

Planning Positively for the Future



May 2025

Shaping a New Era of
Strategic Planning in England

**PRIOR
+ PTNRS**



© Prior + Partners, 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced without prior permission of
the copyright owner.

Contents

Strategic planning in context	07
Shaping the new era	23
Our recommendations	24
Purpose and Objectives	
1. Recommendations to shape the new era	26
2. Joining up and embedding national and regional strategy	32
3. Clarity and certainty for investment	34
4. A resilient natural environment to underpin growth	36
5. Health and wellbeing fully embedded	38
Focus, Approach and Scope	
6. Visual and compelling strategies with clear intent	40
7. Digitally enabled 21st century plans	42
8. Delivered at pace	44
Setting Vision and Ambition	
9. Ambitious and place-specific visions	46
10. Consensus through meaningful engagement	48
Evidence, Testing, Examination and Monitoring	
11. Focused and streamlined evidence	50
12. Meaningful and integrated assessment	52
13. Streamlined examination	54
14. Effective monitoring	56
Leadership, Skills and Capacity	
15. Championed by place leaders	58
16. Diverse, inter-disciplinary teams	60
17. Investment in resource capacity	62
Next steps	65

About Prior + Partners

02 Prior + Partners is an integrated planning, masterplanning and economics practice. Recognised for leading some of the UK and globe's most complex placemaking projects, its 100-strong team shape long-term and viable frameworks, strategies and plans which establish places and communities that are economically, socially and environmentally healthy, resilient, and vibrant.

From regional scale planning frameworks and city-wide transformation plans, to site level masterplans and development strategies, Prior + Partners understands the intricacies and interrelatedness of working strategically across scales.

Our overseas work in places as diverse as California to Bhutan has enabled us to innovate around the use of emerging technology, data analysis and engagement techniques to enable more accurate planning and decision making in shorter timescales.

We believe this innovation is directly applicable to the evolving planning system in the UK and that the emerging and universal system of Spatial Development Strategies should be tech savvy, efficient and ground breaking.

It is for this reason we fully endorse a return to strategic planning and believe that it is vital to planning positively for good growth in England.

For more information on
Prior + Partners visit:
www.priorandpartners.com



The Strategic Planning Group has been convened by Prior + Partners, in collaboration with Catriona Riddell, to explore the future of strategic planning and its role in delivering and shaping key strategic priorities in England.

The Group comprised a number of leading professionals from across the built environment sector, with a shared ambition to strengthen the strategic planning function in a way that is both purposeful and responsive to the complex challenges facing places today. This report is the result of an intense 6-month period of collaboration.

The Group aimed to devise an approach for the Government's proposed model for strategic planning—spatial development strategies (SDS)—which would set clear vision-led ambitions for places. This will help implement national scale objectives and priorities to support long-term prosperity, and will also reflect the specific needs of each place to deliver 'good growth' which integrates spatial objectives with environment, climate, economic and health objectives.

These new plans would combine qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform robust spatial strategies, grounded in an understanding of opportunity, constraint and ambition, and culminate in comprehensive implementation plans that bridge vision and delivery across all aspects of place: from housing, transport and utilities, to governance, environmental protection and economic resilience.

Through the Strategic Planning Group, we have had the privilege of working with experts who share a belief in the importance of joined-up, strategic thinking—one that looks beyond administrative boundaries, policy silos and short-term cycles.

This report reflects the collective insight and intent of that collaboration and aims to inform the next chapter of strategic planning practice and policy.

Background

04

As part of the Government's mission to kickstart economic growth and deliver 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament, a new approach to cross boundary strategic planning is being introduced.

Details of what the Government's expectations are for Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) were published in the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024. The legislation required to underpin the Government's approach to strategic planning is set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. National policy requirements including scope, content and process for preparing SDS, will be included in an update to the National Planning Policy Framework and related Planning Policy Guidance later this year.

This will be the first Government mandated approach to strategic planning universally applied across England since regional spatial strategies were abolished through the 2011 Localism Act.

Since then, the planning system has underperformed significantly, especially in relation to agreeing how to address cross-boundary matters between Local Planning Authorities such as meeting housing needs and provision of strategic infrastructure. A lack of resourcing across the public sector has also been very impactful following a decade or more of austerity cuts.

As a result, the plan-led system that is needed has stopped working effectively and currently fewer than one third of Local Planning Authorities have an up-to-date Local Plan in place (MHCLG, Feb 2025). A new approach to strategic planning is therefore urgently needed.

This will shape a new era of positive and balanced 'good growth', where the importance of addressing the climate emergency, focussing on nature recovery, reducing health inequality and enabling a higher quality of life and wellbeing are recognised as essential outcomes of planning for development and infrastructure.

Purpose of this report

The Strategic Planning Group was established by Prior + Partners in November 2024 and chaired by Catriona Riddell to support the Government in real time and by taking this agenda forward by providing expert advice, building on past and current practice and related disciplines and themes.

Through a number of workshop sessions and joint working between November 2024 and March 2025, the Group considered what is needed from start to finish, from defining what the purpose and scope of SDSs should be, what evidence is needed to support these, what the examination testing process should focus on, and what skills and resources are likely to be needed to prepare and implement these new plans.

The Group has worked closely with government officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), from the Planning Inspectorate and the National Infrastructure Commission, as well as with representatives from local government, including the Planning Advisory Service, District Councils Network and County Councils Network. A number of other meetings have also been held to explore the emerging recommendations with key stakeholders.

The recommendations set out in this report are intended to inform the Government's approach to strategic planning and specifically preparation of SDSs, but are also intended to provide guidance for those that will be required to implement or interact with the new system.

The recommendations have been developed during a time of wider planning reforms to both the local and national system which are still being implemented, as well as changes to the wider national approach to delivering growth, especially in relation to economic priorities, national infrastructure, energy supply and environmental recovery. The new system will also be delivered at a time of major change to the local government landscape through reorganisation in large parts of England and the further expansion of devolution to create Strategic Authorities across the country. These will have a fundamental impact on both the governance and geography of the new strategic planning system and have therefore provided important context for the work of the Group.



Strategic planning in context

07

England has a long history of strategic planning, driven by a ‘plan-led’ planning system that emerged in 1947. Recent decades have seen the removal of the strategic planning tier and an erosion in local plan making leading to a planning system that fails to give certainty to developers and investors, and offers limited opportunities for local communities and stakeholders to engage in shaping the places they live and work in.

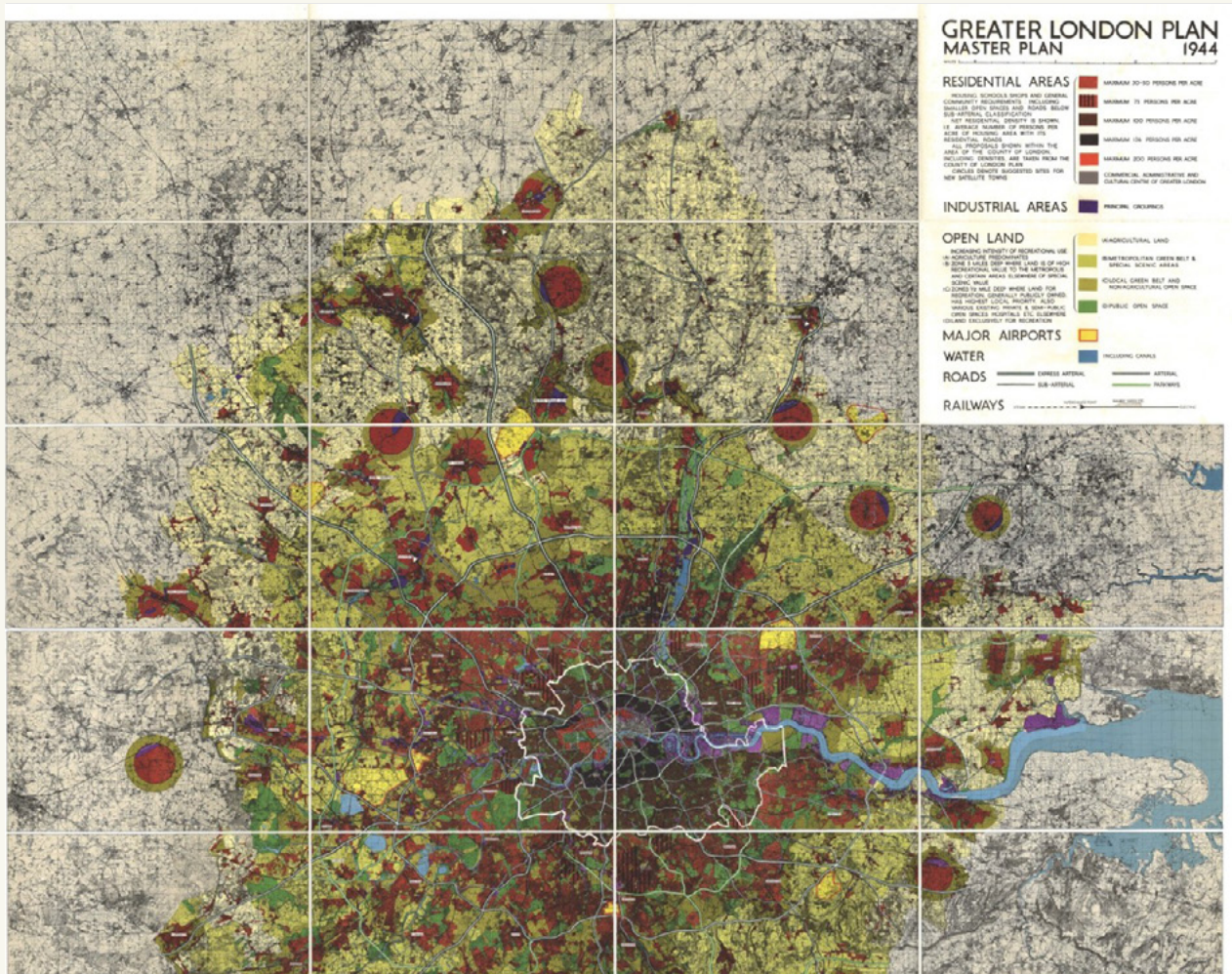
A brief history of strategic planning in England

08

England and the wider UK has a ‘plan-led’ system that was originally enshrined in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Leading up to this, Britain had become a world leader in town planning—and specifically large scale strategic planning emerging from the Victorian Public Health Acts and the Garden Cities movement in the first decades of the 20th Century. Abercrombie’s Greater London Plan, published in 1944, created a global benchmark for strategic planning that continues to influence city and regional plans the world over today.

The post war two-tier statutory Development Plan system in England existed for decades, initially consisting of Structure and Local Plans until 2004 when this was replaced with a new system of Local Development Frameworks and Regional Spatial Strategies. The two-tier Development Plan system was eventually abolished by the Coalition Government in 2011 under the banner of ‘localism’. This placed emphasis on local plan making and community-led plans at the neighbourhood scale and a streamlined national policy context (set out in the National Planning Policy Framework), with no mandated approach to strategic scale planning for the first time in nearly 50 years.

Since then, the loss of the strategic tier of plan and the constantly changing legislative and policy landscape covering local plan-making, together with the erosion in local authority funding, has left a patchwork of up-to-date local plans, with limited strategic co-ordination across local authority boundaries. While the devolved nations in the United Kingdom each have a ‘national’ level spatial framework there is no equivalent covering England. Strategic Planning does exist in the major metropolitan areas of



Greater London Plan, 1944, Patrick Abercrombie

Greater London and Manchester (and emerging in Liverpool) and failed attempts have been made elsewhere. However, these approaches are inconsistent and often overly detailed with a lack the strategic clarity that past generations of strategic plans have had.

With the erosion of the plan-led approach to planning, the English system has become increasingly fragmented, focusing on piecemeal and case-by-case planning applications. This is

compounding the pressure on Local Planning Authorities and creating an environment of uncertainty and risk, leading to frustration for all impacted stakeholders, especially applicants and local communities.

Arguably it has resulted in development being directed to the 'least worst' locations and not the most sustainable or best locations.

Returning to a plan-led system

10

Victorian public health acts and emergence of development control

Pre-1914

Victorian public health acts; development control emerged through essential building regulations for fire prevention, daylight and urban sanitation.

1909

Housing and Town Planning Act encouraged local authorities to make land use plans.

Post war growth and the original London Plan

1944

Greater London Plan by Sir Patrick Abercrombie, strategic decentralisation of London population.

1946

New Towns Act established an ambitious program for building new towns.

1947

Town and Country Planning Act introduced the modern planning system.

1955

Green Belts introduced to restrain urban sprawl.

Structure plans

1968

Town and Country Planning Act introduced county structure plans

1988

Regional planning guidance introduced.

1990

Town and Country Planning Act consolidated previous planning legislation

1999

Greater London Authority Act introduces the SDS as a strategic planning tool in London.

Abolition of structure plans and introduction of the Localism Act

2004

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act abolished structure plans, introduced statutory regional plans and local development frameworks.

2011

Localism Act abolished regional plans and reintroduced the local plan format. SDSs, a distinct strategic planning tool introduced under separate legislation, retain their status.

2016

Devolution deals and secondary legislation enabled preparation of SDS in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region (LCR), West of England and the North East. To date, only LCR has progressed an SDS under these arrangements.

The new era of strategic plans

2025

Planning and Infrastructure Bill aiming to expedite the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure by streamlining planning processes, enhancing nature recovery, improving decision making, unlocking land for development, and introducing strategic cross-boundary planning mechanisms.

English Devolution Bill will embed devolution as a constitutional default, granting expanded powers and funding to Mayors and Strategic Authorities while advancing Local Government reorganisation.

The case for strategic planning in England

- 12 The Localism Act 2011 abolished Regional Spatial Strategies (apart from the London Plan) but the Duty to Cooperate which replaced these has failed to meaningfully address cross-boundary strategic issues.

The lack of a universally applied and mandated approach to strategic planning has created a number of challenges, and in some cases, resulted in a direct and significant negative impact.

These challenges include:

- **Destabilisation of the conditions needed to support long-term investment in places:**
The UK economy has faced repeated shocks and continues to lag in productivity, investing less than global peers for over 15 years. The lack of a long-term spatial investment framework has hindered both investment in places and the ability to bring new investors into places to support growth.
- **Disintegration of the plan-led system:**
Only around 33% of English Local Authorities have adopted a Local Plan in the past five years with an average 7-year production cycle. Most of the challenges around local plan-making have been directly attributed to having a robust mechanism for addressing strategic/ cross-boundary matters, especially in relation to meeting housing needs and strategic infrastructure needs. This has also directly impacted the opportunities for local communities and stakeholders to engage in the future planning of their area.
- **Perpetuation of a growing housing crisis:**
House prices have risen 87% on average in England since 2011 (£155,000 to £290,000), with demand consistently outstripping supply. The level of homelessness and households in temporary accommodation has increased significantly and at the same time, the number of new homes— especially affordable homes—being built has plummeted.
- **Fragmentation of governance and partnerships leading to a lack of co-ordination on strategic priorities and inefficiencies in the use of public sector funding:**

A critical role of strategic planning authorities in the past has been co-ordination across government departments and agencies, across local authorities and stakeholders with a vested interest in 'place'. The fragmented nature of governance structures and partnership with a role to play in supporting place-based growth, with different priorities and access to disparate funding pots, have all impacted on the effective coordination of long-term investment to support 'good' growth.

→ **Investment in national and strategic scale infrastructure has not kept pace with development:**

Delivering large-scale infrastructure and the opportunities from this to support growth remains a major challenge, with a 65% increase in the time it takes for major cases to reach a decision through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) regime (NIC, now NISTA). The local plan system has not been able to address other large scale infrastructure needs, especially in relation to strategic transport, water and energy supply, leading to a complete failure in meeting development needs in large parts of the country.

→ **The nation's ability to tackle the long-term impacts of climate change and the depletion of our natural environment:**

The UK is off track to meet its 2030 Net Zero target. Good growth that is sustainable and equitable can only be delivered in an intentional and planned way. With no national spatial framework and only around one third of local plans being up-to-date, a universal system of strategic plans is urgently needed.

→ **The ability to deliver strategic-scale developments:**

Planning for a delivery of strategic scale development, especially those that impact on more than one local planning area, such as New Towns and large industrial zones have been increasingly hard to deliver at the local level, and many are stalling. Development is often piecemeal and speculative.

→ **The urgent need to address health inequalities through the planning system:**

The health and care system is under pressure, with demand at record highs. 2.8 million people are now economically inactive. Health outcomes are deeply rooted in the social determinants like housing quality and availability, and access to well paid jobs. The planning system strongly shapes these.

→ **Major loss of capacity within the public sector to support the role positive planning should play in delivering sustainable growth:**

Strategic planning teams provided core skills, expertise and capacity and were considered to be an essential part of local planning resources. The loss of mandated strategic planning and the consequential loss of this resource, at the same time as austerity and job cuts impacted the public sector, have contributed to low morale and major recruitment and retention challenges.

So...

How can an effective approach lead to sustainable growth?

14



It will help get the plan-led system operating effectively, reducing the burden downstream in the planning system (at the development management stage) helping to reduce uncertainty for applicants and local communities, and facilitating more proactive conversations with stakeholders around how long-term growth can be supported, especially where this is expected to be transformative.



Build investor confidence (across all sectors) by providing more stable conditions for investment and a clear long-term path through to delivery, especially where Mayoral Strategic Authorities have extensive new delivery powers and funding.



Reduce the political, technical and financial risks in the planning system by elevating some of the critical decisions to a higher level, with more robust decision-making and governance structures and sharing the burden through joint evidence and more streamlined local plan process.



Provide a bigger spatial canvas with more choice in how development needs are met and a more effective approach to planning long-term for strategic scale developments, especially national infrastructure and new towns.

15



Provide an integrated framework to help ensure that the issues related to meeting housing needs are considered alongside the economic, environmental, social, climate and health outcomes, driving good growth and creating a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable foundation for the future.



Provide a more invigorated Local Plan process with more productive community engagement focusing on detailed matters around how development and infrastructure needs are met locally, rather than the overall scale and distribution of growth.



Provide a compelling written and spatial vision for transforming places, a 'golden thread' that runs through the whole planning system in each area from plan making to decision making on applications.

How spatially interpret
an SDS?

Strategic
Planning
Group

annotate below

16



Fast-paced reform

The UK Government is driving an ambitious and accelerated agenda of reform to transform planning processes, expedite housing development, and decentralise power from Westminster. This urgency reflects the critical need to address long-standing challenges in housing supply, infrastructure delivery, and regional governance while accelerating good growth and delivering upon urgent environmental and climate objectives.

A new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in December 2024, with further revisions planned for later in 2025 to reflect the new local and strategic planning system. New National Development Management Policies will also be introduced later in the year following a consultation this summer. These updates aim to standardise planning rules, foster a consistent approach across regions and streamline decision-making, and ultimately, get the plan-led system working effectively again so that it can do its job in supporting the Government's economic growth mission.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill, introduced in March 2025, is progressing rapidly through Parliament. It is expected to reach the House of Lords by this summer and secure Royal Assent at the end of the year.

Simultaneously, the English Devolution Bill will begin its legislative journey spring/ summer 2025. This promises a 'devolution revolution,' transferring significant powers over transport, housing, economic development and public services to (Mayoral) Strategic Authorities. It will also set out what additional planning powers these authorities will have beyond preparation of SDS.

This unprecedented pace of legislative change underscores the Government's determination to reshape the planning landscape and devolve authority, but also the need for the work of the SPG to ensure clarity for new strategy development in a time of great legislative and policy flux.

The pathway to the new era of strategic planning

18

2024

12th Dec 2024

Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and amended in February 2025.

16th Dec 2024

The English Devolution White Paper.

2025

5th Feb 2025

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited councils in two-tier areas and small neighbouring unitary authorities to submit proposals for creating new unitary councils. The Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) also began a fast-tracked initiative to establish Mayoral Strategic Authorities in six areas: Cumbria, Cheshire & Warrington, Norfolk & Suffolk, Greater Essex, Sussex & Brighton, and Hampshire & Solent.

17th Feb – 13th Apr 2025

The Devolution Priority Programme consultation sought proposals to establish mayoral combined authorities or mayoral combined county authorities in six areas across England.

11th Mar 2025

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill was introduced into Parliament.

21st Mar 2025

All 21 areas of two-tier authorities in England submitted their interim plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to the Government.

Est. Late 2025

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill, introduced to Parliament on March 11, 2025 is expected to receive Royal Assent and be published at the end of the year.

2026**2028****Est. Summer 2025**

The Draft Planning and Infrastructure Bill is expected to move to the House of Lords for further scrutiny.

Est. Summer 2025

Draft English Devolution Bill published/ 1st Reading—The English Devolution Bill is anticipated to begin its passage through Parliament in mid-2025. The Bill's target publication and date for Royal Assent are yet to be confirmed.

Est. Summer 2025

The UK Government plans to consult on National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) in Summer 2025.

28th November 2025

Local government authorities are required to submit their final proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Those on the DPP will submit by 26th Sept.

Est. Winter 2025

The Government is expected to release an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This revision will likely incorporate changes resulting from the NDMPs consultation and other planning reforms, continuing the Government's efforts to streamline the planning system.

Spring 2026

The English Devolution Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent and be published.

7th May 2026

The first mayoral elections for areas under the DPP are scheduled to take place, marking a significant expansion of devolved powers and local governance in the country.

April 2028

The new unitary authorities in England are expected to become operational, marking a significant shift in local government structure as two-tier areas are reorganised into single-tier councils.

A new generation of strategic plans

20 Universal coverage of Spatial Development Strategies across England will provide high-level frameworks that guide spatial planning and investment across larger geographical areas, responding to national policy and priorities and in many areas, addressing market failures. They will have to help secure long-term (vision-led) transformation, especially in places that require a different spatial strategy, for example, to respond to investment in national infrastructure or a proposed new town, or to support Government led economic growth priorities.

Managing the preparation and implementation of SDSs through the new devolved Strategic Authorities will help to manage the inherent political, technical and financial risks associated with efforts to plan strategically under the framework of current local plans only. It will also help secure additional (government) resources, freedoms and flexibilities, providing increased confidence in delivery of strategic priorities with all partners aligned, whether they operate at the local, strategic or national level.

A stronger business case and increased investor confidence in an area, especially for infrastructure, will help de-risk an invigorated and more action focused local plan process, facilitating a return to a 'plan-led' system with reduced inappropriate speculative and piecemeal development and unsustainable patterns of growth.

The strategic planning tool being introduced across England is the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), and is closely modelled on the legislative framework for strategic planning that has been in place in London for over 20 years. The draft Planning and Infrastructure Bill states that:

Governance

- All areas will be represented by a single Strategic Planning Authority (SPA);
- It places a duty on combined authorities, combined county authorities, upper-tier county councils and unitary authorities to prepare an SDS for their area;
- It also allows the Government to create 'Strategic Planning Boards' to develop SDSs on behalf of specified groups of authorities. This option will be used when an SDS area covers multiple upper-tier authorities, or when the SDS geography extends beyond a combined authority area. In some cases, a single Strategic Planning Authority (SPA) may be managed through a county council;
- The ambition of Government is that all SPAs will eventually be Mayoral Strategic Authorities. However, it is recognised that the pace of change will be different in different parts of England;
- Governance arrangements for SDSs may change in early iterations, as areas progress through devolution and the designated Strategic Planning Authority changes (e.g. from upper tier authorities to Strategic Authorities), with more consistency expected in the long term.

Insights from the Planning and Infrastructure Bill:








The role of SDSs in the new era of strategic planning

Powers

- If plans are not forthcoming to the timeframe agreed with Government, the Secretary of State will have powers to intervene in the production of an SDS. The provisions will give the Secretary of State the ability to give direction on timetables or particular policy content, through to taking over the preparation of an SDS and adopting it on behalf of SPAs.
- Through the forthcoming English Devolution Bill, the Government intends to give strategic development management powers to Strategic Planning Authorities that have elected mayors. These powers are likely to include a role in decision making on strategic applications, and the ability to raise strategic infrastructure funding through developer contributions.
- The SDS will form part of the statutory Development Plan, with Local Plans eventually required to be in conformity. This will enable more efficient and timely production of local plans which will provide the detail and site allocations to support the spatial strategy set out in the SDS. It also means that the SDS will be part of the decision-making context for applications.

Content & Structure

The new SDS checklist: what does the Planning and Infrastructure Bill say the new generation of SDS will do?

- | | |
|---|--|
|  | Set the strategic patterns and scales of development, and provide a spatial strategy that guides Local Plans and enables growth |
|  | Include policies on the use and development of land that are of strategic importance to the area |
|  | Identify key infrastructure requirements to enable the spatial strategy to be implemented (e.g. transport, energy and economic infrastructure) |
|  | Identify strategic locations for development and an indication of the scale of development required |
|  | Identify areas where protection or restoration of the natural environment is required |
|  | Apportion and distribute housing and employment need to the most appropriate locations |
|  | Include policies on housing, employment, retail, leisure, and identify key infrastructure needs. They may also cover affordable housing where strategically important. |

Shaping the new era

23

Recommendations have emerged through the work of the Strategic Planning Group. In the first instance these are intended to help shape and support Central Government guidance. They should also provide a route map for Strategic Planning Authorities in understanding what might be prioritised in moving forward SDSs at pace.

Our recommendations

- 24 The previous sections of this report has set out clearly *why* the return of strategic planning is so important. Amongst other things, this new generation of plans will be central to delivering the Government's economic growth mission.

The Strategic Planning Group's recommendations aim to help the Government answer some key questions, including those provided overleaf. The report sets out what is needed to ensure that in each SDS there is a clearly articulated, ambitious and place-specific vision; delivered through a set of measurable objectives and a tight and well-defined scope; a robust and digitally enabled evidence base which ensures efficient examination; integrates infrastructure and investment priorities; and aligns with existing legislation and policy hierarchies.

Key questions:

25

Why is universal coverage of strategic plans necessary and what are the long-term and tangible benefits?

How will these plans act as the sustainable growth ‘ringmaster’ ensuring that national priorities are aligned (including in relation to national infrastructure and the New Towns Programme) locally and horizontally across different sectors, policies and investment priorities?

How will neighbouring strategic planning authorities effectively collaborate to address common issues, cross boundary opportunities for development and infrastructure and functional relationships and ensure that the sum of the SDS parts add up to a national spatial picture?

How can the scope and content of first generation SDSs remain focused and therefore ensure that preparation moves forward at pace to meet the Government’s objectives of having full coverage across England by the end of the first Parliament.

By guiding policy development and strategic decision making, it is hoped that these recommendations are well received and positively shape these critical and much needed changes to the English planning system, setting a course for resilient communities and good growth.

Recommendations to shape the new era

26

Summary

Purpose and Objectives

- 01 The centre of a reformed plan-led system
- 02 Joined up Strategic Plans
- 03 Clarity and certainty for investment
- 04 A resilient natural environment to underpin growth
- 05 Health and wellbeing fully embedded

Focus, Approach and Scope

- 06 Visual and compelling strategies with clear intent
- 07 Digitally enabled twenty-first century plans
- 08 Delivered at pace

Setting Vision and Ambition

- 09 Ambitious and place-specific visions
- 10 Consensus through meaningful engagement

Evidence, Testing, Examination and Monitoring

- 11** Focused and streamlined evidence
- 12** Meaningful and integrated assessment
- 13** Streamlined examination
- 14** Effective monitoring

Leadership, Skills and Capacity

- 15** Championed by place leaders
- 16** Diverse, interdisciplinary teams
- 17** Investment in resource capacity

The centre of a reformed plan-led system

28

Recommendation 1:

Strategic plans should be the core of the reformed planning system.

The planning system in England is broken and no longer truly plan-led, with fewer than one-third of local authorities having an up-to-date Local Plan, and no statutory strategic plans beyond local level outside Greater London and Greater Manchester. Reforms over the past two decades have led to inconsistencies in plan adoption across authorities, with no effective mechanism to coordinate across geographies. The result is a fragmented, adversarial and overly discretionary planning system.

The Strategic Planning Group fully supports the Government's aim to improve the plan-led system by reintroducing a two-tier development plan, placing strategic planning at the heart of wider reforms. SDS must provide clarity on scale of development and growth locations, supporting infrastructure, and protected or enhanced environments to strengthen the overall system. Crucially, SDS must connect national and local policy, offering a joined-up, interdisciplinary approach to growth, infrastructure, and environmental priorities, ensuring, for example, sustainable patterns of growth alongside public transport connectivity.

SDS will play a major role in embedding central government missions and closing the gap between national and local governance. They must become the vehicle for stronger collaboration between strategic and principal authorities, support a new approach to local plans, and align Government departments through clearly articulated spatial priorities.

The overhaul of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and introduction of National Development Management Policies (NMDP) will enable local plans to focus on translating strategic priorities into action, making them more delivery-focused, efficient, and consistent nationwide.

SDS will also be key to resolving controversial strategic issues, such as reviewing the Green Belt to define its general extent, i.e. ensure its inner and outer boundaries remain relevant and identify where local boundary reviews will be needed to deliver the strategy. This must be managed collaboratively with neighbouring Strategic Planning Authorities where the Green Belt crosses SDS boundaries.

National Planning

MHCLG

Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

National Development Management Policies (emerging)

Other National Priorities

Integrate national plans and strategies prepared by Government, public sector bodies and agencies.

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning Authorities

The 30-year strategic planning horizon

Spatial Development Strategies

Other Strategic Priorities

Integrate plans and strategies prepared by Strategic Planning Authorities such as Local Growth Plans.

Local Planning

Principal Authorities

The 10-year planning horizon

Local Plan

Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Neighbourhood Plan

Other Supplementary Plans

Integrate strategic supplementary plans such as major settlement/ New Town Development Briefs.

Shared Evidence Base

Collaborative approaches, such as joint commissioning of studies across Strategic Planning Authority areas will optimise resources while fostering consistency in policy development.

Joined up Strategic Plans

30

Recommendation 2:

Strategic plans must be joined up to provide a clear framework for national spatial and infrastructure priorities.

England has often failed to effectively plan for nationally significant infrastructure and critical issues such as addressing climate change. This is in part due to the lack of a cohesive national strategy, fragmented policy frameworks and slow decision-making processes.

Localism has failed to address cross-boundary issues effectively, as mechanisms like the Duty to Cooperate lack enforceability, leading to stalled local plans and inadequate regional collaboration.

To ensure SDSs contribute to a cohesive national framework for managing development and infrastructure across boundaries, effective partnership arrangements between Strategic Planning Authorities are essential. This is especially important for functional areas, such as housing markets, where housing need may be redistributed, and where national infrastructure or new towns affect more than one area.

Also, at present, local authorities and Local Plans have no legal responsibilities for climate. SDSs should be empowered to deliver climate targets in the event carbon budgets and adaptation scenarios are mandated.

Regional partnership arrangements have previously supported cross-boundary planning, for example, regional planning conferences which operated across Structure Plan areas. In minerals planning, Regional Aggregates Working Parties (RAWPs) have long been used to manage aggregates apportionment and supply across authorities, offering a potential model for wider cross-boundary planning. Each RAWP has a small secretariat,

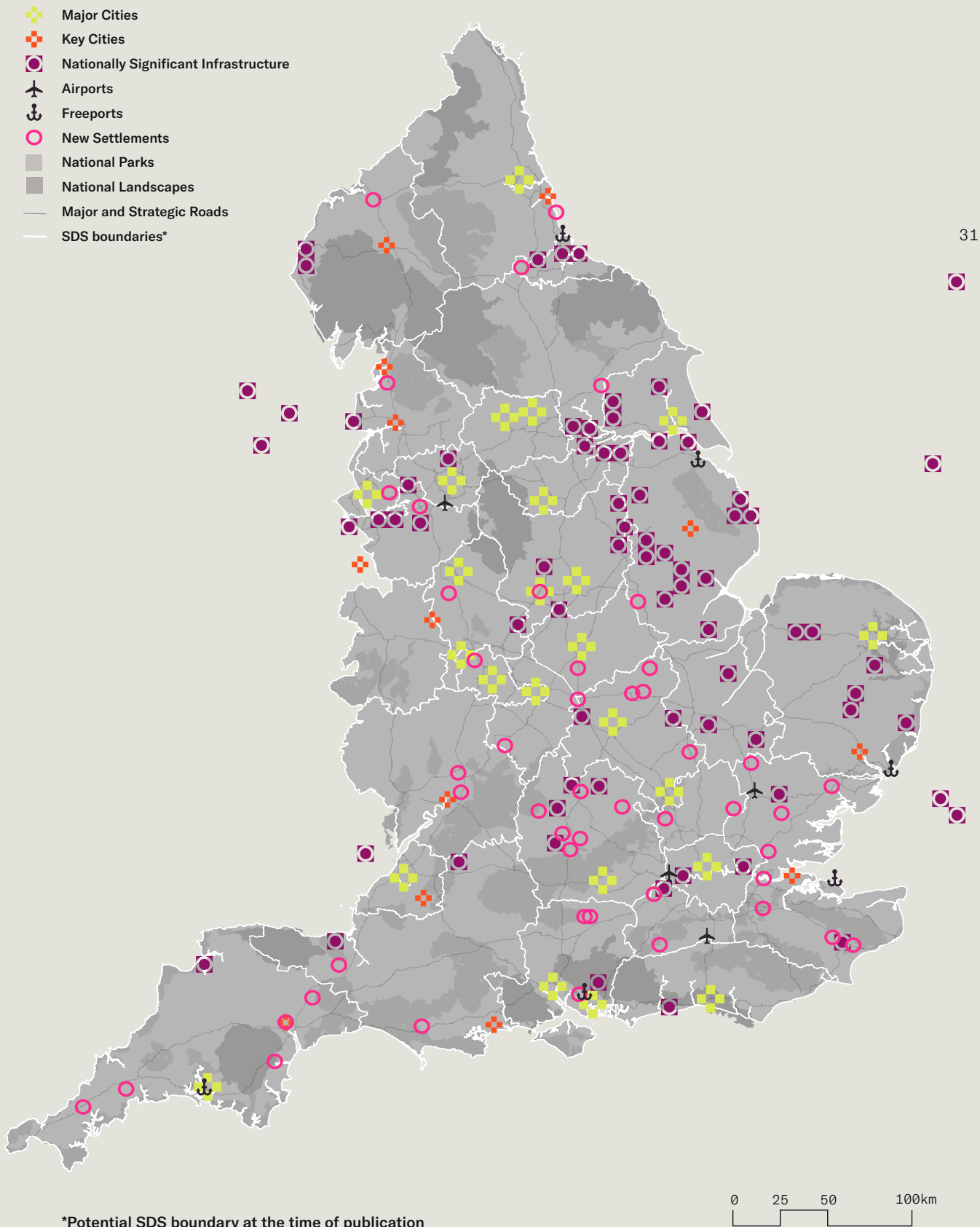
funded by government (with contributions from partner authorities), and reports annually to MHCLG. Industry representatives are also involved to help ensure deliverability of supply.

The Government should therefore consider establishing a small number of 'Spatial Planning Monitoring Units' across SDS geographies. When defining their geographical extent, existing functional geographies (e.g. housing market areas) and the relationship with national infrastructure and new towns should be taken into consideration. The extent of existing partnerships should also be a factor in determining these new cross SDS geographies (e.g. where existing combined authorities already work together, where there are established growth partnerships across local authority boundaries or where there are regional transport partnerships).

The secretariat for these new units must have a clear and focused role, especially in relation to how they will work with Strategic Planning Authorities within their defined area. This should include annual reporting to the Government (especially in relation to how housing targets are being managed at the strategic scale) and NISTA to inform its biennial review of its 10-year national infrastructure strategy.

Quarterly meetings of the relevant Strategic Planning Authorities should be held to support ongoing co-ordination. These should also include representatives from any pan-SDS grouping and the relevant government agencies.

Joining up the SDS programme nationally will provide an essential picture of national spatial priorities. This will help align stakeholders, from government departments to local leaders, around a shared approach to growth. In the longer term, however, the Government should consider using this to help lay the groundwork for a formal National Spatial Framework to align with the other UK nations' spatial frameworks.



Joining up and embedding national and regional strategy

32

The government is committed to delivering a cross-cutting 10-year strategy for the UK's social, economic and housing infrastructure and has now established the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) as a purposeful body to work with departments, regulators and the private sector to oversee the implementation of this strategy.

A critical role for NISTA should therefore be to ensure the various national and strategic plans and strategies that are produced are aligned and appropriately fed into SDS production, where Strategic Planning Authorities can more readily plan for the spatial implications of these plans.

The effective strategic planning of national priorities, embedded within SDSs, will ensure that government can be more readily informed across departments and aligned on priorities ahead of the multi-year spending reviews.

Consideration may also be given as to how NISTA and the Spatial Planning Monitoring Units can utilise a singular national geo-spatial database to ensure consistency and alignment in monitoring proposals and performance.

- Existing policy
- Emerging policy
- Stakeholders

National
Sub-regional/Regional

- MHCLG
- Mayoral Data Council

Built Environment & Housing

- National Planning Policy Framework and associated planning practice guidance, MHCLG
- Standard Method for calculating housing needs, MHCLG
- New Towns Programme, MHCLG
- National Model Design Guide and Code, MHCLG
- National Development Management Policies, MHCLG

- Regional Design Guides, LPA

- Public Health Strategies
- Adult Social Care Strategy and Plans, LPA
- Integrated Care Strategy, ICS
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, LPA

- Sporting Future—A New Strategy for an Active Nation, DCMS
- Active Environments Framework (Sports England)

Health and Wellbeing

- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- NHS Bodies (Integrated Care Boards and Integrated Care System)
- National Care Service

- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Responsible Authorities

Natural Environment

- National Adaptation Programme 2023-2028, DEFRA
- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management strategy, EA
- Air Quality strategy, DEFRA
- 25 Year Environment Plan, DEFRA
- Environmental Delivery Plans, Natural England
- National Framework for Water Resources, EA
- Land Use Framework, DEFRA

- Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- National Landscape (AONB) Management Plans
- Local Environment Improvement Plans
- Minerals and Waste Local Plans

- HM Treasury
- Investors
- Department for digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)

Economy

- Advanced Manufacturing Plan, DBT
- Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy, DBT
- Emerging Trade Strategy, DBT

- Local Growth Plans

Spatial Development Strategies

- Sub-national transport bodies (STBs)
- Local Transport Plans
- Active Travel Strategies

- Connecting the Country National Highways
- Integrated National Transport Strategy, DfT

- Regulated Service / Utility Provider Plans
- Regional Energy Strategic Plan NESO
- Local Power Plan, Great British Energy

- National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline, IPA and HM Treasury
- National Infrastructure Strategy, HM Treasury
- AI Growth Zones Programme, DSIT
- 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy, HM Treasury
- Strategic Spatial Energy Plan, NESO

Movement and Connectivity

- Department for Transport (DfT)
- National Highways
- Network Rail

Infrastructure

- Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem)
- National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA)
- National Energy System Operator (NESO)
- Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)
- Great British Energy Utility Providers

Clarity and certainty for investment

34

Recommendation 3:

Strategic plans must provide clarity and certainty for the investment needed to deliver the vision and ambition of an area.

The critical infrastructure required to underpin and support sustainable and equitable housing and economic growth is inadequate across large parts of the UK. This includes our transportation, energy and natural systems and digital networks, hindering productivity and exacerbating inequalities across all scales. Additionally, there are specific challenges in scaling the energy transition to renewable infrastructure and delivering natural capital at scale through policy areas such as Biodiversity Net Gain.

SDSs should create the right investment conditions to support growth and build long-term economic resilience, prioritising strategic requirements, aligning them with government funding, and driving investor confidence. Strategic planning through SDSs will be essential in addressing infrastructure gaps and future needs by providing a clear framework that aligns public and private sector investors with long-term goals for each area and across SDS areas.

SDSs will need to perform as spatial investment frameworks and be the foundations for a coherent approach to funding and financing delivery. The current fragmented approach to public investment through disparate competitive funding pots has been suboptimal and the inconsistency of planning regulation across England is a major disincentive to potential private investment. Ensuring that SDSs set out a clear framework of parameters appropriate for

both public and private opportunity will allow a more integrated and complementary public/private ecosystem. This will permit market diversification and a wider range of investment opportunity to be brought forward. SDSs should be supported by aligning the funding arrangements through the devolution process, via single integrated settlements to Mayoral Strategic Authorities and directly to Strategic Planning Authorities, with agreed outcomes as a measure of successful delivery.

Ensuring that existing public funding aligns with SDS proposals will strengthen their role as spatial investment frameworks, offering the clarity and consistency of planning policy application that will build investor confidence. Creating an environment where both public and private funding can be secured more easily if aligned properly to SDS ambitions, provides authorities with the best opportunity to deliver upon their SDS over the long term.

But for the SDS to operate effectively as spatial investment frameworks, the Government will have to work closely with the Strategic Planning Authorities to compel private sector infrastructure providers, especially those with responsibilities for water and energy, to engage positively and directly early on and throughout the preparatory and delivery phases of the SDS.

85
Planning Positively
for the Future

May 2005



A resilient natural environment to underpin growth

36

Recommendation 4:

Strategic plans must ensure a resilient natural environment to underpin sustainable and equitable growth.

Restoration of the natural environment is essential everywhere. With less than one third of councils with up-to-date local plans, and in the absence of spatial strategies above the local level, the country's ability to deliver on environmental priorities has been seriously undermined. Whilst the current focus on delivering housing and essential infrastructure is clearly warranted, this cannot be at the expense of fundamental climate and environmental goals which must be fully integrated. 'Good growth' that is sustainable and equitable, can only be built on strong and resilient foundations.

SDSs must create a resilient foundation for sustainable and equitable growth by prioritising environmental goals alongside housing, economic, and infrastructure planning. SDSs should recognise the importance of land use planning to support the natural environment and climate resilience, recognising that in supporting clean energy and carbon capture, some infrastructure, will need to be located sensitively in the natural environment. Local Area Energy Plans offer a valuable opportunity to coordinate energy planning beyond individual local authorities.

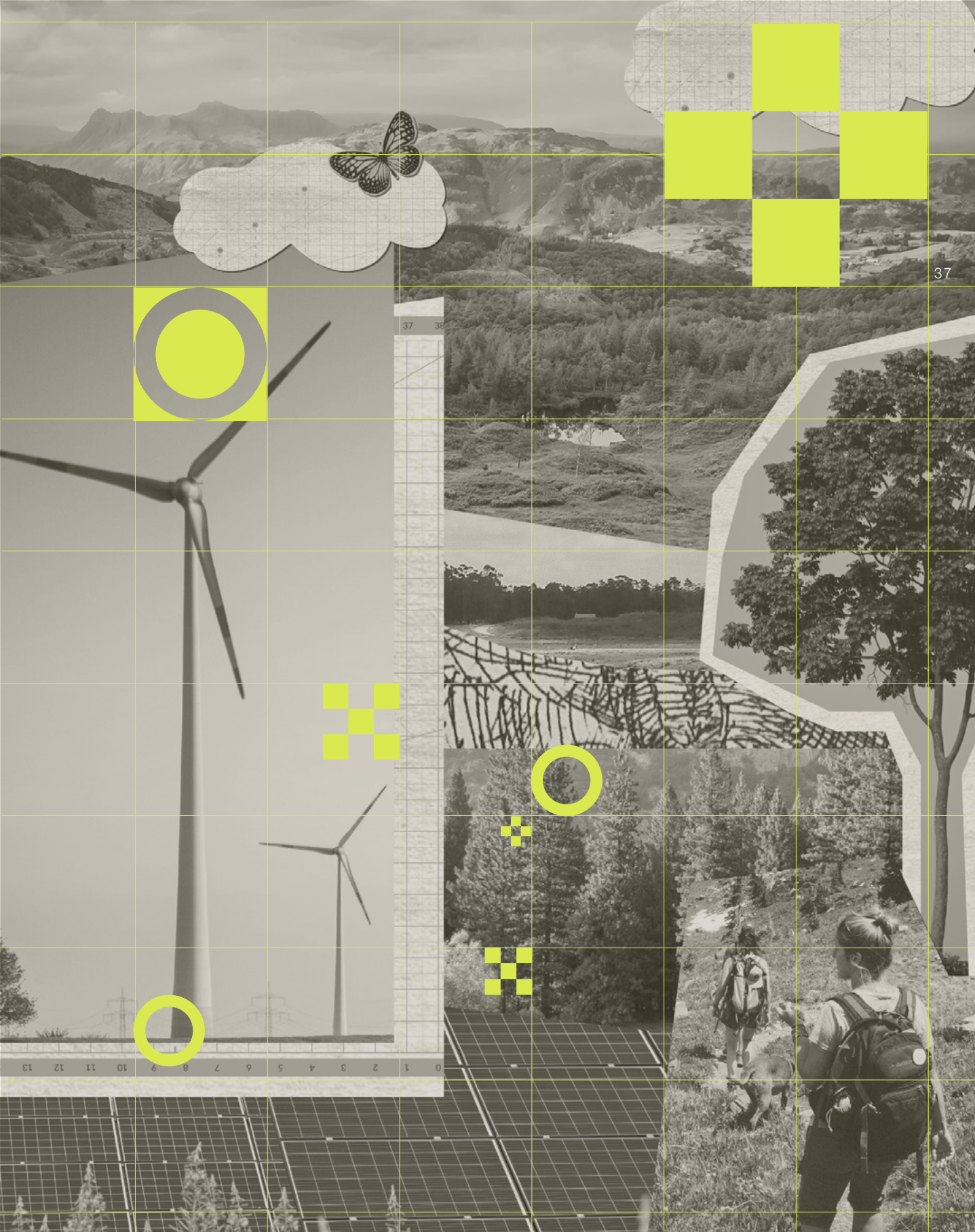
Additionally, aligning the five-year National Adaptation Plan with other priorities is crucial for ensuring climate resilience and addressing specific wider than local challenges.

It will also be critical to integrate government targets for nature recovery and biodiversity (Environment Act 2021) and, for example, its '30 by 30' commitment to effectively protect and manage 30% of our land, inland water and marine areas by 2030.

It is important at this strategic scale to align with existing nature recovery planning, including Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Local Environment Improvement Plans operating as single frameworks to support joined-up delivery with the Government's Examination in Public (EiP), and its net zero and climate adaptation ambitions.

Strategic Planning Authorities should also work with Natural England on a new strategic approach to nature recovery, to be delivered through Environmental Delivery Plans and the Nature Restoration Fund to support integration of environmental priorities at a strategic scale.

Key to the success of both government and local objectives to address environment and climate challenges, will be the effective integration role of SDS. In some areas, the upper tier local authorities are preparing Local Environment Improvement Plans. These will play an important role in coordinating the environment, natural resources, net zero, energy and climate change adaptation objectives and will therefore be a critical part of the strategic planning process.



Health and wellbeing fully embedded

38

Recommendation 5:

Strategic plans must fully embed healthy placemaking principles, and address local need and inequalities.

The UK is facing a health crisis and while planning has historically benefited public health more than most interventions outside vaccination¹, the crisis highlights systemic issues that require reform and reinvestment. With nearly a 20-year difference in healthy life expectancy for women between the least and most deprived areas of England², urgent action is needed. Ethnic minority communities often face worse outcomes.

SDSs should enact the proposed statutory duty on Strategic Authorities to address health disparities, building on the new requirements in the NPPF, and adopt a Health in All Policies (WHO) approach.

As Sir Michael Marmot and Institute of Health Equity and others have shown, health outcomes and inequality are deeply rooted in social determinants, like air quality, housing quality, access to green space, spatial and urban design, and broader social and economic factors such as employment, education and social infrastructure.

Planning strongly influences these social determinants, provides critical infrastructure and has a critical role in creating healthy places. Preventing poor health and addressing health inequity through better planning and design of the built environment is recognised in the NPPF (Chapter 8, Dec 24).

Planning for health is effective at different scales, and at the sub-regional and regional level, plans can provide overarching strategies for larger areas, guiding local plans to ensure cohesive approaches across regions, e.g. by effectively distributing land uses to reduce car dependency, promoting active travel and increasing physical activity levels.

This is recognised in the English Devolution White Paper which proposes a new statutory duty for Strategic Authorities to address health improvement and health inequality within their areas. SDSs will be expected to integrate these health considerations.

Adopting a Health in All Policies approach and the application of strategic Health Impact Assessments is likely to be effective, allowing consideration of health impacts, such as air quality and respiratory health, across geographical and policy areas. Several organisations have adopted this approach, including Liverpool City Region Combined Authority through its SDS and in Wales through the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations Act'.

There are also a wealth of useful tools available including the Quality of Life Framework, the NHS's Healthy Urban Planning Checklist and Building for Life Standards. Defining place specific objectives and requirements will provide a strong basis to affect positive change.

¹ Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, 2022, Town & Country Planning Association Conference

² Health Foundation, 2022, Map of Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth



Visual and compelling strategies with clear intent

40

Recommendation 6:

Strategic plans must set out visual and compelling spatial strategies with clear intent to support sustainable growth.

SDSs must articulate the long-term spatial vision and direction for the area, using compelling storytelling, images, diagrams and maps.

Strong visual communication will ensure that plans are accessible to a wide range of people, are written in 'plain English' and ensure that communities, decision-makers, and investors understand and engage with the strategic direction.

A well-communicated vision will strengthen collaboration, foster dialogue between stakeholders and infrastructure providers. This will ultimately enhance the likelihood of successful delivery.

The main elements of the SDS must be simply conveyed in a 'key diagram' that maps the spatial elements of the strategy including the location and scale of housing and employment growth locations, primary infrastructure and natural features requiring protection, restoration or creation.

SDSs will be a central component of the statutory development plan. By building on a foundation of shared evidence, SDSs focus is on long-term strategy and direction, with detail and delivery provided at the Local Plan level. This approach reduces complexity and scope creep, allowing strategic plans to convey their vision quickly and effectively.

It will be important to get the right balance between the SDS key diagram and Local Plan proposals maps. For example, where the SDS is proposing a strategic scale development, there should be little room for ambiguity in terms of the location, even if the site-specific details, including the boundary line on a map, is left to the local plan process. Ensuring that SDSs and corresponding local plans are supported by integrated and interactive online mapping will be important.

A National Model Spatial Development Strategy (NMSDS) should play a critical role in advancing consistent delivery of SDSs. This would set an advisory framework for best practice in terms of scope, detail, evidence and communication. Clear and visually-engaging strategies can help address these challenges by ensuring that key messages and ambitions are easily understood by a broad audience.

+115,000
new jobs

Draft Key Diagram

+242,000
new residents

+100,000
new homes

£6.bn
GVA

-  Blue Infrastructure
-  Natural Ecosystem
-  New Town
-  Strategic Growth
-  Expanded Centre
-  New Primary Infrastructure
-  Connecting Roads

Digitally enabled 21st century plans

42

Recommendation 7:

Strategic plans must be digitally enabled for the 21st century and be effective, efficient, accessible and transparent.

The way in which we use technology is radically shifting. Despite greater access to AI and digital tools across most sectors, the planning system in England remains overly reliant on paper-based processes. Development planning in England faces issues due to limited digital capabilities, including inconsistent methodologies, fragmented data and inefficiencies in collaboration.

SDSs must adopt a digital, data-led approach from the outset, using tools to evidence, prepare, share and monitor strategies. This will reduce plan creation time, improve decision-making, and build transparency and trust. The opportunity here is unprecedented. Spatial Development Strategies will be the links between vast national and local data sets and will need to integrate this in ways that do not just provide technical frameworks for delivery, but also investment prospectuses for growth and tell a story of place to bring communities and stakeholders along this journey.

This can only be achieved effectively in a modern economy by using digital and design-based approaches. Planning is one of the most data-intensive professions linked to a wide system of primary and secondary industries and sectors. Opening this ecosystem up through digitisation will provide unprecedented access to the vastly rich data required for plan making to a technology market that can build products and services that will enhance and accelerate both preparation of plans and the delivery of housing and associated growth.

A data-driven approach will enable Strategic Planning Authorities to analyse baseline information, including demographic trends, land use patterns, environmental constraints, and infrastructure needs, with greater precision and speed, providing deeper insights and foresight than previous methods.

Big data, AI language models and agents, and predictive analysis tools will enhance the ability to model and visualise complex spatial relationships and test growth options with greater depth and analytical rigour with speed and accuracy previously unprecedented. These tools can challenge assumptions and provide a transparent audit trail for stakeholders. A digital approach will also bring clarity, transforming raw information into intuitive maps and charts. Simplifying complex spatial plans improve communication between authorities and stakeholders, ensuring more meaningful engagement.

A data-driven framework will also allow for real-time data sharing at the national level between a much wider range of cross-industry and sector stakeholders. It will provide opportunities to develop collaborative platforms where stakeholders can track progress, undertake live monitoring of delivery and understand investment requirements, opportunities, and criteria to transform the delivery ecosystem. Allowing openness through shared data platforms will build trust and provide greater clarity and certainty whilst reducing conflicts by grounding decisions in objective single 'source of truth' evidence.



Delivered at pace

44

Recommendation 8:

Strategic plans should be delivered at pace, with a clear delivery framework and measurable outcome-focused targets monitored annually.

The expedient delivery of SDSs will be critical in meeting national priorities within this Parliament and beyond. Through clear guidance and support by Government, urgent effort should be given to producing first generation SDSs within a two year time horizon.

The diagram opposite sets out the key milestones to delivering an SDS over 24 months, from inception to adoption, establishing the new era of strategic planning at pace.

The need for rapid pace was a major theme and discussion point of the Strategic Planning Group, with a tight strategic scope, expedited process and efficient output being considered critical.

In this context, it is considered that the two-year production period is achievable and is a reasonable target, particularly given the additional recommendations of the Group, that include the adoption of a 'digital first' approach and better use of data analytics and technology, a streamlined evidence base and examination, and use of private sector resource.

A key challenge in achieving this timescale in large parts of the country will be the transition to a new devolved structure through the establishment of (Mayoral) Strategic Authorities, with each area's devolution journey moving at a different pace. In large parts of the country this is also being affected by Local Government

Reorganisation (LGR), noting that in places existing County Councils or Strategic Planning Boards will be delivering SDSs to begin with.

During this period, the strategic planning governance arrangements are very likely to change as the SDS is being prepared, with different bodies accountable for strategic planning decision-making. This is also likely to disrupt local plan progress in these areas. The Government is therefore urged to set out a clear geography for SDS preparation as soon as possible so that work can commence, and to support the emerging Strategic Planning Authorities (and Counties where appropriate) in establishing a resource which can be protected during this major transition.

The Government should also undertake a full risk assessment for each area to establish where the key risks to delivery of the SDS are likely to be and manage these with the relevant Strategic Planning Authority.

The recommended Spatial Planning Monitoring Units could be used to monitor the risk assessment and align on digital data sets.

0-3 months

Inception

Agree timetable with Secretary of State (SoS) as required in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB), notify key stakeholders, and agree on working arrangements with neighbouring Strategic Planning Authorities (SPAs).

6-12 months

Develop Strategic Vision

Frame a compelling narratives that sets bold and specific objectives for a 30-year time horizon.

6-12 months

Define Growth Parameters

Adopt Standard Housing Method numbers and agree economic sectoral growth forecasts to frame robust planning parameters.

9-12 months

Prepare and test spatial options

Assess under an Integrated Impact Assessment with indicators that are data driven and explicitly tied to a placed based vision.

12-15 months

Draft SDS and consult

Prepare the draft SDS document, incorporating preferred spatial strategies. Initiate consultation to gather feedback and refine the strategy based on input received.

Start

Evidence

Plan

Examine

Publish

2-12 months

Evidence base preparation

Prepare streamlined evidence base that appropriately relates to Local Plan evidence and therefore avoids overly complex or excessive data collection. Collaborative approaches, such as joint commissioning of studies across Strategic Planning Authority areas will optimise resources while fostering consistency in policy development.

15-20 months

Prepare final SDS and submit for examination

Consideration of representations received to the Draft SDS, ahead of submitting for Examination.

20-23 months

Streamlined examination

Examination by the Planning Inspectorate or relevant statutory body.

24 months

Adoption

Ambitious and place-specific visions

46

Recommendation 9:

Strategic plans must be ambitious, with a compelling place-specific vision.

Development Plan visions are often criticised for being too generic and lacking local specificity. They tend to use vague, aspirational language that could apply to any area and fail to communicate the unique characteristics and assets of a place that could shape a more compelling future.

This lack of clarity and distinctiveness often makes it difficult for the community and stakeholders to engage and advocate for the plans prepared.

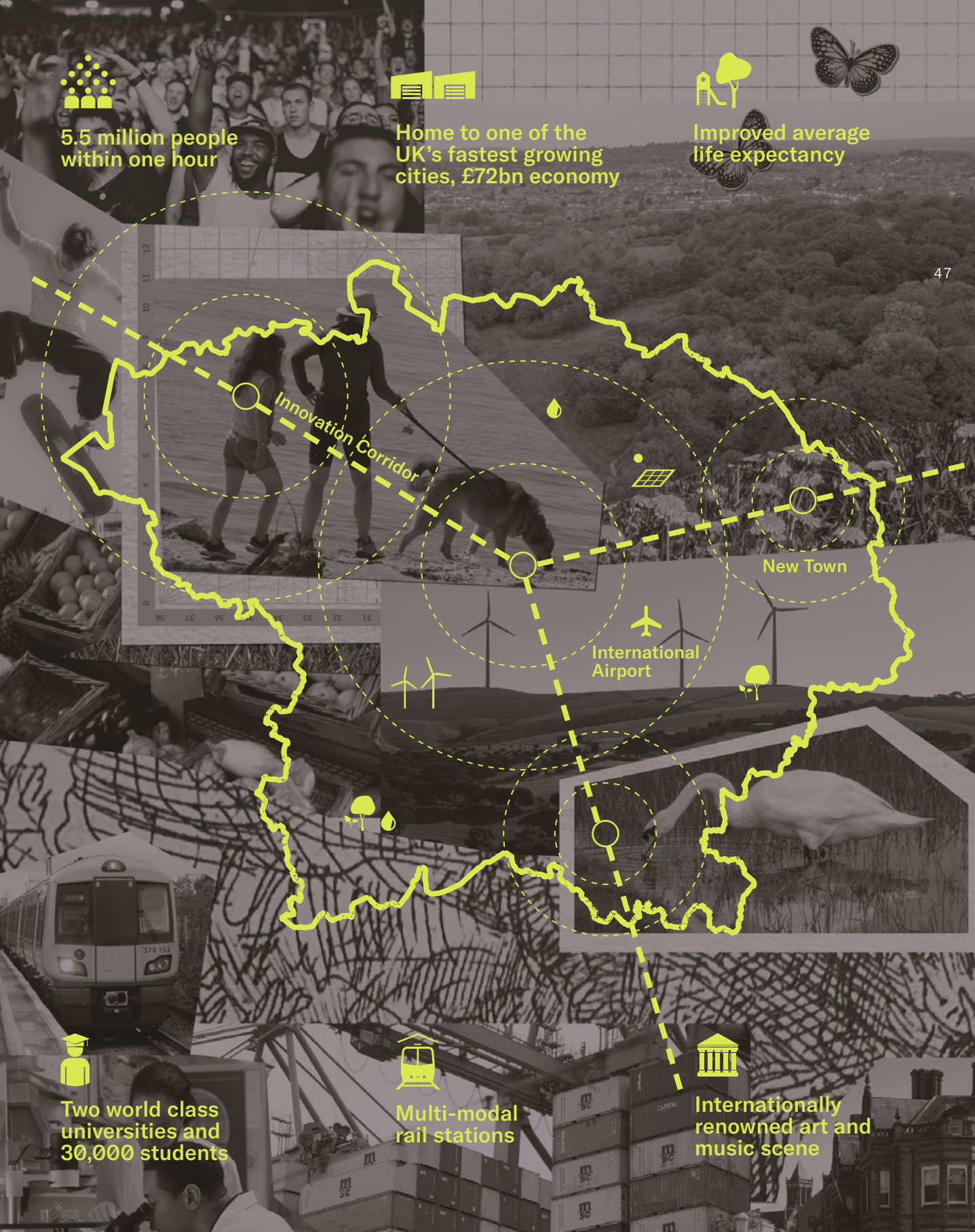
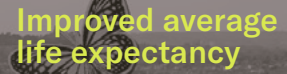
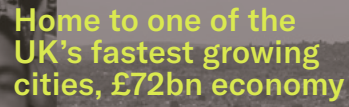
SDSs must be framed by a compelling narrative with bold, specific objectives for a 30-year plan period. They must set an unambiguous framework for transforming an area to meet the growth ambitions and long-term challenges. They should establish a written and spatial vision that acts as a ‘golden thread’ throughout the planning process, linking growth strategies to local policies (especially Local Plans) and refocusing planning on spatial and outcome-driven approaches. Vitally, they must also reflect the wider ambitions of the Strategic Authority in order to directly influence the delivery tools and interventions, especially funding priorities.

The long-term timeframe will allow for the integration of scenario planning, helping stakeholders and Strategic Planning Authorities prepare for a range of possible (but realistic) futures and build in agility and resilience to remain adaptable to unexpected events and changes.

This approach recognises the need for flexibility in long-term planning, requiring SDSs to align near-term goals with broader and longer-term strategic objectives.

A well-crafted and locally specific vision will provide a compelling ‘north star’ that inspires confidence across all stakeholders. This will foster collaboration and shared responsibility for championing change, building the long-term investor confidence needed to deliver sustainable growth. This will be illustrated through the ‘key diagram’ together with supporting maps, diagrams and images. This will be particularly important to ensure that the framework ties in infrastructure delivery bodies, especially those that currently either have much shorter-term business planning processes or only engage at the end of the planning process at the application stage (e.g. utility companies).

While remaining bold and ambitious, it is important that these visions are credible, plausible and rooted in place; such that they can guide development and balance competing factors in a manner that is responsive to the opportunities and challenges individual areas present. Meaningful and measurable metrics should therefore be set to underpin the vision and ensure that effective monitoring can help stakeholders to commit to a shared endeavour.



Consensus through meaningful engagement

48

Recommendation 10:

SDSs should be developed through honest and meaningful engagement with communities and stakeholders.

The absence of strategic planning has limited opportunities for the public and key stakeholders to engage beyond their local authority area or neighbourhood. This has also impacted on the ability of stakeholders with national (and sub-national) remit to engage effectively in long-term spatial planning given the significant number of Local Planning Authorities that they have been expected to engage with directly. This has created an engagement vacuum, where the root causes of key challenges are overlooked and consensus on critical issues is not reached. Instead, engagement is often confined to Local Plans, which can be slow, costly and protracted. Without the ability to shape strategic solutions, plans are more likely to face objections, lack public support, and fail to deliver effective policy responses to complex challenges.

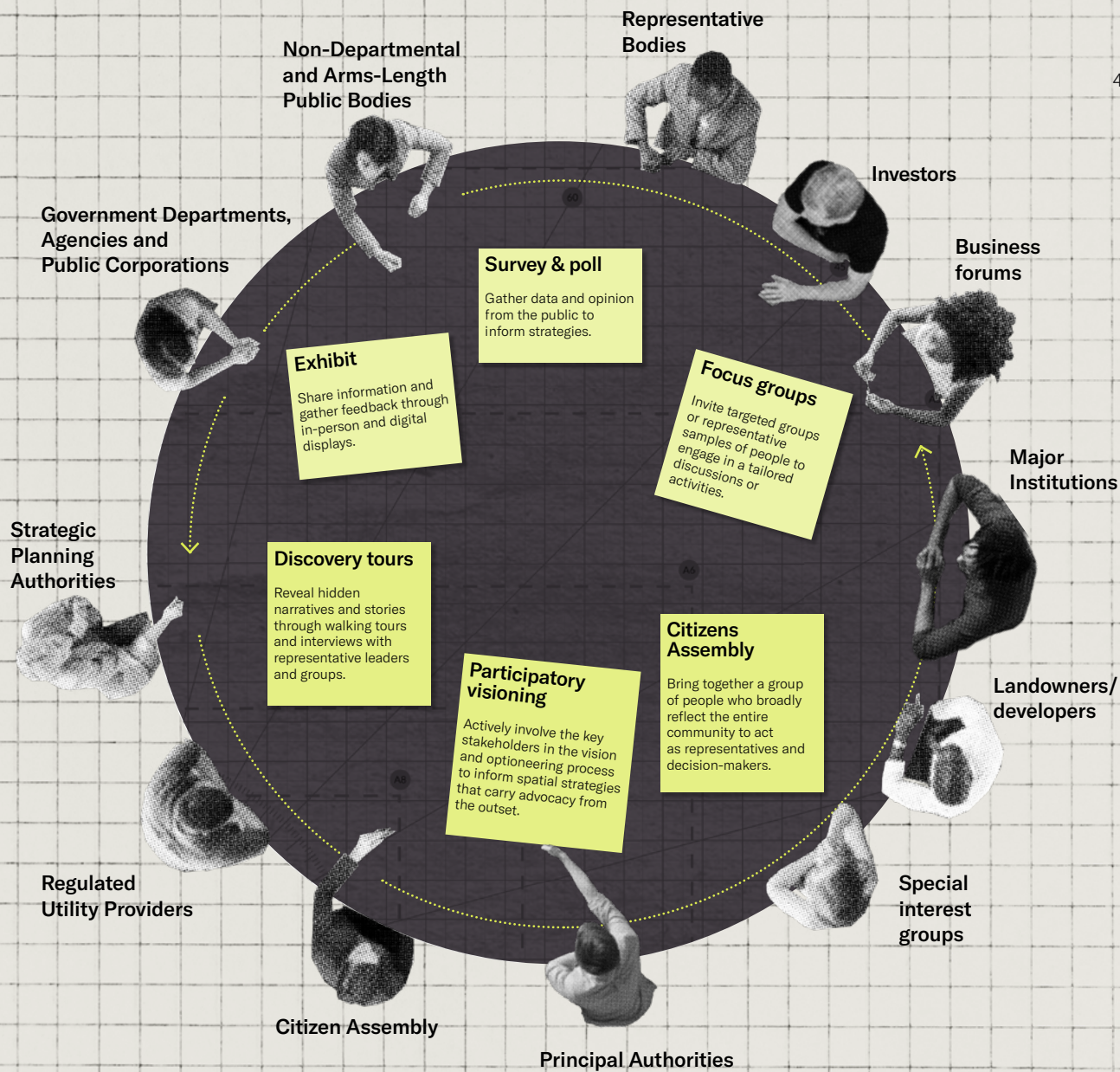
The SDS process must embed honest, focused and purposeful engagement with the public and stakeholders at key milestones, with an emphasis on early visioning (which could begin prior to the formal SDS programme). Engagement should reflect the strategic scale of the plan, using innovative approaches to embed diverse, representative input. SDSs provide a key opportunity for stakeholders to shape strategic solutions beyond local issues.

Involving the right consultees from the start ensures plans are coherent, inclusive and reflect diverse perspectives, fostering buy-in, building consensus, and improving the plan's effectiveness. It also helps assure the longevity of the plan through political cycles.

Key to a successful engagement process will be managing the expectations from all involved around what they can directly influence and what decisions have or will be made elsewhere. This will also mitigate against possible 'mission creep'. It is also important to be clear that the SDS is one part of the statutory Development Plan and that there are other opportunities to engage as the SDS is implemented, especially through Local Plans. Close working with local authorities with its previous engagement experience will be important.

Targeted public engagement, through tools like citizens' panels or assemblies will help garner representative views. This creates a practical and inclusive process, building legitimacy and enabling meaningful contributions to an area's long-term vision. Establishing Infrastructure Advisory Panels, as in London, would bring expert advice to support the SDS process and cross-sector coordination. This will ensure that infrastructure providers, including private sector utility companies, are engaged early on in the planning stages and through to delivery.

Strategic Planning Authorities should prepare a clear engagement strategy, setting out objectives and how meaningful participation will be achieved during plan-making. This should be publicly available for transparency and clarify the purpose, methods and responsibilities for engagement.



Focused and streamlined evidence

50

Recommendation 11:

Strategic plans must be supported by a focused and streamlined evidence base and in line with clear guidance to be provided by MHCLG.

Development Plan evidence base is often overly complex, making it difficult for stakeholders to navigate and understand, and production and examination protracted.

Excessive detail can hinder timely decision making and public engagement. Streamlining the evidence base into a more concise and efficient format would enhance accessibility, reduce bureaucracy, and ensure clarity while retaining essential information for justified decision making.

SDSs should be underpinned by a focused and streamlined evidence base that avoids overly complex or excessive data collection and is aligned with a 30-year plan period but remains capable of being updated at key moments.

The new era of SDS will demand a focused and integrated evidence base that is developed early in the process to shape ambition, vision and strategies rather than justify predetermined positions.

The evidence base will serve as the backbone for informed decision-making and ensure that policies are not only justified but also aligned with national frameworks and local contexts.

To maintain focus, evidence must be streamlined and relevant, avoiding unnecessary requirements that delays plan production. Strategic Planning Authorities should prioritise baseline data, trend analysis, and use predictive modelling to understand current conditions and anticipate future needs. Collaborative approaches, such as partnership working and joint commissioning of studies across Strategic Planning Authority areas, will optimise resources while fostering consistency in policy development.

The evidence base should also be prepared in a manner which anticipates directly informing Local Plans. It should include a clear Stage 1 (strategic)/ Stage 2 (local) approach for studies to be undertaken at different scales such as Water Management and Green Belt (Strategic Green Belt reviews will be key for relevant SDSs so as to inform coordinated decisions about growth and environmental protection across wider areas).

Evidence bases are also data rich and there should be clear standards set for commissioning, managing and making data available so it can be reused and readily updated.

	A streamlined SDS Evidence Base	Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strategic Housing and Economic Development—Supply, Demand and Needs Assessment → Inward Investment and Local Growth—Opportunities and Dependencies → Strategic Employment Growth Options Topic Paper 	51
	Movement and Connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strategic Transport Modelling and Accessibility Analysis 	Natural Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strategic Landscape Character Assessment → BNG Baseline → Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) → Level 1 Water Cycle Study and Strategic Food Risk Assessment → Aggregate minerals survey/ Local Aggregates Assessments (LAAs) → Habitat Regulations Assessment 	
	Health and Wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Joint Strategic Needs Assessment → Strategic Sport, Open Space and Recreational Needs Assessment 		
	Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Framework → Strategic Circular Economy and Carbon Offsetting—Baseline and Opportunities 	Built Environment and Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strategic Housing Market Assessment → Strategic Housing and Economic Development—Supply, Demand and Needs Assessment → Land Availability Assessment → Stage 1 Strategic Green Belt Review (where appropriate) → Strategic Spatial Options Study 	

Meaningful and integrated assessment

52

Recommendation 12:

Strategic plans must be assessed under an Integrated Impact Assessment tied to a place based vision.

Local plan assessment and sustainability appraisal often fall short by being overly complex, time-consuming and focused on process rather than outcomes. They frequently fail to effectively inform decision making or genuinely contribute to sustainable development. The approach can be cumbersome, leading to duplication of efforts and a disconnect from the core planning process, ultimately hindering rather than supporting the creation of truly sustainable plans.

In line with the forthcoming 'Environmental Outcomes' Reporting system and to avoid siloed assessment, SDSs should undergo an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) with data-driven indicators tied to a place-based vision, supporting robust assessment of reasonable alternatives.

This will help to reduce duplication of assessment and ensure that process is seen less as necessity to guard against the risk of legal challenge and much more a pro-active approach to shape positive plan making.

IIA is gaining momentum as a method to integrate multiple impact assessments into a single framework, building on Sustainability Appraisals (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) to analyse the effects of spatial options, policies, strategies and projects across agreed indicators. Strategic Health Impact Assessments should also be integrated.

Although there will only be one formal stage of consultation on the SDS (at the draft plan/pre-submission stage), there should be some engagement/consultation on the spatial options to ensure the IIA process is robust.

This approach will help to identify potential synergies and conflicts between different objectives, allowing more informed choices and balanced strategies.

In line with recommendation 11 and the need for a streamlined evidence base, the IIA should be undertaken at the strategic level.

Data should play a crucial role in IIA by providing measurable and meaningful indicators to assess the performance of SDSs. These indicators should also be associated with the SDS vision and can be used to track progress towards specific objectives, such as reducing health inequalities, improving air quality, or enhancing walkability. By utilising quantitative and qualitative data we can establish baseline conditions, set targets and monitor the actual impacts of implemented policies over time. This will help identify areas where interventions are most needed, enabling more targeted and effective planning decisions.

Local
Skills
Improvement
Plans.

Q004
Which areas
are suitable
for development
why?

GROWTH LOCATIONS
SHOULD BE CHOSEN
BY RATIONAL
ANALYSIS OF
EVIDENCE
NOT A CALL
FOR SITES.

Must include:

water recovery
networks
flood risk +
water networks
(quality)

- water resource
availability
- strategic carbon
modeling
(infrastructure
+ transport only)

Streamlined examination

Recommendation 13:

Strategic plans should be evaluated through a streamlined technical examination process and in line with clear guidance to be provided by MHCLG.

Local Plans often fail at the examination stage, whether due to inadequate cooperation between Local Planning Authorities or failure to meet the key test of soundness. Plans are sometimes submitted with unresolved soundness issues, with the hope or expectation that inspectors can fix this during examination. Although the government has recently cautioned against the approach, this practice had been increasing in recent years and the average examination time for a Local Plan was 18 months in 2024.

To avoid this practice developing in relation to SDSs and to avoid an extended and protracted examination stage, a streamlined and fit for purpose examination process for SDSs must be set by MHCLG and PINS. This must also reflect the fact that SDSs will provide high level frameworks and not detailed site specific proposals.

The SDS submitted should be certified to be sound by the Strategic Planning Authority as set out in its Statement of Soundness which should be shared with both the Planning Inspectorate and MHCLG in advance of submission. In considering how this would work in practice, the Government should consider a single 'gateway check' prior to submission, similar to the one proposed for local plans, especially to ensure the SDS is legally compliant. Subject to checking by the Panel, this would allow the focus of the examination to be on key areas that are fundamental to delivering the strategy and/or areas where the soundness of policy requires further examination. The examination is a critical final stage in the SDS preparation process and it is therefore important that this is managed as a facilitated exploration of these matters. Whilst from time-to-time participants may choose to have legal representation, the clear expectation should be that those attending will be giving their views directly and not via advocates.

The examination process should focus on a limited but meaningful series of questions—the basis for which is set out opposite for further shaping. The key question for the examination process to address in relation to soundness is: does the SDS provide a clear narrative of how the area is expected to evolve over time and are the proposed mechanisms and interventions being put in place to help deliver this feasible and achievable? Whilst development viability plays an important role in local plans and development management, given the high level and long-term nature of SDSs, in most cases, viability issues are unlikely to form part of the evidence base with an emphasis on 'developability' rather than 'deliverability'. Any viability evidence that is deemed admissible by the Panel should be relative and streamlined to the strategic and long-term nature of SDSs. The new process will also need to acknowledge the possibility that the SDS itself is expected to change some assumptions around development and viability.

It will be important that this process ensures that the relationship between SDS areas is properly addressed to ensure that cross boundary matters are managed consistently. This will help to ensure that SDSs collectively create a national framework for development and infrastructure investment.

Given the breadth of issues addressed, the examination should be led by an Examination Panel (appointed by the Secretary of State) that consists of an independent Chair with diverse experience (to be appointed via a competitive process undertaken by Government and not necessarily a Planning Inspector), together with a Planning Inspector. In some cases, separate technical sessions could be held by advisors to explore key issues that require particular expertise (as happened with the London Plan Examinations and RSS examinations). These would then report directly back to the Panel and be considered through the Examination sessions.

As with previous iterations of strategic plans, the expectation is that an SDS should only be reviewed in full approximately every ten years or when the monitoring indicators highlight the need to modify the strategy or update particular policies of the SDS through a partial review.

Local Plans would continue to be reviewed on a more regular basis to support implementation of the long-term strategy.

Core questions to guide the SDS examination



Is the SDS aligned with national policy? If not, is justification provided for divergence?



Are cross-boundary opportunities and challenges positively and satisfactorily addressed in the spatial strategy/ policies?



Does the SDS align with and incorporate relevant national and regional plans and strategies as confirmed by Government?



Does SDS identify developable levels of growth by a point envisaged consistent with national policy and local needs evidence?



Does the SDS support delivery of identified national infrastructure and major projects (e.g., New Towns) where relevant?



Does the SDS identify developable growth locations (land/ infrastructure) with realistic post-10-year investment expectations?



Is there a clear evidence-based link between the SDS vision and spatial strategy through to the distribution of planned growth and policies?



Does the SDS key diagram clearly illustrate the vision/spatial strategy?



Does the SDS demonstrate consideration of options and alternatives, incorporating area-wide opportunities/constraints into the spatial strategy to deliver an appropriate approach?



Does the SDS Delivery Framework outline a clear implementation pathway, with detailed first-decade Local Plan actions?



Has the SDS been developed utilising best planning practice, grounded in data, evidence and objective analysis?



Are outcomes tied to measurable, open-data metrics?



Does the SDS align with local economic priorities (linked to the Local Growth Plan) and establish a framework for long-term investment?



Is the strategy adaptable to changing circumstances?



Does the SDS ensure infrastructure provision, alignment and sequencing and secure medium/long-term delivery (via investment)?

Effective monitoring

56 Recommendation 14:

Strategic plans must be capable of demonstrating how they will accelerate delivery of development and infrastructure priorities over time and how the anticipated outcomes of the strategy will be monitored.

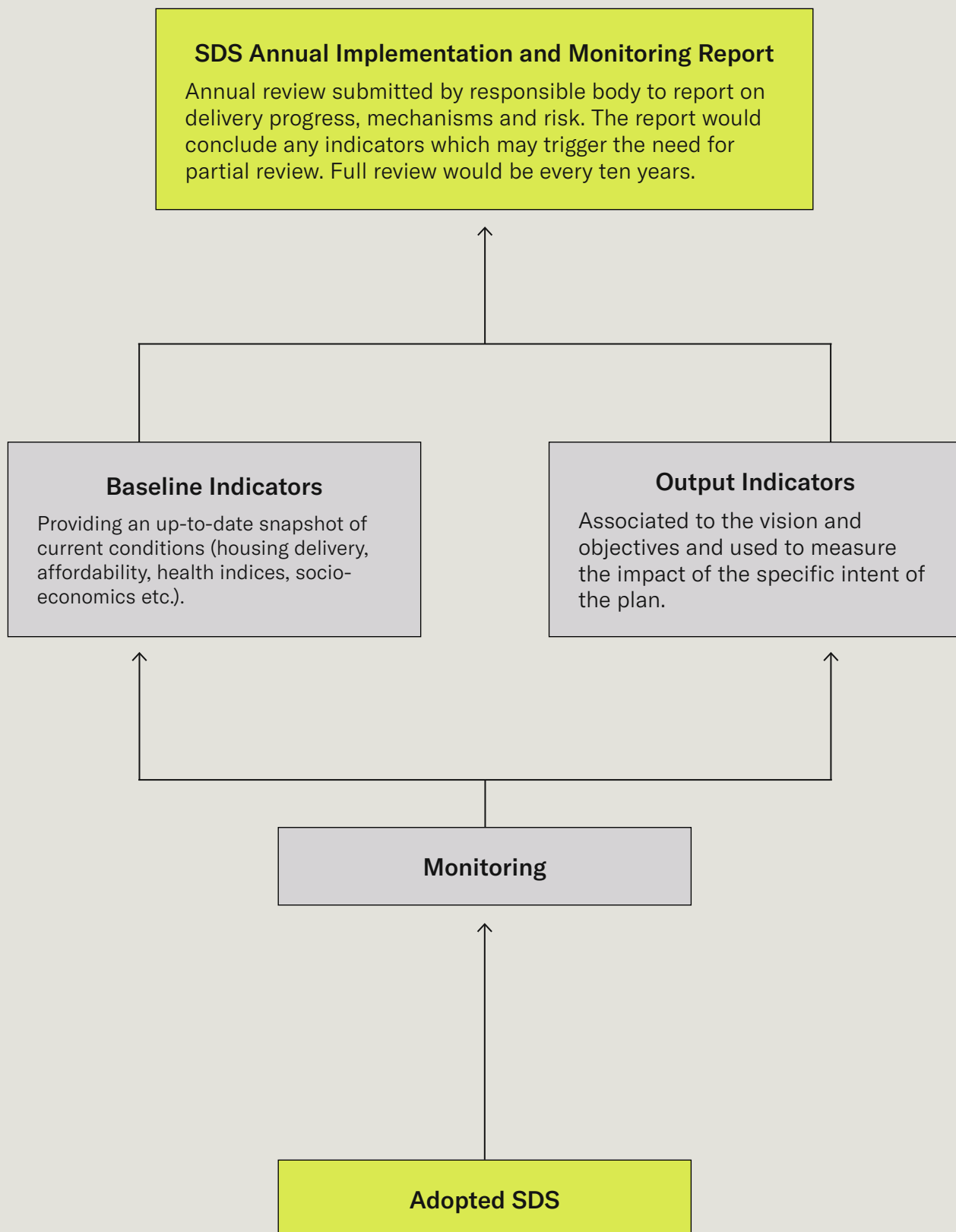
Implementation and monitoring of plan proposals are often undermined due to inadequate resources, lack of stakeholder engagement, poor coordination among agencies, and insufficient data collection. Ambiguous goals, political interference and limited accountability further hinder progress. But, if this new generation of strategic plans is to be genuinely vision-led and outcome focused, there will need to be a clearly articulated Implementation and Monitoring Framework with measurable ambitions to demonstrate success over a c. 30-year programme, with 10-year delivery phases.

Work on preparing a 10-year implementation and Monitoring Framework for each SDS should be managed alongside preparation of the SDS itself and should form part of the testing process. The Implementation and Monitoring Framework will be an important tool for highlighting any risks to delivery such as the need for a change to the strategic interventions (e.g. policy or fiscal interventions) being used or where progress is not moving in the right direction towards successful delivery of the overall ambition. The different plans, strategies and stakeholders responsible for delivery should also be clear. The Implementation and Monitoring Framework should therefore also indicate whether an early full or partial review of the SDS is needed and provide reasons.

Given the long-term nature of SDSs, they should be monitored via frameworks that set out approximate milestones, timescales and high-level outcomes at each stage, allowing flexibility in how different places achieve these objectives. Long-term goals set within SDSs should span multiple electoral cycles, ensuring continuity while accommodating adjustments in implementation. It will be essential to balance the success of delivering social, community and nature recovery outcomes, with other quantifiable measures such as economic growth and housing delivery.

Monitoring baseline indicators which would be common to all SDSs should be submitted annually to Government (via the Spatial Planning Monitoring Unit). The indicators would need to be publicly available, regularly updated and provide clear metrics around strategic objectives (e.g. housing delivery and affordability, climate impact and health). This should feed into a single and consistent national spatial dataset that could be utilised across all tiers of Government and departments.

Output indicators would be linked directly to the vision and objectives and used to measure the impact of the specific intent of the plan.



Championed by place leaders

58

Recommendation 15:

Strategic plans must be championed by strong place leaders willing to make the difficult decisions that will inevitably be required through the strategic planning process.

In recent years, planning has consistently been referred to as a barrier to growth and development. While the challenge of delivering growth is multi-dimensional, planning suffers from poor public perception and a lack of trust. As a result, it has become a political tool, used both positively and negatively. With planning reform now front and centre of the Government's overall economic growth mission, it is vital that the potential positive role of planning is used to its full extent. This will require brave technical and political decisions and strong place leadership.

Senior place leaders, including Mayors, should use the SDS as a tool for building partnerships, overcoming poor perceptions of planning and strengthening democratic legitimacy. The SDS will establish a long-term written and spatial vision for a place, supported by local communities. This process should help address tensions between local action and central government priorities on nationally significant issues, with housing as the top concern. But it will also require some difficult choices where there are perceived winners and losers.

It is important that, despite the obstacles, the SDS is not subject to political whims. Leaders must demonstrate genuine buy-in and advocacy for the SDS and, regardless of challenges, uphold their commitment to reinforce democratic legitimacy. It is equally necessary

for Government to continue to identify strategic planning as key when inevitable challenges arise.

The SDS is a powerful tool for building relationships across tiers of government, public sector institutions and investors. These partnerships (local, regional, and national) are crucial for achieving the vision and goals set out in the SDS and ensuring growth is delivered. Therefore, the highest tier of leadership in Strategic Authorities must actively advocate for the vision outlined in the SDS. Senior-level advocacy and place leadership will help ensure that, despite the political, economic, and fiscal cycles each SDS faces, growth planned through the SDS is not subject to political whims or short-term gain.

Creating the right conditions to deliver the SDS will be essential if these are to provide the long-term spatial investment framework for places that is currently lacking. Stability in the political leadership for SDS preparation and delivery will therefore be essential. This has always been challenging for plans prepared through the democratic process, but will be even more challenging as the local government landscape transforms over the next few years in the LGR and Devolution journey, and different leaders with potentially different ambitions take responsibility for the SDS.

This should be taken into account in the recommended risk assessment for each SDS area undertaken at the start of the process, with appropriate mechanisms put in place to limit the risks to meeting the ambition for universal coverage of SDS by the end of the first Parliament.

What is the ideal team structure to deliver an SDS?

Write, draw, and annotate below

No
silos

Could help
to support
on going
planning

Clear
responsibilities
and
accountability

Clear
roles
and
responsibilities
for
SDS
process

should a "day one" team
be required to get an SDS

experience

draw, and annotate below

Diverse, inter-disciplinary teams

60

Recommendation 16:

Strategic plans must be prepared by multi-disciplinary teams and incorporate a diversity of perspectives.

Since the abolition of regional planning in England, an entire generation of planners and built environment professionals have not worked in a strategic planning context. There is therefore a skills and experience deficit that will need to be addressed.

Strategic spatial planning will require new and evolving skill sets and a mix of built and natural environment professionals. Delivery of strategic planning will also happen in highly political and complex organisational contexts. Diverse, multidisciplinary teams, with the ability to think and plan spatially, test and analyse data, and communicate effectively, will be important.

Convening skills will be vital, with people who can act as ‘ringmasters’ to articulate and own the shared vision for the Strategic Planning Authority, ensuring it transcends all aspects of the wider strategic objectives. Even in the face of disruption as a result of LGR and evolving devolution architecture, the shared ambition must remain constant, integrating all perspectives and components of high-quality spatial planning, along with external plans and strategies.

Building strong relationships across all tiers of government, infrastructure providers, and the private sector will be essential. It will also be vital to build stronger partnerships with the education sectors to ensure they are supporting the rebuilding of strategic planning capacity for the future.

Inherent tensions and trade-offs are inevitable in strategic planning, therefore it is the ‘ringmaster’ role that enables someone to effectively manage these challenges and ensure sustainable and equitable growth outcomes. Alongside technical skills it is the ‘power skills’ of communication, negotiation, emotional intelligence, and problem solving that place leaders of strategic planning will rely on. Good relationship management is a pre-requisite of good strategic planning.

Teams must be led by data and insight which requires deeper and more comprehensive understanding and fluency in technology and digital delivery as digital products and services will form a large part of the new strategic planning ecosystem including investment, financing and monitoring of delivery. The production of SDSs will require synthesis and interpretation of large complex data sets and long-term monitoring and tracking of progress will require modern approaches to be successful. Teams should ensure they can use data, graphics and visualisation to communicate effectively.

Which of the following skills does your team need but does not have enough of?

70%

For the last three years, over 70% of officers have reported their number one recruitment issue is ‘difficulty in attracting appropriately qualified or skilled candidates’.

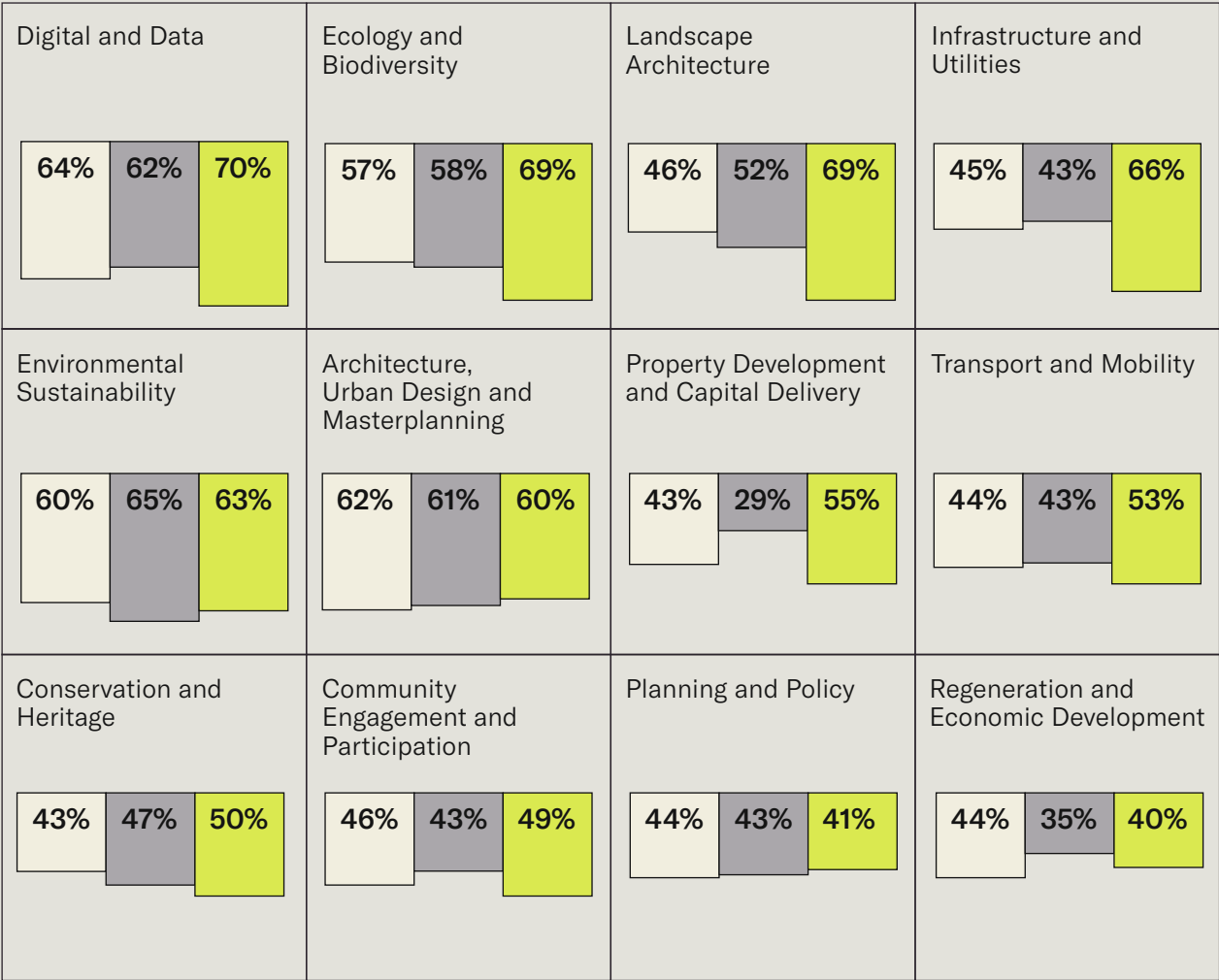
Digital & Data

‘Digital & Data’ is the skill identified as most needed and the one for which the least number of new roles are planned.

61

Note respondents could select multiple options, resulting in totals over 100%.

2022 2023 2024



Investment in resource capacity

62

Recommendation 17:

The successful preparation of SDSs will require investment in a new generation of strategic planners to support the essential role of partnerships and embed innovative practices and thinking.

The skills challenge has been exacerbated by significant and chronic reductions in planning resources and capacity, particularly within local authorities (but also within government agencies and the Planning Inspectorate) alongside poor public perception of the industry overall.

It is recognised that resource and capacity will be a challenge. The state of public finances and the broader changes in how we work have dramatically shifted since 2011. New team structures and working methods, in collaboration with the private sector, will be essential. The support role of organisations such as Public Practice in bringing private sector skills into the public sector to expand the role of strategic planning will also be an important part of the capacity building.

Government must invest in additional resource; and at salaries that are comparable to market rates to ensure talent is attracted, but more importantly retained. Consistency in plan-making teams, particularly at senior level, is critical for ensuring timely and quality delivery.

This is a new statutory responsibility for local and strategic authorities and will therefore require a new resource. It is acknowledged that this is likely to be a small core resource initially but, as the strategic planning functions become a more established responsibility, assembling a diverse, multidisciplinary resource will be critical. With the essential policy integration role of the

SDS and the ‘ringmaster’ skills of the strategic planning resource, it is important to consider where this sits within organisational structures.

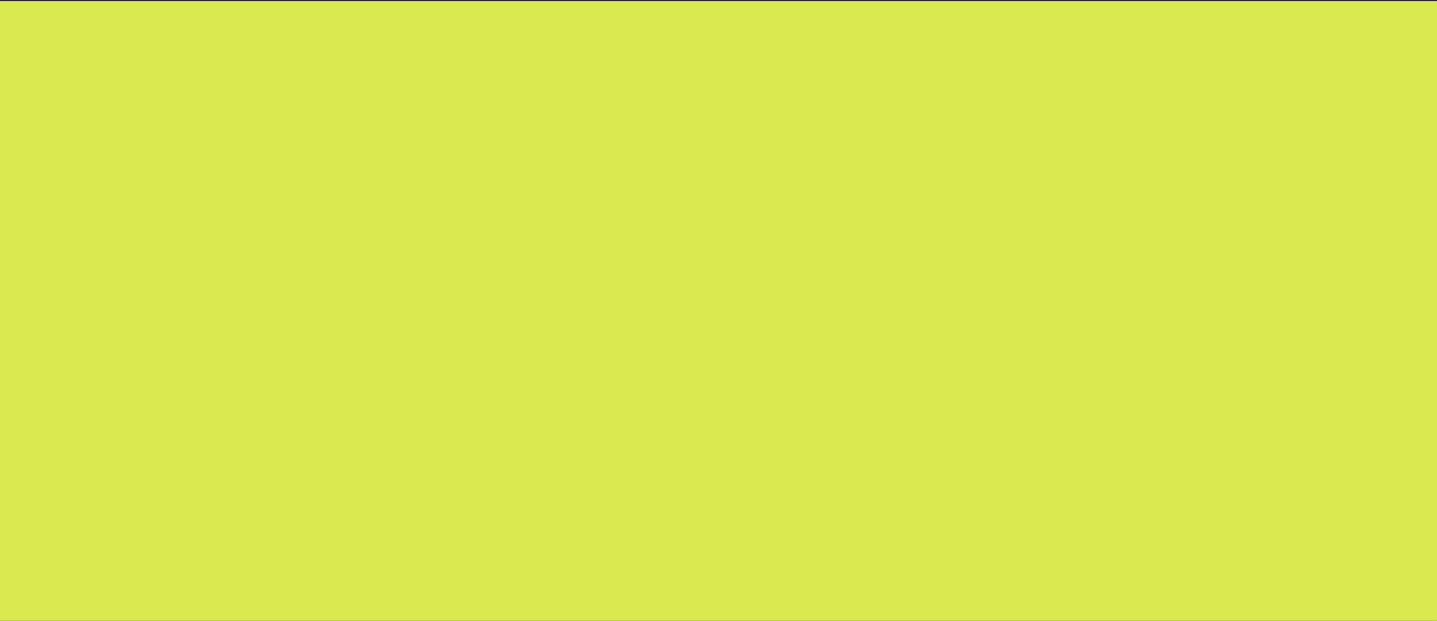
Whilst these teams may initially be formed of a shared resource consisting of individuals from local authorities, it will be important that they provide impartial advice to the Strategic Planning Authority and are not representing the individual local authorities they represent. In time, there should be a clear separation between the Strategic Planning Authority resource and the Local Planning resource to ensure independence and impartiality.

The need to invest in rebuilding capacity and systems within the public sector is not exclusively a local government challenge. The Government will also have to invest in its own resources, particularly in the Planning Inspectorate which has also lost strategic planning capacity and experience since 2011, and its delivery agencies that support spatial planning.

Since 2011 the private sector has gained greater exposure to strategic planning, particularly overseas. As a result, it has developed skills, capacity and working practices that better reflect strategic plan-making in 2025. It is therefore important that the Strategic Planning Authorities draw on this experience and expertise as much as possible.

However, to effectively deliver this type of work, commissioning authorities will need to seek advice on appropriate procurement to ensure the best value for money.





Next steps

What do we need to ‘get going’ with the new era of strategic plans?

66

The Strategic Planning Group emphasises the urgent need to integrate strategic planning with the existing Local Plan system without hindering the ongoing production of robust Local Plans. In many parts of England these plans will be likely to be prepared during a period of significant upheaval due to local government restructuring and as newly emerging (Mayoral) Strategic Authorities are established.

The current lack of understanding about what strategic planning is and its value as a ‘ringmaster’ of good growth will make it harder initially to ensure effective integration with other plans and strategies, especially if the negative perceptions of planning persist.

A seamless transition is essential to ensure that current progress on Local Plans remains uninterrupted while enabling a shift toward the adoption of SDSs.

By acting decisively now, we can embed the new SDSs effectively within a new plan-led system and lay the foundation for future success.

The Strategic Planning Group is fully committed to supporting this transition and has outlined some suggested practical next steps to support the transition to the new planning system and initiate work on the new SDS as soon as possible.



Define Strategic Planning geographies so that early work to develop the evidence base on the right spatial geography can be progressed now.



Carry out a full risk assessment for each SDS area in relation to Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution to support the implementation of the new system during a period of considerable upheaval in large parts of England and maintain momentum in plan preparation.



Facilitate cross-boundary cooperation by establishing new Strategic Planning Monitoring Units with initial work programmes and defined cross SDS area responsibilities.



Standardise evidence base and examination requirements by setting clear guidance for SDS preparation in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Policy Guidance (PPG), ensuring consistency across Strategic Planning Authorities.



Provide accessible data by developing a centralised government data hub with standardised, downloadable datasets to support evidence-based planning and ensure ongoing support of SDS monitoring frameworks.



Allocate strategic planning funding and budget to support the early establishment of resources for each Strategic Planning Authority through specific funding and support packages.



Provide funding to pilot specific processes and evidence base, especially related to embedding the role of digital technology, for early SDS initiatives to test and refine strategic planning approaches from which others can benefit.



Support the establishment of core Shadow Teams especially in areas that are subject to local government reorganisation and devolution transitions to protect valuable spatial planning resources and experience.



Promote the added-value of strategic planning by advocating for the importance of SDSs, especially in relation to integrating policy agendas and priorities, and in attracting investment through targeted campaigns involving Mayors, advisors, and stakeholders.



Develop a strategic planning support, training and development programme to help rebuild capacity and knowledge in the system, to set out a proactive approach to working with Higher Education facilities and Planning Schools, and support the role of the Planning Inspectorate and government delivery agencies.

The Strategic Planning Group extends its sincere thanks to the following individuals for their esteemed contributions, whose insights and expertise have been invaluable in shaping this work.

Lead authorship

Catriona Riddell & Associates

Catriona Riddell, Director

Prior + Partners

Shaun Andrews, Director of UK Planning Strategy

Tom Venables, Planning Director

Simon Mattinson, Planning Director

Polly Barker, Place Economics Director

Chloe Rutland, Senior Planner

Special thanks to the Minister for Housing and Planning Matthew Pennycook MP, and representatives from the MHCLG and the Planning Inspectorate for their attendance and support at key workshops.

Design & Art Direction

Prior + Partners

Bärbel Gamm, Head of Graphics

Andrea Cristea, Graphic Designer

Qinru He, Graphic Designer



Acknowledgements

Pooja Agrawal

CEO, Public Practice

Mark Dickens

Assistant Director Planning & Building Control,
Manchester City Council

Paul Frainer

Director, Olive Branch Consulting

Peter French

Senior Policy Advisor, County Councils Network

James Harris

Senior Policy Advisor,
National Infrastructure Commission

Hannah Hickman

Associate Professor of Planning Practice,
University of the West of England School of
Architecture and Environment

Bev Hindle

Former Oxford-Cambridge Arc Partnership
Director

Alexandra Notay

Chair and Commissioner,
Radix Big Tent Housing Commission

Vicky Payne

Director: Planning and Urban Design,
Jas Bhalla Works

Simon Ricketts

Partner, Town Legal LLP

Anna Rose

Head of Planning Advisory Service,
Local Government Association

Peter Studdert

Director, Peter Studdert Planning

Judith Sykes

Senior Director Expedition/
CEO Useful Simple Trust

Graham Thomas

Head of Planning & Sustainable Development,
Essex County Council

Andrew Wood

Senior Engagement & Impact Officer,
Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission

Laura Wood

Joint Strategic Plan Lead
South West Herts

Richard Wood

Founder, Richard Wood Associates

Alex Yendole

Planning Policy Manager,
District Councils' Network/
Stafford Borough Council



**PRIOR
+ PTNRS**



Prior + Partners

70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ
+44 (0)20 3951 0052

priorandpartners.com

strategicplanninggroup@priorpartners.com

