lanning  
**P**ractice  
**G**uidance  
**PPG (March 2013)**



# Planning in England is policy-led

- national policy/guidance
  - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
  - National Policy Statements
  - G&T policy
  - Planning Practice Guidance
- local policy
  - development plan
- neighbourhood policies
  - neighbourhood plans



# Can still reject unsustainable schemes

- **Spurstow, Cheshire East (Jan 2015): APPEAL DISMISSED:**  
The inspector concluded that the proposals would result in *‘obvious and irrevocable damage to the surrounding countryside and the character of this clear edge to the settlement...’*
- **Fleet Marsden, Aylsebury Vale (Jan 2015): APPEAL DISMISSED:**  
the inspector concluded that: *‘the proposals have the hallmarks of an ill-conceived and opportunistic response to the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan and a corresponding shortage of housing land’*.  
Permission was refused as the development would conflict with national planning policy objectives of securing good design, conserving and enhancing the natural environment and open countryside, and ensuring all development is supported by appropriate transport infrastructure.

# Local plans are important

- set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area
- address needs and opportunities for housing, the economy, community facilities, infrastructure
- guide decisions about individual development proposals
- the context for considering applications

# Why does it matter?

- Providing homes for our children and grandchildren
  - Average house prices are 8 times average incomes
  - The average first time buyer needs a deposit equal to 65% of their income
  - Those in private rented sector spend 40% of income on rents
  - One in four adults between the age of 20 and 34 still live with their parents
- Crucial to economic growth
  - 4 in 5 employers say a lack of affordable housing limits their ability to get the staff they need
  - £1 of construction output generates £2.84 of demand in the wider economy
  - 200,000 homes per year = 230,000 new jobs and 1.2 % to GDP in 5 years.
- Critical to good management of the economy
- Current system one cause of increasing inequality

(From Lyons review 2014)

# Main issues with getting plans in place

- Objectively Assessed Housing Needs/5 year land supply
- Strategic Planning/Duty
- Aligning housing and jobs growth

## Cheshire plan set for increased housing target after new evidence on needs

14 May 2015 by Jamie Carpenter , [Be the First to Comment](#)

New evidence gathered during the suspension of a Cheshire council's local plan examination suggests a need for thousands more homes than were identified in the submitted version of the draft plan.

A district council in Buckinghamshire has formally withdrawn its local plan after an inspector ruled it unsound for failing to meet the Localism Act's duty to cooperate.

## Inspector savages Durham local plan

18 February 2015 by Michael Donnelly , [2 comments](#)

A planning inspector has savaged Durham County Council's draft local plan, saying that its employment and housing targets are too high and proposed new roads 'are not justified, deliverable or environmentally acceptable'.

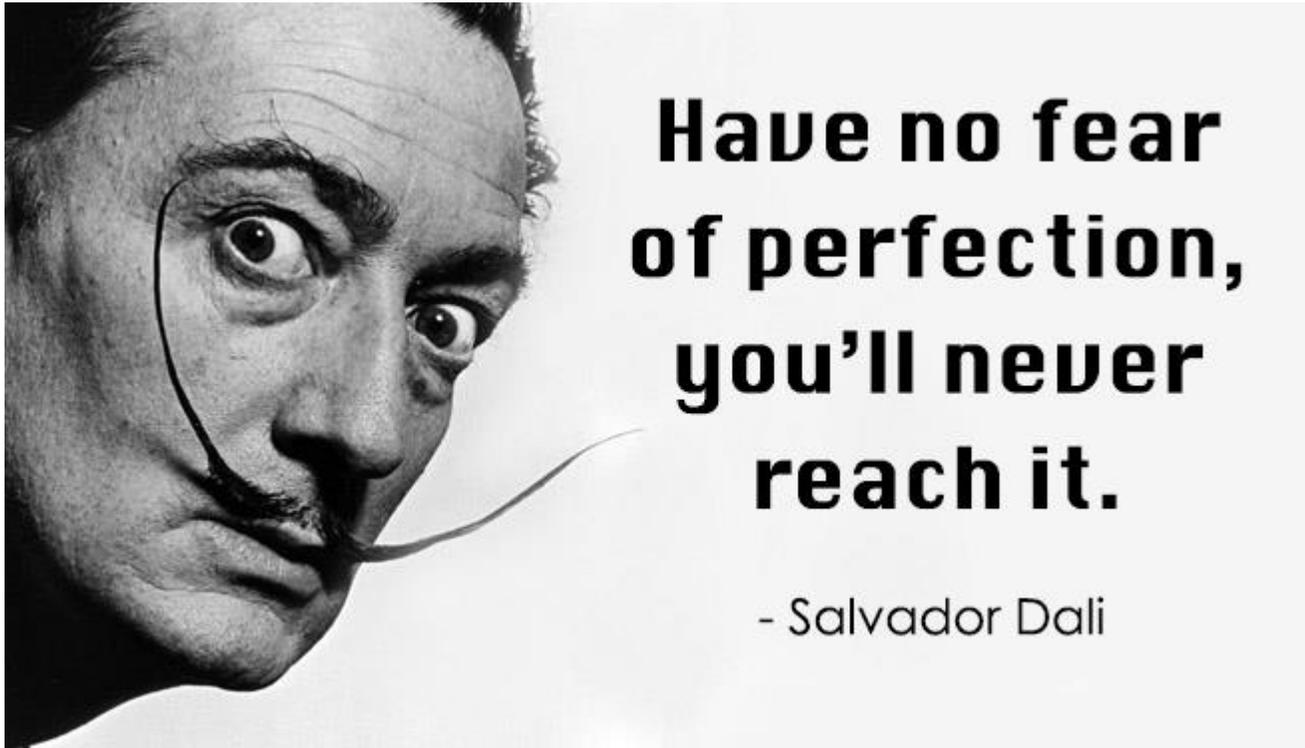
# What is 'strategic'?

- 'Larger than local' issues
- Cross-boundary planning
- Even small sites (collectively) can be 'strategic' if they are needed for the 5-year housing land supply

# PAS Role

- That PAS starts by looking at the Inspectors Examination Conclusions in his letter to the Council dated 19th December 2014 and that the PAS will:
  - I. summarise the issues the Inspector raised, to ensure there is a common understanding;
  - II. provide a high level review of the work carried out on the plan to date, including technical work, engagement with stakeholders and governance arrangements;
  - III. highlight, by way of examples from elsewhere in the country, where the issues raised have commonality with current practices;
  - IV. consider how the council can move forward, making recommendations as appropriate

# Perspective



**Have no fear  
of perfection,  
you'll never  
reach it.**

- Salvador Dali

# Leadership role

- Community concerns
- Evidence base
- District-wide (and sometimes beyond)
- National policy
- **District** Councillors – strategic role

# Political challenges for Local Plan-makers....



**Green field/  
Green Belt sites**

**Cross-boundary  
planning (unmet  
housing needs)**

**L**ocally  
**U**nwanted  
**L**and  
**U**ses (LULUs)  
e.g. Gypsies and  
**T**ravellers

# Leadership is critical...



Sustainable development is about looking at the issues **in the round**.



Not everyone will agree – but you need to work together so that people can understand **why** decisions were taken.

# Objectively Assessed Need

- It's a 2 step approach
  - Assess evidence to understand level of need = OAN
  - Consider potential constraints and apply = Plan Target
- Government would like these numbers to be the same
  - If not, discuss with neighbouring authorities (and other bodies) through Duty to Cooperate

# identifying provision for the plan

- capacity of the area has to be comprehensively and thoroughly assessed
- the plan – and hence the housing supply – has to be deliverable over plan period
- understanding of infrastructure requirements and funding
- critical to engage with developers

*“Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.”*

**NPPF Paragraph 17**



**“No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth”  
Heseltine Review, October 2012**

## Local Plan

## Sustainability Appraisal

Step 1

Initial research

Scoping Report  
(framework and  
criteria)

Step 2

Initial Options

Sustainability  
Appraisal of initial  
options

Step 3

Draft Local Plan

Sustainability  
Appraisal of Draft  
Plan

Step 4

Local Plan  
submission version

Final report: 'audit  
trail' of decisions

# Ministerial Announcements July 2015

- “We are committed to a planning system that provides communities with certainty on where new homes are to be built. Local Plans produced in consultation with the community are therefore the cornerstone of our planning reforms.”

# Ministerial Announcements July 2015

“In cases where no Local Plan has been produced by **early 2017** – five years after the publication of the NPPF – we will intervene to arrange for the Plan to be written, in consultation with local people, to accelerate production of a Local Plan.”

“Local Plans that are brought forward should meet local needs by being produced in good time and being kept up to date. They should be sufficiently clear and concise to be accessible to everyone with a local interest.”

# Letter from SoS to PINS

“In order to maintain plan-making progress and to recognise the cost and time to a council prior to submitting a plan, it is critical that inspectors approach examination from the perspective of working pragmatically with councils towards achieving a sound Local Plan. We will shortly make a Ministerial Statement on this issue, including the importance of inspectors highlighting significant issues to councils very early on, and of giving councils full opportunity to address issues.”

# Short-term and long-term planning

- **First five years** should be ‘deliverable’
- Remainder of the plan should be ‘developable’
- ‘Reasonable prospect’ that development can be delivered – including supporting infrastructure
- Uttlesford Local Plan Inspector’s comments on M11 Junction 8.

# Risks of not having an up-to-date Local Plan – or 5 year land supply - in place

- Housing policies will be considered out of date
- NPPF presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’ will apply in decision making
- Which means permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits
- Your ability to ‘plan’ for the area, provide certainty and secure development where you want it, will be diminished

# Uttlesford Progress

- Importance of vision
- Defining and owning the strategy
- Clear and transparent
- Robust evidence

**Questions ?**