

Local Plans

Find more guidance on local plans here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans>

District and borough councils develop and use Local Plans to make decisions about planning. These plans are designed to allow councils to ensure that development contributes towards their area's specific needs, priorities and objectives. They are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities, based on co-operation with neighbouring authorities and public, voluntary, and private organisations. They identify specific areas for development. Any development proposals must comply with policies set out in each council's Local Plan. Applications for sites identified in the Local Plan still need planning permission before they can proceed, but if they conform to an up-to-date Local Plan, there is a presumption that they will go ahead.

The Local Plan is a portfolio of documents. It needs to be based on adequate up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics for the area. The Evidence Base documents include a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment (where required) and inform preparation of the Local Plan. The Local Planning Authority should consult with local communities, businesses and other interested parties when preparing these documents.

The Local Plan main document contains the long term overall vision, strategic policies and objectives for the area and a detailed delivery policy. Policies should be clear and concise and cover all issues relevant in the district. Strategic policies comprise:

- General criteria-based policies that all development proposals must adhere to
- Spatial policies that identify broad locations and specific site allocations for different land uses.

A Proposals or Policies Map should illustrate spatial policies on a map. Existing land use designations, including protected areas should be shown.

There may be Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) that cover a range of issues, thematic or site-specific, and provide further detail or policies in a 'parent' Local Plan document.

The Statement of Community Involvement identifies when and how you can get involved.

Local Plans are usually designed to last 15-20 years. Each Local Planning Authority should produce a Local Plan for its area. Local plans are at different stages of development across our three counties. You can find the latest information on your local authority's website, where there should also be a timetable for updating the Local Plan.

Berkshire

Berkshire has six unitary authorities:

- West Berkshire Council <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/>
- The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead <https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/>
- Wokingham Borough Council <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/>
- Bracknell Forest Council <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/>

Find out more at bbowt.org.uk

- Reading Borough Council <http://www.reading.gov.uk/>
- Slough Borough Council <https://www.slough.gov.uk/>

Buckinghamshire

As of January 2019, Buckinghamshire has two top-level administrations: Buckinghamshire County Council, which administers about four-fifths of the county and the Borough of Milton Keynes, a unitary authority, which administers the remaining fifth. There are four district councils that are subsidiary to the county council: Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe districts. Buckinghamshire is going to become a unitary authority excluding Milton Keynes. In the meantime, there are the following authorities in the county.

- Buckinghamshire County Council <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/>
- Aylesbury Vale District Council <https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/>
- Chiltern District Council <http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/>
- Milton Keynes Council <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/>
- South Bucks District Council <http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/>
- Wycombe District Council <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/Home.aspx>

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire has a county council and 5 district councils

- Oxfordshire County Council <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>
- Oxford City Council. The local authority for the city area <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/>
- South Oxfordshire District Council. The local authority for the Didcot, Wallingford and Henley area <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/>
- West Oxfordshire District Council <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/>
- Vale of White Horse District Council <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/>
- Cherwell District Council <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/>

What BBOWT does

- We respond to Local Plan consultations to ensure that the protection of wildlife, protection and enhancement of habitat and commitment to biodiversity net gain is integral to the policies of all planning documents.
- We also want to see local Nature Recovery Network maps as part of the evidence base for all Local Plans to identify where development should be avoided and where new habitat needs to be created. A Nature Recovery Network is an expanding and increasingly connected network of wildlife-rich habitat. It will be designed to stimulate the recovery of wildlife and will support the delivery of other economic and social benefits, such as water quality improvement or flood attenuation.

What you can do

- Local Plans will have an effect on wildlife. We encourage local residents to participate in consultations on Local Plans. This includes Habitats Regulations Assessments where proposals may have an impact on Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Sustainability Appraisals, as well as the Local Plan main document.
- There may be several stages to the Local Plan process spanning a period of months or years, potentially including: (i) Initial consultation and work on evidence gathering,

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(ii) draft Local Plan, (iii) Submission version and (iv) Examination of Submitted Plan. Each stage is consulted on.

- Engage with local communities, businesses and other interested parties.
- Keep an eye out for consultation announcements on your local council's website and in the local press. Subscribe to mailings lists if you can. Local Plan consultations are usually open for a minimum of six weeks. Make sure you read through the consultation documents and background information when considering your reply, and submit your comments in the format requested by your local council.
- Where possible, try to draw on policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>). Section 15 of the NPPF refers to 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment', and other relevant government policies, guidance and legislation, in order to justify any objections. You may find useful information in green infrastructure strategies or landscape studies. Check your Local Planning Authority's website for details.
- Don't worry about not being an expert in planning as council officers should be able to interpret your objections and comments in planning terms. Where relevant, do include any knowledge you have about your local area, including wildlife interest, as council officers may not be aware of it. If you are aware of special species or habitats in your area, do mention them.
- At the Evidence Gathering stage, let the Local Planning Authority know what you think the issues are and identify relevant environmental, social and economic objectives to inform the Sustainability Appraisal.
- At the Initial Consultation Stage, which may include Sustainability Appraisal Scoping, find out whether other interested groups or people in your area are getting involved. A joint approach means you can share expertise, ideas and resources, and spread the load. It is important to get involved at an early stage, ideally before a full draft Local Plan is published for consultation. Check that it has policies relating to nature conservation. The plan may refer to green infrastructure, biodiversity, ecosystem services, or natural capital. Ideally, it will include a commitment to a measurable net gain in biodiversity. This period is your main opportunity to make formal representations to the plan. Highlight the main issues that you want your Local Planning Authority to address in your area. If possible, propose alternative solutions.
- At the Submission stage, the Local Planning Authority publishes its proposed Submission Version Local Plan. This is the last opportunity to make comments on the plan before it is submitted for examination by the Planning Inspector. At this stage comments will be taken into account at the examination stage. All comments must be in relation to whether or not the Local Plan is 'sound' (see paragraph 35 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework 2018 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf). If you comment at this stage, you should be specific as to why you consider the document to be unsound, what change(s) you are seeking, and why those amendments would make the document sound. You need to provide evidence to support your arguments. If you wish to participate in the Local Plan Examination you may need to carry out further research to support your case.
- At the Examination of Submitted Plan stage, you can appear in front of the Inspector, if you have requested this when submitting your comments on the Plan and if you are seeking a change to the Submission Version.