



## Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Matthew Pennycook MP**  
*Minister for Housing and Planning*

**Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government**  
4th Floor, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

**To:** Council Leaders and Metro Mayors in England  
**Cc:** Council Chief Executives in England

27 November 2025

Dear Leader,

### **Local plan reforms**

This government was elected on a manifesto that included a clear commitment to build 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament, and all areas are required to play their part. In order to deliver the homes and growth the country needs, we expect all local planning authorities to make every effort to get up-to-date local plans in place as soon as possible.

The plan-led approach is, and must remain, the cornerstone of our planning system. Local plans are the best way for communities to shape decisions about how to deliver the housing and wider development their areas need. In the absence of an up-to-date plan, there is a high likelihood that development will come forward on a piecemeal and speculative basis, with reduced public engagement and fewer guarantees that it will make the most of an area's potential. It is for these reasons that the level of up-to-date plan coverage we inherited is so problematic.

As a government, we have made a clear commitment to achieving universal local plan coverage. To that end, we have been clear that we intend to drive local plans to adoption as quickly as possible. That is why we introduced transitional arrangements for emerging plans in preparation as part of the changes we made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December last year, and why we have recently awarded over £29 million in funding to 188 local planning authorities to support the rapid preparation of plans that reflect that updated Framework.

However, the current system is optimised neither for speed nor for community participation. We are therefore clear that more fundamental reform is needed to ensure that local plans are faster to prepare and simpler for end users to access and understand. In February, we published the government's response to the previous government's consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms. I am today publishing more detailed information about the design of the legislation required to implement the new system; how we intend to roll it out across the country, and the resources that will be made available to support plan-makers to that end.

### **New plan-making regulations**

We will shortly lay the regulations that will underpin our new approach to plan-making. These will reflect our February 2025 response to the previous government's consultation on the new-plan

making system, and their development will take into account responses to that consultation, as well as feedback provided through extensive engagement with the sector.

The regulations will set out a new process for producing plans with clear steps that a local planning authority will need to take. This should support faster preparation of plans and more frequent updates, in line with our aim of universal coverage of up-to-date plans that reflect local needs.

The government is today publishing a summary of what we intend these regulations to contain. This will provide plan-makers and other key stakeholders with the information they need to familiarise themselves with the new system in advance of it coming into force early next year.

## **Rolling out the new plan-making system**

The government is acutely aware that many local planning authorities are keen to start work on plans in the new system at the earliest opportunity, to give themselves the best possible chance of success and provide much needed certainty for their communities.

Having considered carefully responses to the earlier consultation, I am announcing today that we no longer intend to roll the system out in a series of plan-making 'waves'. Instead, local planning authorities will be encouraged to bring plans forward as soon as possible following the commencement of the regulations early in the New Year.

Whilst authorities will have discretion over how soon they start their plan, regulations will set out final 'backstop' dates for when plan-making must legally have commenced. Local planning authorities covered by the NPPF transitional arrangements will have to commence formal plan making (Gateway 1) by 31 October 2026, while those that have a plan that is already over five years old must commence by 30 April 2027. Further information will be set out in the regulations and in guidance.

We will provide a minimum of £14 million of funding this financial year to support local plan-making. This is to help local planning authorities get ambitious plans in place as soon as possible and to support those starting work on a new plan early in the new plan-making system. Further details will be published shortly.

## **Guidance and tools to support local authorities**

In February 2025, we launched a new home for local plan-making resources on GOV.UK, *Create or Update a Local Plan*. This is already supporting plan-makers. Today, we are going further by publishing, in draft, the first dedicated guidance and tools to support plan-makers bringing forward a local plan in the new system.

For this initial release we have prioritised resources that can best support plan-makers in the earliest stages of plan-making, aiding their understanding of how the new system will work and what they could focus on now to get ready. Additional practical tools and templates have been provided by the Planning Advisory Service, which will further support plan-makers with their preparations. These resources form part of a growing digital offer to support plan makers to deliver local plans faster. It will be followed by the timely release of tools and services both this year and beyond.

## **Plan-making in the current system**

The government has been clear that it wants local planning authorities to continue bringing forward plans as quickly as possible ahead of the new system coming into force. For plans progressing to adoption under the existing plan-making legal framework, we will be setting out in the aforementioned regulations that the final date for submission for examination will be 31 December 2026.

As set out in the revised NPPF published on 12 December 2024, local plans that reached Regulation 19 stage on or before 12 March and needed updating as they were meeting less than 80% of local housing need, are expected to be updated and submitted by 12 June 2026, unless updating the plan required the authority to return to regulation 18. If this was the case, authorities have until 31 December 2026 to reach submission.

The government is committed to taking tough action to ensure local authorities have up-to-date local plans in place. While we hope the need will not arise, we have made clear that we are willing to make full use of available intervention powers – including taking over a local authority's plan making directly – if local plans are not progressed as required.

## **Duty to Cooperate**

The new plan-making system provided by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 does not include the Duty to Cooperate that was inserted into the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 through the Localism Act 2011 to help bridge the gap in cross-boundary co-operation resulting from the abolition of regional planning. Instead, the new system will rely on revised national policy and the new tier of strategic planning to ensure effective co-operation between plan-making authorities.

The Regulations for the new system will also 'save' the current plan-making system for a period to allow emerging plans to progress to examination by 31 December 2026. Given the above, and to help drive local plans to adoption as quickly as possible and progress towards our objective of universal local plan coverage, we have decided not to 'save' the Duty, thereby removing this requirement for plans in the current system.

Local planning authorities should continue to collaborate across their boundaries, including on unmet development needs from neighbouring areas, and we expect Planning Inspectors to continue to examine plans in line with the policies in the NPPF on 'maintaining effective co-operation'. I have written to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate to ask that these matters are made clear to Local Plan Inspectors.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP**  
Minister of State for Housing and Planning