

building a safer future

a guide for communities on navigating the planning system in england to tackle flood risk



Briefing 4:
Making a difference to your Local Plan



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Building a Safer Future – A Guide for Communities on Navigating the Planning System in England to Tackle Flood Risk. Briefing 4: Making a Difference to Your Local Plan

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Introduction

You are probably reading this because you have experienced flooding at first hand or are worried about flood risk where you live. The risk of flooding is going to increase over the coming decades as a result of climate change, and you certainly do not want any changes made to your local area that could make flooding worse. The planning system in England has a major role in making decisions about where new development will go, and these decisions are crucial to reducing the risk of flooding, both now and in the future.

The future of your community depends on people like you and your neighbours getting involved in the decision-making process, as local communities have unique knowledge of the flood risk in their area, as well as the drive to tackle climate change in order to create a positive future for the next generation.

We hope that this guidance will be a useful starting point to help you get your voice heard when planning decisions that will have an impact on the level of flood risk in your community are made. The guidance takes the reader on a journey through the processes and language used to make decisions within the planning system about flood risk. Both the language and the processes are often not easy to understand, as the system is complex and frequently confusing, but we hope to shed some light on exactly how you can make a real difference in your local area.

The guidance consists of six briefings:

Briefing 1: Future flood risk, and how planning can help

- Introducing flood risk, and planning's role in addressing it
- How communities can influence planning
- Practical solutions to ask for

Briefing 2: Who does what in planning for flood risk?

- Organisations involved and their responsibilities
- When to contact each of these organisations
- Working with your community and local council

Briefing 3: Understanding national law and policy on flood risk

- Flood risk and planning law
- National planning policy on flood risk
- Applying the law and policy to make a difference

Briefing 4: Making a difference to your Local Plan

- The Local Plan-making process
- Influencing your Local Plan
- Other ways to influence planning policy

Briefing 5: Making a difference on planning applications

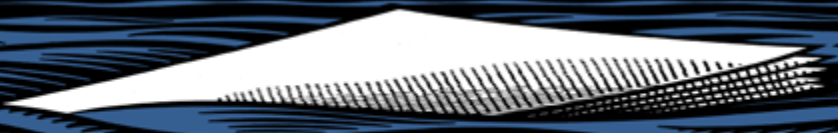
- The planning application process
- Influencing planning decisions
- Challenging a planning decision

Briefing 6: Where to get help – further information and glossary

- Key resources and contacts for further information
- Forming partnerships and building contacts
- Glossary of technical terms

A glossary of the technical terms used in this guide is appended to this Briefing. The first use of a glossary term in each briefing appears in **bold green text. Clicking on this text will take you to the corresponding entry in the glossary. Clickable links to external sources of information are set in **bold dark red type**.**

Briefing 4



Making a difference to your Local Plan

'Getting involved in the Local Plan for your area can seem tough and can take time, but it is vital if you want to have a lasting influence on what gets built in your community. It is where all our knowledge on flood risk needs to come together to ensure that places are safe for the long term.'

Dr Hugh Ellis
Policy Director, Town and Country Planning Association

What is a Local Plan?

A **Local Plan** sets out what **development** should go where and how it should be designed. It should contain a map to show where new development will be built in your community and more detailed text on a wider range of issues, including a long-term view of the **flood risk** of the area (existing flood risk and how this will change over time). **Climate change** will result in increases in rainfall intensity, river flows and sea levels, so all new development must be designed to be safe for as many years as it is expected to last (at least 100 years).

Why should I care?

Attempting to read and understand a Local Plan can feel overwhelming, and getting to grips with the jargon involved is not easy. But successfully influencing your Local Plan is a more efficient way to have an impact than dealing with lots of individual **planning applications** – by the time applications are submitted many of the big overriding decisions will already have been made, and there will be less time and fewer opportunities for your views to be heard.

Creating a Local Plan

The creation of a new Local Plan can take up to five years from start to finish. Its content is developed by the **Local Planning Authority**, and it is then examined by the **Planning Inspectorate** to ensure that the proposed plan has taken account of national government **policy** on things such as the number of houses

that must be built in an area and the need to tackle climate change.

If the Planning Inspectorate is convinced that the draft plan meets these requirements it is deemed 'sound' and the Local Planning Authority will formally 'adopt' the Local Plan. It then forms the basis for decisions on planning applications (the law says that these decisions must follow the plan apart from in very exceptional circumstances).

The Local Plan-making process

The Local Plan-making process can be broken down into a number of stages:

- **Evidence gathering:** This is the stage at which a Local Planning Authority decides its aims for the Local Plan. It must talk to neighbouring authorities about cross-border approaches and also consult with other organisations, including the **Environment Agency**. A **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment** is carried out. This allows the Local Planning Authority to identify locations with low risk of flooding where future development could take place.
- **Writing the Local Plan:** The Local Planning Authority draws up a list of issues that need to be addressed and different options that could be taken, and then allocates sites for housing, employment, retailing and green space to ensure that enough land is available in appropriate locations to meet any targets set by national government. The Local Plan – including policy for avoiding development in flood risk areas, for **flood defence** measures, and for **sustainable drainage systems** – is then drafted.



Local Plans should take a long-term view of the flood risk in their area

- **Public consultation:** Local Planning Authorities are duty bound to engage in a process of **consultation** with local communities. The draft Local Plan is formally published and you then have at least six weeks to submit your comments.
- **Updating the draft Local Plan:** The draft Local Plan is then updated to take comments from organisations and community members into account.
- **Examination and soundness tests:** The Local Planning Authority submits the draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, and it is then scrutinised through an **Examination** carried out by a **Planning Inspector**. The Inspector writes a report on whether the Local Plan satisfies national legal and policy requirements – if it does, it is declared ‘sound’; if it does not, the Inspector will recommend modifications to make it sound.
- **Adopted Local Plans:** When the Planning Inspector is satisfied that the Local Plan meets all of the requirements, the Local Planning Authority may formally ‘adopt’ it (usually by a vote in full council). Once adopted, it is formally the development plan for the area, and all planning applications should be decided on the basis of whether or not they fit with the plan.

Getting involved in the Local Plan-making process

If you are worried about the impact of new development on the flood risk in your area, getting involved in the Local Plan process can be a very effective way of making sure that your voice is

heard. Once something is recognised in the Local Plan, decisions on all planning applications will have to take account of it.

It is important to approach the creation of a Local Plan with an open mind and focus on having positive dialogue with the planners at your Local Planning Authority. Try to get as many people from your community involved as you can. Make sure that you are as informed as you possibly can be, and gather strong evidence to back up your case.

Incorporating your local knowledge in the Local Plan

You need to influence the Local Plan right at the beginning of the plan-making process, when the evidence about what growth is needed and the levels of flood risk are first put on the table.

Local Plans are based on, among other things, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), which should weigh up all sources of flood risk both now **and** in the future. Local Planning Authorities should follow guidance published by the Environment Agency on how to prepare an SFRA (available **here**). SFRAs are based on detailed computer modelling, but they are only as good as the information fed into them. Local knowledge can be crucial, particularly about **surface water flooding** or **culverts** and **ordinary watercourses** that have not been mapped. Unfortunately, Local Planning Authorities are only required to consult the Environment Agency and the area’s **Lead Local Flood Authority** during the preparation of an SFRA, but if you are concerned that the

Case study

Objecting to a proposal for development that will increase flood risk

What was the problem?

A housing **developer** submitted a planning application for 50 new dwellings in a small rural village. The site was open farmland on slightly higher ground to 30 existing homes which had a history of flooding associated with surface water run-off.

The local community had previously set up a **Flood Action Group** to help monitor the flood risk that they faced. When the planning application was submitted, the Flood Action Group downloaded the relevant documents from the council's website and assessed the quality of the proposed development and whether it would worsen the village's existing flooding issues.

Upon inspection, they found that the proposed development would be likely to increase the flood risk as the development of farmland would significantly reduce how much water could soak into the ground – which would probably cause an increase in run-off down the hill towards the existing nearby houses.

What did the community do?

The Flood Action Group consulted a hydrologist, who, after examining the developer's plans, confirmed that this was likely to be the case, provided the group with technical advice, and prepared evidence to support their argument. The Flood Action Group used this to encourage other residents to submit objections to the council in response to the planning application. In total, the council received approximately 250 objections from residents.

The Flood Action Group also arranged for 50-60 local residents to attend a meeting of the **County Council's planning committee** during which the planning application was to be discussed and voted on by **councillors**. Those attending made their concerns known to the committee, and two representatives from the Flood Action Group and the local Parish Council presented their arguments. As a result, planning permission was refused.

SFRA does not reflect the flood risk in your area you should contact your Local Planning Authority immediately.

To make your case, you will need to compile evidence which demonstrates that what you are saying is correct. This could be in the form of records of historic flood events or heavy rainfall events. Photographs are particularly effective. Furthermore, to be most effective you need to do more than just say 'no' to a site being allocated for development in the Local Plan that you think will make the flood risk worse. It will help if you can show what kind of policy **could** make the area safe over the long term or identify locations where you think development **would** be appropriate. Remember that planners are under lots of pressure from national government to grant **planning permission** for new homes – and these new homes have to go somewhere. There are many examples of practical things that Local Plans can require to reduce flood risk, and Briefing 1 gives an outline of the kinds of practical measures that you could ask for. Badly

planned development can make flood risk worse for existing communities, but the right design of a new development can help to manage the flood risk for surrounding places.

What are my rights to be heard in the plan-making process?

The most important way that you can make sure that your opinions are considered during the drafting of the Local Plan is to respond to the **public consultation**. You can submit an individual response and/or a joint response on behalf of a community group, such as a Flood Action Group.

If you make a formal objection to a draft Local Plan, normally by using an online form, you have a legal right to be heard at the **Public Examination** of the plan, if you wish. This means that you could play an active part in the debate on flood risk policy for your area and would have the opportunity to make your point directly to the Planning Inspector.

Friends of the Earth have published some useful guidance on community rights in the **planning system**, which is available [here](#).

A word of warning about viability testing

The biggest challenge that you will face in trying to get the right policy in a Local Plan is dealing with the question of who is going to pay for it. The Environment Agency supports a range of flood defence projects, some of which are also backed by private sector investment.

However, most policies that can make places safer from flood risk require housebuilders to build to higher standards. Through the **viability test**, developers can argue that these costs make their schemes 'unviable' by reducing their profit margins or by reducing the price paid to landowners.

This viability issue is often used to bewilder local members of the public, and it is very complex. To help you with this there are a few things that it is useful to be aware of:

- The **National Planning Policy Framework** states that developers are not allowed to use the price they paid for the land as an excuse for not meeting Local Plan requirements. In other words, if the developer paid too much for the land, then that is their problem and not an excuse for not building to the right standard.
- Developers must make their viability tests available for members of the public to see – so you have an opportunity to see how much money is being made and whether the assessments are fair.

What to do if your Local Plan is not currently being reviewed

Changing a plan once it has been adopted

If a Local Plan has just been adopted and you don't think it is good enough, your options are limited. There is an annual review of the Local Plan and Local Planning Authorities can agree to review particular parts of plan, but otherwise there can be a three- to five-year wait before a new plan is made.

Instead, it may be more effective to use the flexibility that the Local Planning Authority has to make decisions on issues not included in the plan. These are known as **material considerations**. So new evidence on flood risk could be used to challenge development in a location agreed in the Local Plan – but you will need to make a strong case, and it can help to have your evidence verified by experts.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Your local authority can produce more detailed guidance on specific topics to sit alongside the Local Plan – these are called **Supplementary Planning Documents**. Sometimes they may be specific to certain development sites, or they may take the form of **design codes**. Supplementary Planning Documents must be linked to policy within the Local Plan and, although they must be considered when a decision on a planning application is being made, they have less legal weight than the Local Plan itself.

There is no fixed process for preparing these documents other than that they have to be signed off by elected councillors – but the community should always be involved. Flood risk is a topic frequently addressed in Supplementary Planning Documents.

Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood Plans are community-led plans for a small local area. Once they are agreed they have to be considered alongside the Local Plan when decisions on planning applications are made. If you live in an area with a **Parish Council** or **Town Council**, then these organisations can, if they choose, prepare Neighbourhood Plans. In cities you can set up your own **Neighbourhood Forum**, if one does not exist already, which can prepare the plan with the approval of your council. Neighbourhood Plans can set out the detail of smaller-scale development sites and set policies on good design.

At the moment most of these plans do not deal with flood risk, but there is no reason why they could not. There is no point in a Neighbourhood Plan duplicating the content of a Local Plan – but they do allow communities affected by flooding to set out their own vision for the future of their neighbourhood, based on local needs and knowledge. However, they cannot be used as a mechanism to stop development completely in an area; nor can they be used to oppose development already agreed in a Local Plan or which has planning permission.

There is extensive guidance on how to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, including some official government guidance (available [here](#)).

Those who are interested in addressing climate change, including flood risk, may find it useful to consult Locality's publication, *How to Consider the Environment in Neighbourhood Plans* (available [here](#)), and the Centre for Sustainable Energy's *Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency* (available [here](#)).

Glossary

25 Year Environment Plan

Strategy document, published in 2018, setting out the UK government's plan for improving the natural environment over a 25-year period – available [here](#). It includes actions aimed at creating better habitats for wildlife, improving air and water quality, and reducing the amount of plastic in the ocean.

Canalisation

The straightening, deepening and widening of a natural river channel to increase flow capacity so that flood water is carried away more quickly. However, it may increase **flood risk** further downstream and can also have a negative impact on river ecosystems.

Change of use

The conversion of a building from one type of use to another, for example from a commercial use to residential use. Until very recently, change of use usually required **planning permission**.

Climate change

The long-term change in weather due to human activity. Global temperatures are continuing to increase, and extreme weather events are becoming more common.

Climate Change Act 2008

UK legislation that includes a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050.

Climate change allowances

Predictions of anticipated change in peak river flow, peak rainfall intensity and sea level rise caused by future **climate change**. **Local Planning Authorities** must consider local climate change allowances when preparing **Strategic Flood Risk Assessments**. Climate change allowances are also known as flood risk allowances.

Climate Change Committee

Independent organisation that advises the UK government on how the nation should reduce greenhouse emissions and cope with the impacts of **climate change** – see [here](#).

Coastal erosion

The loss of land along the coast due to the action of waves, tides, currents, and wind-driven sea water over time. Over a long period it is possible that homes and even whole villages will fall into the sea as the land retreats.

Coastal flooding

Seawater flooding of an area of land on the coast, often caused by a severe storm which forces excessive quantities of sea water onto the land.

Coastal Protection Authority

District and **Unitary Authorities** in coastal areas are designated as Coastal Protection Authorities. They have the responsibility of co-ordinating **coastal erosion** risk management activities in their area, including drawing up a **Shoreline Management Plan**.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

A charge that local authorities can require **developers** to pay as part of granting **planning permission** for new development. It is used to pay for the improvements to local infrastructure needed to support the increase in population and other impacts of new development. Further information is available **here**.

Consultation (or Public consultation)

The process through which a public body, such as the government or a local authority, invites members of the public to give their opinion on proposals that are likely to affect their lives – such as a draft **Local Plan**.

Councillor

An elected member of a council.

County Council

A form of elected local government for a county area, responsible for functions such as education, but also minerals and waste planning.

Culvert

A man-made structure that allows water to flow underneath a road, footpath, or railway line. Culverts can become blocked by debris, which may cause flooding.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

The UK government department responsible for housing, communities and local government in England (formerly known as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government).

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

The UK government department responsible for safeguarding the natural environment, supporting the food and farming industry, and supporting the rural economy.

Design code

A set of rules dictating what a new **development** should look like.

Developer/property developer

A company that purchases land to be used for new development, such as housing and, usually, undertakes the building of (for example) houses and the development of other infrastructure.

Development

Building on or carrying out other industrial activities on an area of land. In the **planning system**, it most often refers to the building of new homes.

Development control (or Development management)

The process of approving or rejecting applications for **planning permission**.

District Council

A form of elected local government for a rural or urban district, with local planning among its responsibilities (some district-level councils are formally named borough councils or city councils).

Environment Agency

Public body with oversight of the management of all sources of flooding and **coastal erosion** – although it is directly responsible only for managing the risk of flooding from **main rivers**, reservoirs, estuaries, and the sea. It advises on **Strategic Flood Risk Assessments** and **site-specific flood risk assessments**, and on the appropriateness of a proposed **development**.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The process of collecting information about the impact a proposed **development** on the environment. The results are considered by the **Local Planning Authority** when deciding whether to grant **planning permission**.

Examination (or Public Examination)

Meeting held to assess whether a **Local Plan** follows national law, **policy**, and procedure. It is run by the **Planning Inspectorate** and provides an opportunity for members of the public to voice concerns about draft planning policies and suggest amendments, based on evidence.

Exception Test

A test undertaken as part of the process of granting **planning permission** in an area at risk of flooding. If the **Sequential Test** shows that it is not possible to develop in a lower-risk area, the Exception Test is used to assess whether the wider benefits of building in a location with higher risk outweigh the disbenefits from the **flood risk**.

Flash flooding

Rapid flooding of low-lying areas. It may be caused by heavy rainfall or by meltwater from heavy snow or ice. The impact is usually worse in built-up areas, where there are fewer permeable surfaces for the flood water to drain away.

Flood Action Group (FAG)

A group formed by people living within a community threatened by the risk of flooding. Flood Action Groups act as a representative voice for their wider community when working with their **Local Planning Authority** and in influencing the **planning system** on matters concerning local **flood risk**.

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England

A document (issued in 2020) setting out what needs to be done by all Risk Management Authorities involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management in England – see **here**.

Flood and Water Management Act 2010

UK legislation introduced to improve the nation's approach to the management of **flood risk** and **coastal erosion**. Further information is available **here**.

Flood defences

Structures designed to prevent flooding or control flood water in order to minimise the harm to people and property.

Floodplain

A flat, low-lying area next to a body or bodies of water prone to flooding.

Flood risk

The combination of the likelihood of a flood event occurring and the impact that the flood would have if it did occur.

Flood Risk Management Strategy

A document produced by the **Lead Local Flood Authority** which assesses **flood risk** for the whole area, sets objectives for the management of flood risk, outlines the responsibilities of **Risk Management Authorities**, lists the costs and benefits of measures proposed to meet the objectives, and sets out how these measures will be funded.

Flood Zone

A system of four Flood Zones – called 1, 2, 3a, and 3b – is used to indicate the probability of **flood risk**, ignoring the presence of any flood defence. Areas in Flood Zone 1 are least likely to flood, with areas in Flood Zone 3 most likely. A map on the **Environment Agency's** website indicates the Flood Zone in which a property is located – available **here**. Flood Zones do not take into account flood risk from sewers, ground or surface water, or reservoirs.

Fluvial flooding

Flooding caused when the water level in a river, ditch or stream overflows.

Groundwater flooding

Flooding caused by a rise in the level of underground water (known as the water table) to above ground level, as a result of prolonged or heavy rainfall. Groundwater flooding tends to happen gradually and can last much longer than other types of flooding as the water cannot drain into the saturated ground.

Internal Drainage Board

An authority established in areas of special drainage need in England and Wales, with powers to improve water level management in their particular area, known as an internal drainage district.

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

An area's Lead Local Flood Authority is either the **County Council** or the **Unitary Authority**. Lead Local Flood Authorities are responsible for providing advice on how **developments** manage surface water drainage and use **sustainable drainage systems**, and on the management of **flood risk** from **groundwater** and **surface water**. They are required to comment on all major **planning applications** with regard to flood risk from 'local' sources of flooding, such as surface water, groundwater, and **ordinary watercourses**.

Local Plan

The plan for future development in your local area, prepared by the **Local Planning Authority**. It includes maps of where new housing, other **development** and infrastructure are to go, and also contains **policies** prescribing the sort of things that can and cannot be built and rules on the quality of anything that is built. A **planning application** will be accepted much more easily if it is in line with the Local Plan. But **planning permission** can be given to proposals in areas not allocated in the plan if a substantial case is made. Further information is available **here**.

Local Planning Authority (LPA)

The council (or National Park Authority in some cases) that carries out planning functions for your local area. In areas where there is both a **County Council** and a **District Council**, it is the District Council that prepares the **Local Plan**.

London Borough Council

The Local Planning Authority for the London boroughs.

Main river

Main rivers are the main watercourses shown on the statutory main river maps drawn up by the **Environment Agency** and the **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**.

Major development

For residential development, any **development** consisting of ten or more residential units.

Material consideration

A planning term for something that should be taken into account when deciding whether to grant **planning permission** – such as the risk of flooding. Almost anything that relates to **development** or the use of land is capable of being a material consideration, but it will need to relate to the **National Planning Policy Framework** or **Planning Practice Guidance** to be taken seriously.

Minor development

For residential development, any **development** consisting of nine or fewer residential units.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Document setting out the government's planning policies in England, and outlining how they should be applied. The NPPF must be taken into account by the **Local Planning Authority** when drawing up a **Local Plan** and in making decisions on **planning applications**. The NPPF is available **here**.

Natural flood management

The use of natural processes to minimise the impact of flood events. Examples include restoring bends in rivers to allow more water to be carried, and changing the way that land is managed so that the soil can absorb more water.

Neighbourhood Forum

A body formed either by a **Town Council** or a **Parish Council** (where one exists) or by local people for the purpose of producing a **Neighbourhood Plan**.

Neighbourhood Plan

A document produced by the local community, as represented by a **Neighbourhood Forum**, which sets out planning **policies** for a local area and is used by the **Local Planning Authority** when deciding whether to approve or deny a **planning application**.

Ombudsman

An independent official appointed to investigate complaints by members of the public against a company or an organisation.

Ordinary watercourse

Any watercourse not designated as a **main river**.

Parish Council

A form of local government – not present in all locations – based on civil parishes and with varying but limited powers. Parish Councils and **Town Councils** form the lowest tier of local government in the UK.

Permission in principle

Certain types of land (such as brownfield land) can be granted **planning permission** in principle, where the concept of **development** on that site is pre-approved but the details are not confirmed. Before starting to build on this land, **developers** have to submit to the **Local Planning Authority** limited details of what they intend to do.

Permitted development rights (PDR)

Certain changes to a building can be made without the need to apply for **planning permission**, under what are termed permitted development rights, although, in most cases, the risk of flooding must still be taken into account.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

A key piece of UK legislation within the planning system and on the compulsory purchase of land. It is of particular relevance as it places a legal duty on local authorities to address climate change.

Planning appeal

The process through which a **developer** or individual making a **planning application** can appeal against a planning decision, including the decision by a **Local Planning Authority** to reject the application. In England, appeals are processed and decided by the **Planning Inspectorate**.

Planning application

A document (physical or electronic) completed by a person, a group of people or an organisation to request permission from the **Local Planning Authority** to build something new or make a change to an existing building or structure.

Planning committee

A panel of local **councillors** at a **Local Planning Authority** who consider each **planning application** and vote on whether to grant **planning permission**.

Planning condition

Rather than refusing a **planning application**, a **Local Planning Authority** can grant **planning permission**, but with conditions that must be met by the **developer**.

Planning Inspector

A planning expert employed by the **Planning Inspectorate** to provide independent scrutiny of plans (such as **Local Plans**) before they can be adopted. Planning Inspectors also preside over **Examinations** of plans and decisions, and **planning appeals** on and inquiries into decisions that have been made.

Planning Inspectorate (PINS)

The national government agency responsible for **planning appeals**, national infrastructure **planning applications** and the **examination** and approval of **Local Plans**.

Planning officer

A planning professional employed by a **Local Planning Authority** to process (and for certain types of application decide on the outcomes of) **planning applications** and develop planning **policy** and **Local Plans**.

Planning permission

Formal permission from a **Local Planning Authority** for either a new **development** or a change to an existing building.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National guidance on various topics of relevance to the **planning system**, including **climate change** and **flood risk**. It is intended to be read alongside the **National Planning Policy Framework** and must be considered by planners when preparing the **Local Plan** and in decision-making on **planning applications**. The full Planning Practice Guidance set is available **here**.

Planning system

The set of processes which together are intended to ensure that **development** happens in the right place and at the right time, to the benefit of people, the economy, and the environment. These processes are multiple, complex, and carried out by a number of different organisations – mostly public bodies.

Policy

A set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that have/has been officially established by national or local government.

Prior approval

A condition of certain types of **permitted development** is the submission of a **planning application** to the **Local Planning Authority** for its 'prior approval'. This process allows the Local Planning Authority to consider the proposal with regard to certain, pre-defined factors.

Public hearing

A formal meeting to hear community viewpoints, held as part of the process of drawing up a **Local Plan**.

Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

There are 12 Regional Flood and Coastal Committees in England. They work with the **Environment Agency** and other partners to understand local issues better.

Resilience

The capacity to withstand or recover from a disaster or emergency such as flooding.

Resilience Forum

A local partnership consisting of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the **Environment Agency**, and others. Resilience forums plan and prepare for incidents and emergencies. They identify risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.

Risk Management Authorities (RMAs)

Public bodies, including the **Environment Agency** and **Lead Local Flood Authorities**, who work with communities to manage the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, surface water, groundwater, and reservoirs.

Secretary of State

A senior Minister who is head of a UK government department.

Secretary of State call-in

The **Secretary of State** for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has the power 'call in' any **planning application** to decide the outcome on behalf of the **Local Planning Authority**. The Secretary of State can call in a planning application for any reason – however, such instances usually relate to applications considered to be of national significance.

Sequential Test

A planning test comparing a proposed **development** site with other available sites to determine which has the lowest **flood risk** and to explore whether development could be steered to lower-risk areas.

Sewer flooding

Flooding occurring when sewage or water leaks from a sewerage system or rises above ground level through drainage systems, toilets, sinks, or showers.

Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)

A document assessing the risks associated with coastal processes over a large area, and setting a framework to address these risks and manage the shoreline in ways that reduce the risks to people and the environment.

Site-specific flood risk assessment

An assessment of **flood risk** on and resulting from a **development** site, carried out either by or on behalf of a **developer** as part of a **planning application**. The **Local Planning Authority** receiving the planning application uses the assessment to help determine whether to grant or deny **planning permission**.

Statutory consultee

An organisation that must be consulted and provide a substantive response to a **Local Planning Authority** concerning a **planning application**, prior to a final decision being made.

Storm surge

A change in sea level caused by a storm. It can lead to extensive flooding and poses danger to people living in coastal areas. The main causes of a storm surge are low pressure and high winds – high winds push the seawater towards the coast, causing it to pile up there, and low pressure at the centre of the storm can also 'pull' the water up. Strong winds in the storm can also generate large waves on top of the surge, which can cause damage to sea defences or spill over their tops, adding to the **flood risk**.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The process of collecting information about the environmental impact of the **policies** included in a draft **Local Plan**. It is undertaken at the plan-making stage.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

The process of collecting information about the risk to an area from flooding from all sources, now and in the future, taking account of the impacts of **climate change**. It assesses the impact that land use changes and **development** in the area will have on **flood risk**. **Environment Agency** guidance on producing a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is available [here](#).

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

A document produced by a **Local Planning Authority** providing further information for **developers** on how policies detailed in the **Local Plan** are to be implemented.

Surface water flooding

Surface water flooding occurs when water that has fallen onto the ground flows over impermeable surfaces, or accumulates in low spots, and the capacity of drainage systems is exceeded. It is very difficult to predict, as it is usually caused by very localised, intense storms which overwhelm surface water sewers and drainage systems. These **flash floods** typically occur and then disappear in a short space of time, but they can still be devastating if they get into our homes. The risk of surface water flooding can be exacerbated by sealing previously permeable surfaces (paving over gardens and other green spaces, for example), with the result that water can no longer soak away into the ground.

Sustainable drainage system (SuDS)

A drainage system in which water does not flow directly into the sewer network. Instead, water is stored locally, thus reducing the risk of **surface water flooding**. High-quality SuDS schemes include trees and/or other vegetation and provide other landscape and amenity benefits for local communities, but sometimes schemes referred to as a SuDS are just a concrete storage tank underneath a car park.

Town Council

A form of local government – not present in all locations – for small municipalities, operating with varying but limited powers. **Parish Councils** and Town Councils form the lowest tier of local government.

Unitary Authority

A form of elected local government responsible for providing all local government services for that area.

Viability test

A test carried out during the **planning application** process to determine whether it is viable for **developers** to deliver the other measures requested by the **Local Planning Authority** alongside the proposed **development**. It has been widely criticised for allowing landowners and developers to claim to be unable to contribute towards infrastructure costs and affordable housing, thus undermining **policy** requirements and maximising land value and profits at the expense of local communities.



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