

Guidance

30-month local plan process: an overview

Draft process of creating a local plan under the new plan-making system which covers getting ready, preparing the plan, examination, adoption and monitoring.

From: **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**
(/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government)

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Applies to England

Contents

- For plans under the legacy plan-making system
- Principles to apply when preparing your plan
- Process overview
- Before the 30-month process starts
- Months 1 to 23: prepare the plan
- Months 24 to 29: submit your plan for examination
- Month 30 to 31: adopt plan and publish policies map
- Month 31 onwards: monitor your plan
- When to start preparing your new plan

We will review this guidance and make any necessary revisions and updates as the new system is implemented and related policy is confirmed.

For plans under the legacy plan-making system

If you are submitting your plan under the legacy system, use the [create or update a local plan legacy system guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/create-or-update-a-local-plan-using-the-legacy-system) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/create-or-update-a-local-plan-using-the-legacy-system>).

The legacy system covers plans to be adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, excluding the amendments made by the LURA, and [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/186/contents/made) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/186/contents/made>).

Local planning authorities (LPAs) must prepare a single local plan and should adopt it within 30 months.

This guidance is aimed at LPAs. Read it to understand:

- the high-level process of preparing a plan in the new system
- where you can find more detailed guidance on each stage of preparing a plan

Principles to apply when preparing your plan

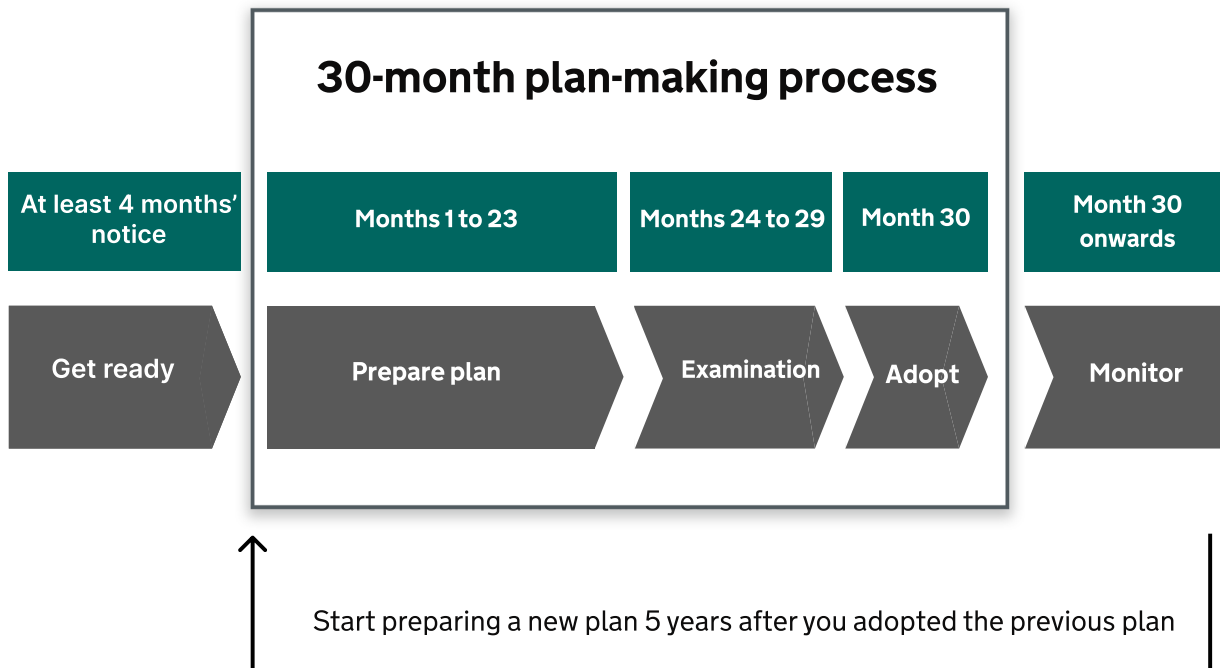
You should design your plan-making process so you can prepare a plan that will be found sound and adopted within 30 months. Following these principles should help:

- use the mandatory consultations to consult in a meaningful yet proportionate way – try to maximise the effectiveness of them and only hold extra formal consultations where it's critical to delivering the plan
- hold proactive ongoing conversations with key stakeholders that are critical to delivering the plan
- start creating the required plan content and supporting information as early as you can, and build on this as you go
- use any templates provided in the GOV.UK guidance published on [Create or update a local plan using the new system](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/create-or-update-a-local-plan-using-the-new-system>

- take a digital-first approach, prioritising digital formats and complying with defined data standards
- consider how you will engage councillors and council senior leaders to shape the plan and secure their support, keeping them up to date as much as possible throughout the process
- secure efficient sign offs at key stages of the process - to make this happen, work with senior leaders to plan effective delegation and identify necessary changes (for example, to change the council’s constitution or standing orders)

Process overview



This diagram illustrates the main stages and timings in the 30-month process.

Sequencing

In this guidance, we specify where:

- tasks must happen in a certain sequence as required by law
- it’s expected that you’ll follow a certain sequence but it’s not mandated

- you can decide on the best approach for your LPA based on your specific local circumstances

These are the tasks where the sequence is required by law:

Tasks in local plan-making where the sequence is required by law

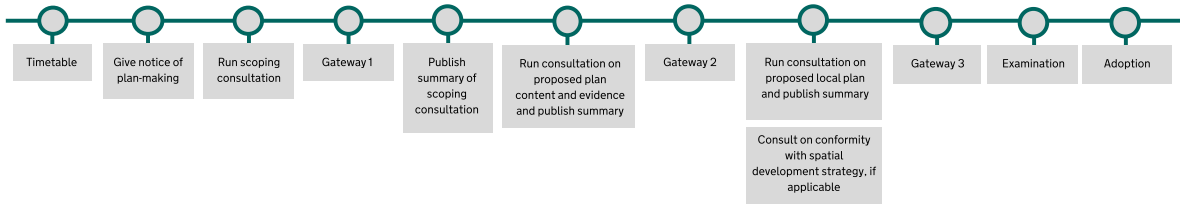
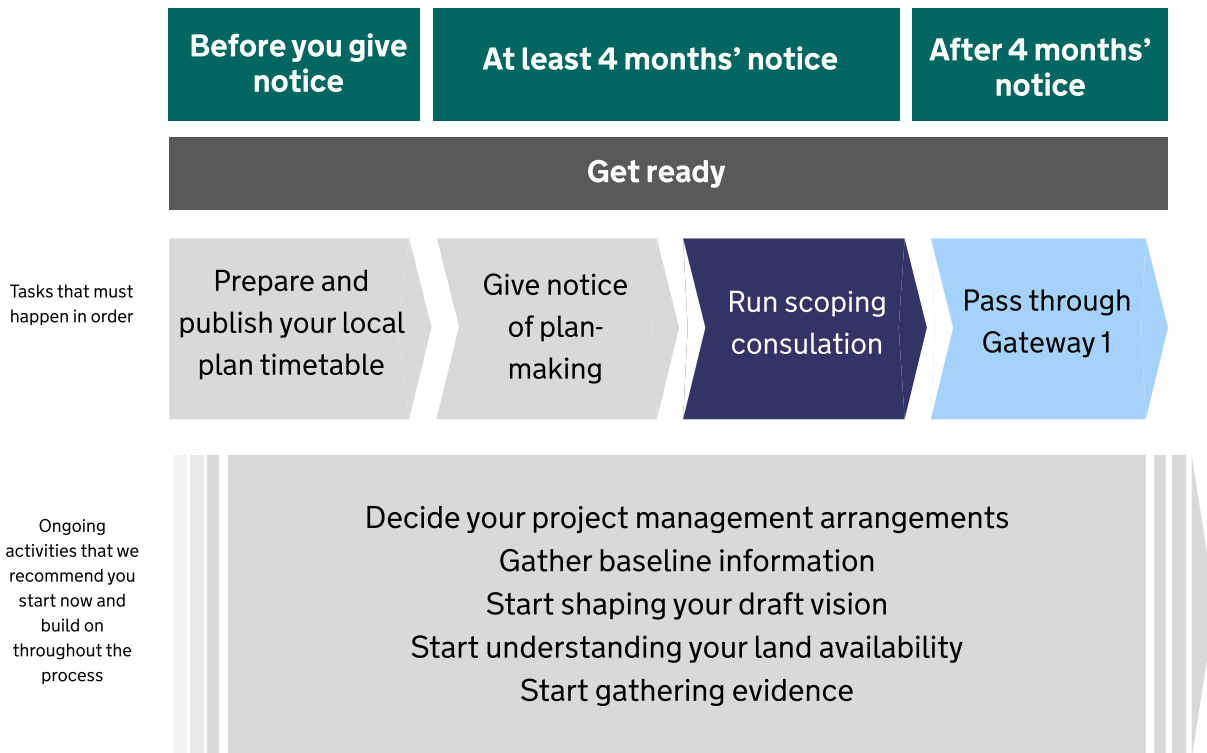


Diagram showing tasks along a timeline in the following order: timetable, give notice of plan-making, run scoping consultation, Gateway 1, publish summary of scoping consultation, run consultation on proposed plan content and evidence and publish summary, Gateway 2, run consultation on proposed local plan and publish summary and consult on conformity with spatial development strategy if applicable, Gateway 3, examination, adoption.

Before the 30-month process starts



This diagram illustrates the main tasks to complete when you are 'getting ready' to prepare a new plan before the 30-month process starts.

There are some tasks you must complete before the 30-month process starts, and which must happen in a certain order. There are other tasks that

we recommend starting early, as doing so will maximise your chance of preparing a sound plan.

While there's no strict time limit on this stage, it's important that you plan to start the 30-month plan-making phase by the point at which you're required to do so. Read more in the [rollout of the new local plan-making system](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system>).

An overview of the tasks in this stage is set out below. You also can read more detail about this in our guidance on [getting ready to prepare a new plan](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-ready-to-prepare-a-new-plan) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-ready-to-prepare-a-new-plan>).

Confirm you need to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

SEA is a process for the environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Your plan will need to carry out SEA if it meets certain criteria set out in [regulation 5 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/regulation/5) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/regulation/5>). We expect that all local plans will need to carry out SEA.

Prepare and publish your local plan timetable

Publish the first version of your [local plan timetable](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/creating-a-plan-timetable) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/creating-a-plan-timetable>). This will help your community know when they can get involved with the plan. You must keep the timetable up to date.

You should not require full council approval each time you update your timetable.

Give at least 4 months' notice of plan-making

You must:

- give a minimum of 4 months' notice before you begin preparing your plan and give this notice publicly (called your 'notice to commence')
- set out where your timetable is published
- publish your timetable on the same day as the notice, if not before.

Read more in the guidance on [giving notice of plan-making](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/giving-notice-of-your-plan-making) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/giving-notice-of-your-plan-making>).

Decide your project management arrangements

To help you manage the plan-making process effectively, we recommend that you consider topics such as governance, resourcing and risk management at this stage. To help, you should complete a project initiation document (PID). We recommend you use the [template provided by the Planning Advisory Service \(https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/plans/new-plan-making-system-what-we-know-so-far/local-plan-project-initiation-document-pid\)](https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/plans/new-plan-making-system-what-we-know-so-far/local-plan-project-initiation-document-pid).

Run a scoping consultation to invite early engagement

You must run a scoping consultation and invite feedback throughout the plan-making process. You'll invite feedback on matters including [how to engage \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/engaging-the-public-when-preparing-a-local-plan\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/engaging-the-public-when-preparing-a-local-plan) with them throughout the plan-making process and what the plan should contain.

Gather baseline information

Alongside the other tasks in this 'getting ready' stage, you should:

- [gather baseline information, knowledge and understanding about the area \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gathering-baselining-information-to-inform-a-local-plan\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gathering-baselining-information-to-inform-a-local-plan)
- review monitoring information from your previous plan
- gather baseline environmental information to help establish the baseline for the environmental report to support your SEA

Start working on your vision, land availability and evidence

You do not have to start these tasks at this point, but we recommend that you do. This will help you deliver a plan in 30 months.

You could:

- use the information you've obtained, plus your early engagement, to start shaping your draft vision
- start to understand the availability of land in your area, including running a call for sites – this is the first stage in the [site assessment process \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/selecting-identifying-and-assessing-sites-for-local-plans\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/selecting-identifying-and-assessing-sites-for-local-plans)
- start to gather the evidence you'll need to support your plan

- upload your evidence to your draft statement of compliance – this will help you track your progress towards producing a legally compliant plan and guide discussions at later gateways

Self-assess that you're ready to start to 30-month process and pass through Gateway 1

Once you've done the preparation tasks during the (minimum) 4 months' notice period, you need to pass through Gateway 1.

Gateway 1 helps ensure you are ready to prepare and adopt a plan within 30 months. It's also intended to increase the transparency of the preparation of your plan for your external stakeholders and communities.

To pass through Gateway 1, you must publish a self-assessment summary of what you've done to get ready. You should do this following a set template, which you'll find in the [Gateway 1: what you need to do](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gateway-1-what-you-need-to-do) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gateway-1-what-you-need-to-do>) guidance.

See [guidance on transitional arrangements](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system#plans-submitted-under-the-2024-nppf-transitional-arrangements) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system#plans-submitted-under-the-2024-nppf-transitional-arrangements>) for when to publish your Gateway 1 summary for your first new-style local plan.

You must publish your Gateway 1 self-assessment summary:

- no later than 5 years after adopting your existing plan
- no sooner than 4 months after you gave notice of your plan-making, or the day after your scoping consultation ends – whichever comes later

Read more in the [guidance on Gateway 1](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gateway-1-what-you-need-to-do) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gateway-1-what-you-need-to-do>).

Months 1 to 23: prepare the plan

At the point you pass through Gateway 1, the 30-month timeframe begins and you can start preparing your plan.

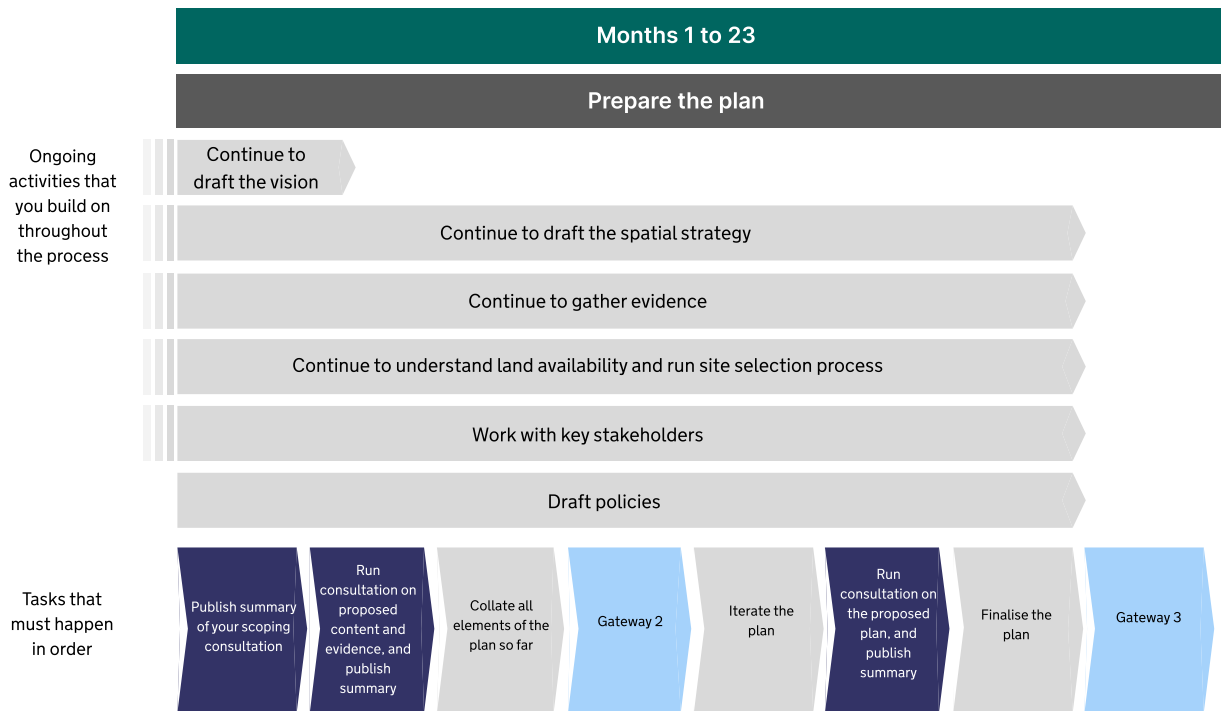


Diagram illustrating the 'prepare the plan' part of plan-making.

Publish a summary of your scoping consultation

After you've passed through Gateway 1, you must publish a summary of your scoping consultation. The summary must set out matters including:

- a summary of the main issues raised in any responses you received
- how you have had regard to any responses you received at the point at which you publish the summary

You must publish this before you start the consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence.

Continue to work on your vision, spatial strategy, sites and evidence

At the start of the 30-month process, you'll need to look ahead and think about the long-term goals and aspirations for your community and local area.

Building on the work done before the 30-month process started, you should:

- finish producing a draft vision for the future of the area
- consider and agree on any aims and objectives
- identify the spatial strategy options

You'll need to continue to gather evidence relating to general aspects of the plan, regardless of which spatial strategy you choose, which will inform the spatial strategy. A key part of this is continuing with your site selection process.

These 'general aspects' could include retail, and employment land reviews, a strategic flood risk assessment, and a strategic housing market assessment. This evidence will inform your strategy on things like employment land need, open space needs, flood risk considerations and infrastructure delivery.

You should develop and refine spatial strategy options, taking account of alternatives and assessing how your choice of sites may result in environmental effects.

Start thinking about your policies

You could start thinking about your policies at this point, taking account of national policy and guidance, including any relevant legislative requirements.

Work with key stakeholders throughout

Throughout the plan-making process, collaborating with key stakeholders will help to address issues across LPA boundaries and challenges that can only be resolved with the support of others. This might include other LPAs, highway authorities or organisations like Natural England.

At the earliest stages of plan-making, we recommend you contact key individuals and stakeholders who are likely to be critical to the successful delivery of the plan. This will help build trust and strengthen the relationship.

You could supplement formal consultations with informal interactions on a more ongoing basis, to maintain progress and resolve challenges more proactively. This might involve regular meetings, video calls or even site visits to develop shared understanding and identify common ground.

To support the engagement work you carry out, you should work with stakeholders to prepare and maintain one or more 'statements of common ground' to record:

- the cross-boundary matters you're addressing
- your progress towards addressing them

If you cannot get the assistance or information you need from other organisations, we intend that you will be able to use the 'requirement to

assist' as a last resort.

Consult on the proposed plan content and evidence

Once you've got a draft vision and spatial strategy, and after you have published the summary of your scoping consultation, carry out a public consultation.

You must make the following information available and invite representations on it:

- your draft vision and any proposed aims and objectives
- your proposed spatial strategy
- a summary of the evidence you intend to gather and details of any evidence you have already gathered
- any other elements you'd like to consult on, which may include initial draft policies

The consultation must last for a minimum period of 6 weeks. Once it's finished, you must publish a summary of the consultation before you can move onto Gateway 2 which sets out matters including:

- a summary of the main issues raised in any responses you received
- how you have had regard to any responses you received at the point at which you publish the summary

For your SEA, we recommend that you consult on the level of detail and scope of your environmental report at the same time as the consultation on the proposed plan content and evidence.

You must have regard to the public consultation feedback as you continue to prepare your plan. We recommend that you use the feedback to inform your plan and to identify and test spatial options and local priorities.

We expect that this is all the consultation you will need to do before you run the next consultation on the proposed plan. While we encourage you to have continuous dialogue with key stakeholders, we do not expect in general that you would need to run additional consultation periods outside of the mandatory ones set out in this guidance.

Collate elements of the plan

Having regard to the feedback received from the consultation, you'll bring together the elements of the plan that you've worked on so far and start setting this out in the draft plan document.

You need to:

- decide on the preferred spatial strategy option using your evidence about site availability and other relevant matters – use this to inform the scope and content of your local policies and site allocations and to write your local policies
- decide the specific sites you propose to allocate
- continue to gather specific evidence to support your proposed policies and site allocations
- record the evidence you've gathered in your statement of compliance to help guide discussions at Gateway 2
- gather evidence to inform, explain, and demonstrate soundness of the plan
- develop your map of proposed local plan policies, which will show people where the policies in your draft plan are to apply in your area.
- further develop the environmental report, using the feedback from the consultation to help predict and evaluate the cumulative effects of the plan

Gateway 2: check your progress with the Planning Inspectorate

Once you have published your summary of the consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence, and have decided you're ready, you must seek observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate on aspects of your proposed plan.

The Planning Inspectorate will appoint a gateway assessor to look at the documentation you provide and give you their observations and advice.

The purpose of Gateway 2 is to support:

- early resolution of potential soundness issues
- progress towards meeting the 'prescribed requirements' (the things you need to do to pass through Gateway 3)

You must start Gateway 2 after publishing your summary of the consultation on the proposed plan content and evidence, and before the consultation on the proposed local plan. Other than that, you can choose when to start it.

When deciding when to start Gateway 2, consider when you'll be able to get the most out of it. It will be helpful for the assessor to see work in progress. For Gateway 2 to be useful, you should have enough information for the assessor to give you meaningful advice on soundness and progress towards the prescribed requirements. However, leaving it too late may mean you can't incorporate the advice sufficiently and may have to re-do work.

Gateway 2 should normally take between 4 and 6 weeks. You can continue working on your plan during this time.

At Gateway 2 you will:

- provide your documents
- tell the assessor which issues you'd like to discuss with them
- take part in a workshop led by the assessor to discuss the topics you identified

The assessor will give you their observations and advice in the workshop and then in a formal report. They will identify practical steps that you could take to progress the plan, and where you may need further support.

You must publish the observations and advice on your website as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Following Gateway 2, make any necessary changes to your draft plan having regard to the observations and advice you received.

Consult on the proposed local plan

Once you've published the Gateway 2 observations and advice and have updated your plan as needed, you must carry out a public consultation on the proposed local plan. You must make available and invite representations on documents including:

- your proposed local plan
- a map of proposed local plan policies, site allocations and designations
- details of the evidence you have gathered

Consult with the community, statutory bodies and other relevant stakeholders (<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/using-automation-to-save-time-processing-consultation-responses>).

The consultation must last a minimum of 8 weeks.

Other matters to consult on

We recommend that you consult on your SEA environmental report at the same time.

You must also consult the authority of any spatial development strategy (SDS) that covers your area (for example, the London Plan for Greater London) on whether your plan generally conforms with the strategy. You

must carry out the SDS consultation at the same time as the consultation on the proposed plan and they must both end on the same day.

After the consultation

After the consultation, analyse the feedback and have regard to it while making any appropriate changes to finalise your plan and submission material for Gateway 3.

You must publish a summary of the consultation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/using-automation-to-save-time-processing-consultation-responses>), setting out matters including a summary of the main issues raised in any responses you received and how you have had regard to any responses you received at the point at which you publish the summary.

We anticipate this is all you need to do at this point. Extra consultations will add significant delays to your plan-making process, so we recommend avoiding them if possible. We recommend that you do not plan to run any extra consultations unless you have strong reasons to do so, for example, if after receiving feedback you want to make significant changes to your plan like removing or adding sites.

If changes to the plan require changes to the environmental report, you may also need to consider further consultation where the changes are significant.

Gateway 3: check you're ready to go to examination

You must pass through Gateway 3 after you have:

- published your summary of the consultation on the proposed local plan
- finalised your plan
- decided that you consider you've met the prescribed requirements

You must provide the version of your plan you intend to submit for examination and other supporting documents, including your completed statement of compliance.

The Planning Inspectorate will appoint a gateway assessor to provide observations and advice and decide whether the plan is ready to be submitted for examination. The plan will be ready if it meets the prescribed requirements (set out in post regulations). These requirements will relate to:

- legal compliance

- whether all submission documents have been prepared
- whether you are ready to proceed to examination

Gateway 3 should take 4 weeks or up to 6 by exception.

At Gateway 3:

- you'll provide documents to show how your plan meets the prescribed requirements
- the assessor will review the documents and produce a report to say if you're ready to proceed to examination

You must submit your plan for examination once you've successfully passed through Gateway 3. If you do not successfully pass through Gateway 3, you cannot proceed to examination at this stage – you'll need to make the necessary changes and re-do the gateway.

You need to make available the observations and advice you receive as soon as is reasonably practicable.

After you have successfully passed Gateway 3 you must also make available:

- the documents you submitted to the gateway assessor
- a Gateway 3 completion statement confirming the date you successfully passed it

Months 24 to 29: submit your plan for examination

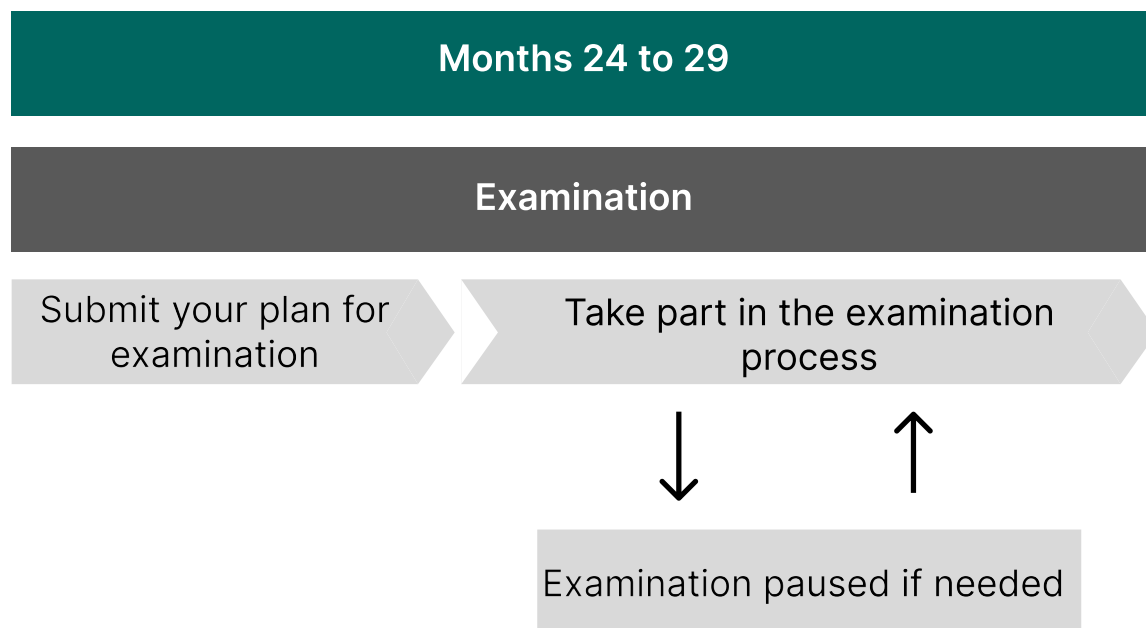


Diagram illustrating the 'examination' part of plan-making.

When the assessor advises that you can submit your plan and supporting documents to the Planning Inspectorate for examination, you have passed through Gateway 3. An inspector will be appointed to carry out an independent examination of the plan.

The examination will assess whether the plan is sound – meaning it meets the test of soundness set out in national planning policy.

Those who have made representations on the plan during its preparation will have the right to present their views to the inspector. The inspector may recommend that you need to modify the plan for it to be found sound. If this is the case, you may need to consult interested parties on the proposed modifications. This will also likely extend the 6-month timeframe for the examination.

If the inspector finds that you need to do more work on the plan, the examination may be formally paused for up to 6 months for you to carry that work out.

Month 30 to 31: adopt plan and publish policies map

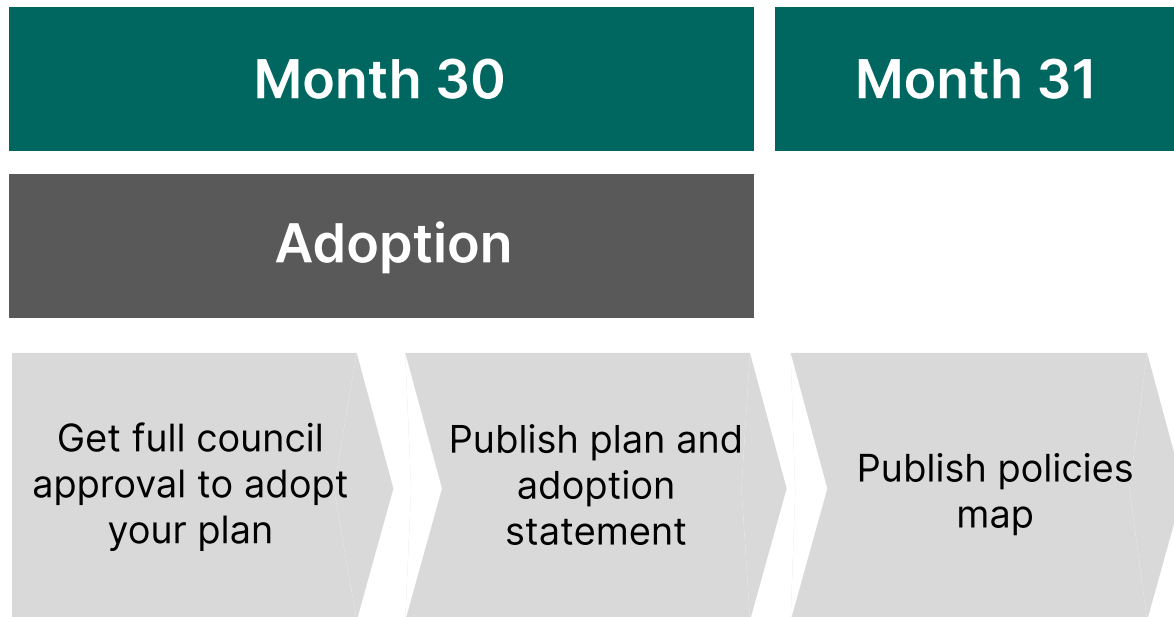


Diagram illustrating the 'adoption' part of plan-making.

After the examination has taken place, the inspector will provide you with their recommendations and reasons. If they find that the plan is sound or could become sound if you make certain modifications, we expect you to adopt the plan (incorporating the modifications where necessary). You must publish the recommendations and reasons of the inspector as soon as is reasonably practicable after you receive them.

You must get full council approval to adopt your plan.

Once you have adopted your plan, you must make it available. You must also publish an adoption statement that includes the date of adoption and the date by which you must start preparing your next local plan. The details you need to include are set out in regulations.

You must also publish the information about SEA set out in [regulation 16 of the SEA regulations](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/regulation/16) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/regulation/16>).

Within 1 month of adoption, you must also publish a policies map. This is different to the 'map of proposed local plan policies' you prepared earlier. The earlier map only showed the policies and allocations in your local plan, whereas the policies map must bring together your local plan policies with the rest of the policies in the development plan. You must keep your policies map up to date and revise it at the required times (are set out in regulations).

Month 31 onwards: monitor your plan

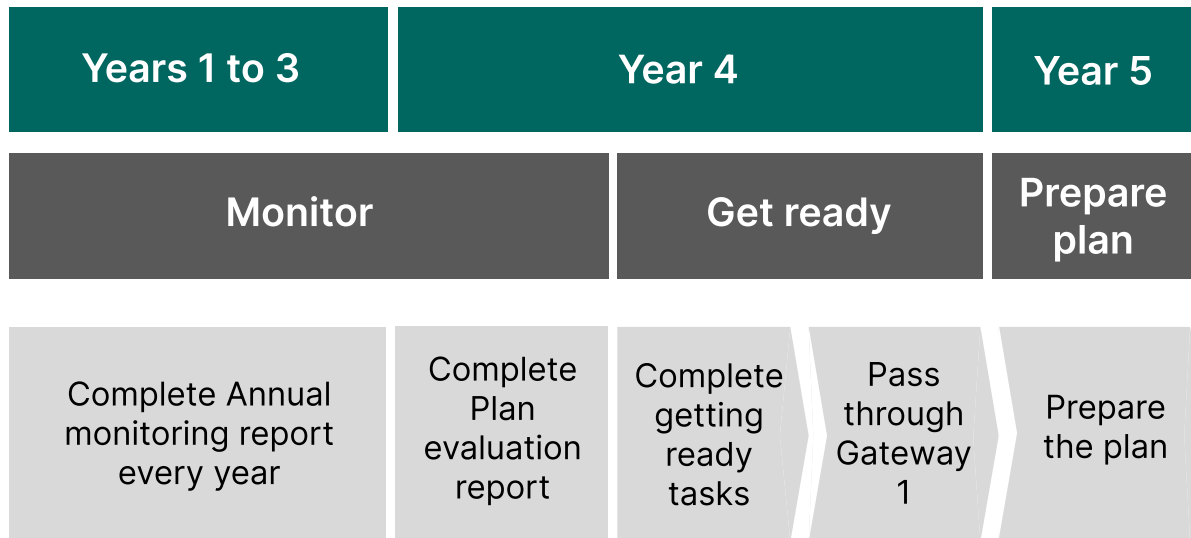


Diagram illustrating the steps involved in plan monitoring.

Once your plan is adopted, you need to monitor it over time. The purpose of monitoring is to review progress against your plan's policy vision and objectives, as well as other key planning matters.

There are 2 types of monitoring.

Annual monitoring:

- happens on the same date every year for all LPAs
- monitors your plan against a list of nationally prescribed metrics to assess how key policies are being implemented
- monitors the implementation of the plan against measurable objectives in the local plan vision

The plan evaluation report:

- must be carried out in year 4 from when you adopted the plan
- informs the next version of the plan and considers which policies and sites you can take forward into the next version

As part of the SEA process, you must also monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of your local plan.

When to start preparing your new plan

You must start preparing a new plan, at the latest, every 5 years following the adoption of the previous plan. However, you should consider starting earlier than this in certain situations. For example, where:

- there has been a significant change in the local or national context which informed your existing plan
- an area's housing requirement has significantly increased following the adoption of a spatial development strategy
- there is no spatial development strategy in place and there is a significant change to the assessed level of housing needed for the area (for example, set through the standard method)
- an inspector examines the current plan and recommends that you prepare a new plan earlier
- planning decisions in your area are being assessed against the presumption in favour of sustainable development
- your annual monitoring indicates that you might not maintain a 5-year housing land supply through to adoption of your next plan

By 'start preparing', we mean you must have passed through Gateway 1 for your new plan.

A 'new plan' does not necessarily mean that you must start the whole plan from scratch every 5 years. For example, where policies and content in your existing plan remain relevant and consistent with national planning policies, you may bring them into the new plan – unless there is evidence suggesting otherwise.

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