

# **PAS Conference: Day 1 Workshop**

## **Strategic Planning is back – what it is and what it means for you?**

**Thursday 26 February**

# Workshop Agenda

- Introductions and warm up (10 mins)
- Strategic Planning Overview (20 mins)
  - PAS Strategic Planning Speed Briefing
  - What it means for Local Planning Authorities
- Four Corners Exercises (30 mins)
- Feedback – Common Themes (7 mins)
- Take-aways and Close (8 mins)



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# Warm up Exercise

How are you feeling about the return of Strategic Planning?

- All stand
- Score how you feel about strategic planning – 1-5
- Starting at 1 (terrible) running through to 5 (best thing since sliced bread)



# Strategic Planning Speed Briefing

## Context

- **Regional Plans revoked in 2011** - for imposing top-down, "Soviet-style" targets.
- **15 years without strategic planning outside London**
- Subsequent low levels of housing delivery



# Why is Strategic Planning important to the Government

Government priorities:

- **Boost housing delivery** – 1.5m homes
- Speed up delivery of **strategic infrastructure**
- Create conditions for **economic growth**
- Have a more **coordinated approach** to development and infrastructure
- Ambition for **full coverage by 2029**



# Strategic Planning: 2026

## Main Legislation and Policy

[Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025](#) – to be brought into force and incorporated into the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 (expected June 26). Return of strategic planning – spatial development strategies

[English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2025](#) – pending and still before Parliament . Sets Mayoral powers and geographies for strategic planning. Current consultation

[Consultation NPPF](#) – National Strategic planning policies including PM1 SDSs and PM14 Examining SDSs



# Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and NPPF – Top 10 Facts

- 1. Introduces Mandatory requirement to prepare Spatial Development Strategies** Combined authorities are required to produce an SDS. In areas without a combined authority, the duty falls to upper-tier county councils and unitary authorities
- 2. Strategic Planning Boards established by SoS** – where prepared by a group of upper tier authorities.
- 3. Majority Voting for SDS adoption**
- 4. Ministerial Intervention** – timetables, preparation or specific content
- 5. Hierarchy of Plans** – SDS align with national policy, Local Plans must comply with SDS

# Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and NPPF – Top 10 Facts

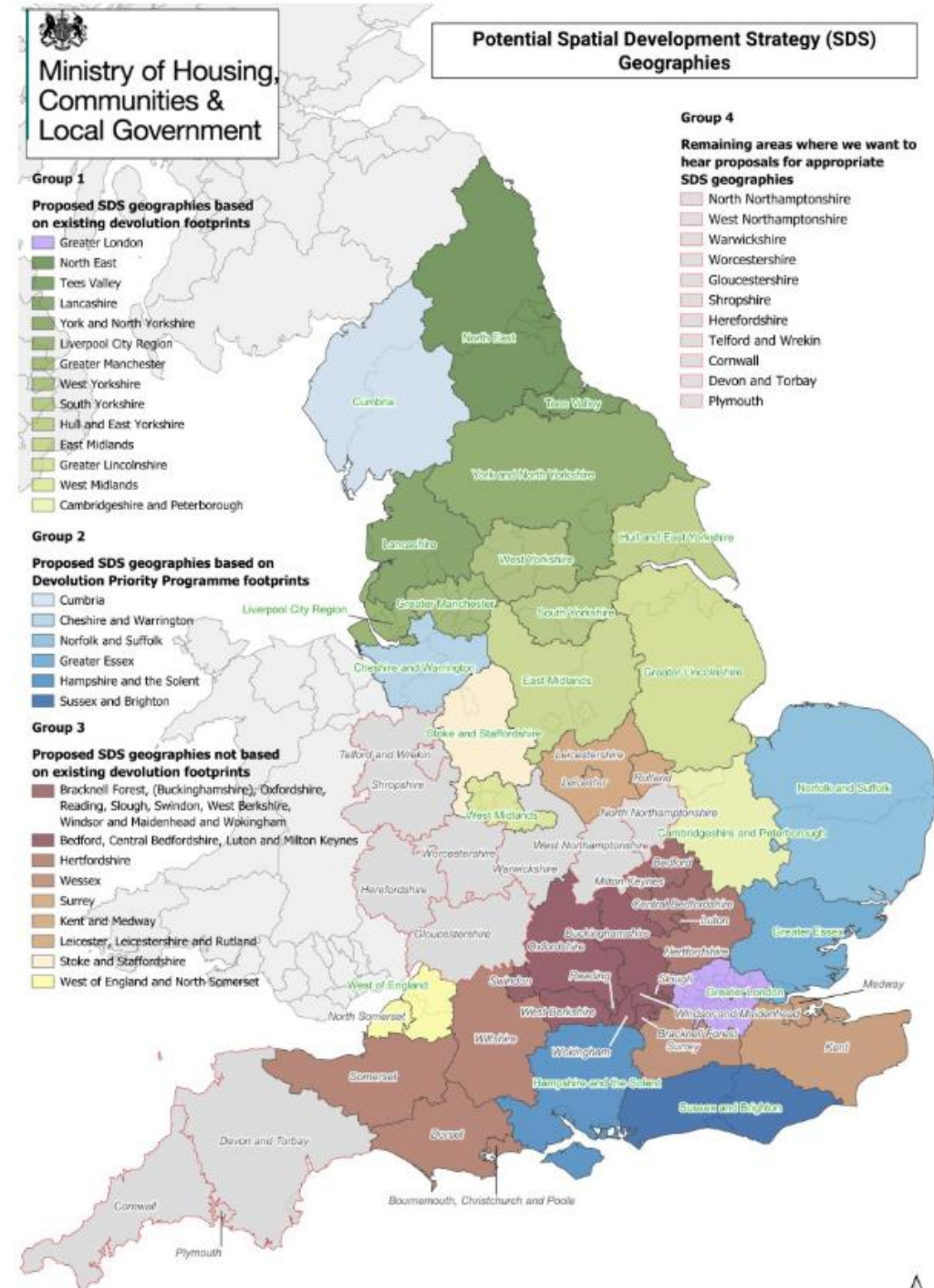
- 6. SDSs will be succinct and focused on strategic matters** – it is not a big local plan. It will set the spatial framework for area – positive vision for future growth and change at a sub-regional scale. Genuinely strategic – e.g. can identify broad locations (not allocate site)
- 7. Topics to be covered include** – housing and apportionment, strategic infrastructure, green belt, grow the economy, climate mitigation and adaptation, nature resilience and health.
- 8. SDS will help deliver key strategies** including Local Growth Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- 9. Independent Examination by PINs** – tests in draft NPPF (positive, appropriate, effective and consistent with national policy)
- 10. Alterations to SDS at least every 5 years** – to reflect changes to housing requirements (at least 20 year time horizon)

# English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2025

- **Pending:** currently before Parliament
- **Complements** the PIA
- **Establishes Mayoral Strategic Areas** – geography of strategic planning
- **Mayoral powers** – to be introduced including mayoral call-in powers and mayoral development orders and mayoral CIL
- **Consultation on SDS Geographies** underway until 26 March 2026

# Consultation proposed geographies

- Commenced on 12 February 26 – finishes 26 March 26
- **Green** – Existing 13 combined authorities
- **Pink** – Greater London
- **Blue** – Devo priority programme (agreed)
- **Brown and yellow** – proposed strategic geographies
- **Grey** – areas where government seeking proposals for sensible geographies – Midlands and SW





## Authority Role: Governance, Decision-Making, Engagement

Re-establishes a strategic tier clarifying what is decided sub-regionally vs locally within the Development Plan.	Triggers new or evolving governance — interim arrangements may precede formal SPA/combined authority structures; decision gateways gain prominence.
Role shifts across partners — LPAs, counties/combined authorities, national agencies — with increased cross-boundary collaboration.	Greater need for member engagement and organisational narratives as devolution/LGR changes take effect.
A wider stakeholder footprint — infrastructure, utilities, investors, health, transport becomes routine.	Formal collaboration records (e.g., SoCG/MoUs) carry more weight in demonstrating alignment and audit trails.
Shadow Planning governance + dedicated Transition PMO - roles, decision-rights, risks and dependencies explicit through LGR into early SDS.	Re-design of committees — need to consider two-tier, rules-based model under the Planning & Infrastructure Act 2025; dovetail EDCE Bill via fast, advisory area committees (advisory only, SLA-bound). Mandatory member training (probity/NDMP/SDS).
Anticipate strategic oversight/call-in by mayoral/strategic authorities	Complex and tight transition timeline affecting plan production (and everything else) (shadow unitary elections May 2027; inaugural mayoral elections May 2028 in Devolution Priority areas) to avoid mid-course rewiring.

# Local Plans

## SDS + Local Plans

SDS + Local Plans act as parts of the Development Plan — strategic policies set parameters that LPs translate locally.

## Timetabling Interdependence

Timetabling interdependence increases — LP review cycles may need to adjust to SDS milestones and transitional arrangements.

## Policy Scope

Policy scope re-balances — strategic matters shift to SDS; LPs emphasise place-specific detail and implementation.

## Evidence Expectations

Evidence expectations shift — proportionate, strategic-level evidence at SDS needs to be managed as a system.

## Cross-boundary Issues

Cross-boundary issues MOUs etc. SOCG — infrastructure corridors, HMAs/FEAs, environmental networks.

## Critical Operational Challenges

- Member/officer alignment across authorities becomes more critical to manage trade-offs and examination readiness.
- Running two plan systems in parallel during LGR roadmapping consolidation of district LPs into a unitary-wide plan while aligning with emerging SDS.
- Data standards and shared evidence across partners; need for MoUs/DSAs to eliminate duplication and support operational working/credibility.
- Multiple dependencies and critical pathways through Vesting Day → pre-mayor period.
- Delivery risk while plans evolve and transition/transformation of council progresses — destabilising DM performance/milestones

# Resources (Time and Resources)



## Multidisciplinary Core

Rising demand for a multidisciplinary core — policy, programme management, data/GIS, engagement.



## Short-term Pressures

Short-term resourcing pressures — SDS start-up coincides with ongoing LP commitments.



## Skills Gaps

Skills gaps become more visible — strategic evidence commissioning, digital, data stewardship, investment/delivery literacy.



## Data/Digital Foundations

Data/digital foundations shift from optional to prerequisite for scenarios, transparency and monitoring.



## Risk Exposure

Risk exposure changes — legislative timing, elections and LGR can affect schedules, costs and decision sequencing.



## Collaboration Overhead

Collaboration overhead increases — joint evidence and shared governance, with long-term efficiencies once aligned.



## LGR PMO

LGR PMO — capacity drain and distraction for senior colleagues/operational collaborators.

# Place & Investment

SDS is treated as a policy document rather than a place-making and investment proposition, it lacks strategic authority and fails to attract partners; investor confidence erodes without a clear, outcome-focused Place Vision.

## **Place Vision delayed (MCAs)**

Absent clear qualitative and quantitative outcomes, trade-offs become politicised, scenario testing lacks anchor points, and the plan reads as a loose set of aspirations.

## **Unclear infrastructure sequencing data (Baseline/Pipeline)**

Without early visibility of strategic infrastructure and coordination with national agencies and neighbours, investment is duplicated, sequencing breaks, and delivery windows are missed.

## **Lack of dependency/systems thinking integrations**

Strategic dependencies not clearly mapped and risk managed

## **Delivery & Investment Framework not integrated across plans and owned at a council/sub regional level**

Lacking a clear funding, delivery partner, and sequencing narrative, the SDS doesn't provide coherent pipeline/appears unbankable; without accessible evidence and investable place stories, the market remains sceptical.

# Four Corners Exercise

## Working in four groups

- **Start with your theme** – three per positives and 3 challenges - for how you think strategic planning will impact you against your group theme area.
- **This needs to be agreed by group** – 6 mins only then rotate clockwise on the teacher's whistle to the next theme.
- Critique/comment on the next table's bullet points add dots when you agree, add bullet if anything missed
- Facilitator stays with the flipchart and feeds back

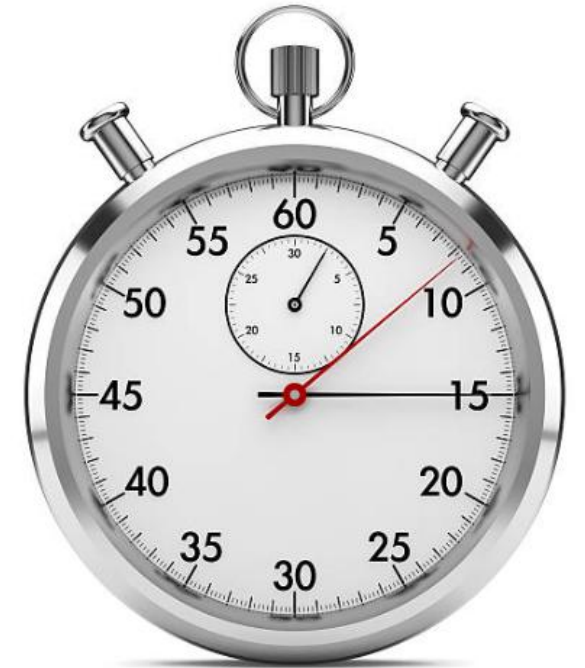
## Themes:

- How will strategic planning affect your authority's role –such as governance, decision-making, engagement?
- How will strategic planning affect your local plan?
- How will strategic planning affect time and resources?
- How strategic planning will impact on place and investment?

# Five Minute Feedback

## Facilitators feedback on Themes

**TOP 3 Challenges** against each theme agreed by the four groups



# Take-aways for PAS and Finish

- Tell us what do you would like for support from PAS - Use post-its or cards
- Take a look at our [LGA Local Government Reorganisation Toolkit](#). LGA webinar on 2-3.15pm 4 March
- Close