

Planning for Localism

A 5 Point Plan for Local Government

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Take Stock

1. Pause for thought
2. Understand the new drivers of decision making
3. Consider each policy priority separately
4. Define and assess the options
5. Shape your action plan



Engage Effectively to Deliver Leadership

1. Audit current relationships
2. Map the key roles and responsibilities
3. Refresh your objectives and define key messages
4. Establish the engagement strategy
5. Capture feedback, respond and build effective dialogue



Re-focus your Spatial Strategy

1. Diagnose the impacts of changing policy drivers
2. Localise the planning benefits and impacts
3. Evidence the full sustainability portfolio
4. Define the planning strategy
5. Focus on hearts and minds



Deliver in an Age of Austerity

1. Respond to delivery pressures
2. Re-assess what development can provide
3. Maximise the potential of assets
4. Measure and promote the fiscal and wealth creation benefits of development
5. Gear up for new financing models



Harness the Opportunities

1. Keep up to speed
2. Be pro-active now
3. Seize opportunities
4. Lead at a time of uncertainty
5. Get ahead of the game for local advantage



Take Stock

The new coalition will be implementing radical reform of the planning system to deliver on localism. This presents a major opportunity for local government to seize the agenda for its localities, but with it comes new responsibilities that run in tandem with an unprecedented tightening of public spending and a sluggish domestic economy. Our 5 Point Plan suggests what you can do to prepare for the forthcoming changes and be better prepared.

In every locality there will be new drivers of decision making, particularly where strategic drivers came from the Regional Strategy. And because localism will enable the authority to give more weight to the unique circumstances of each situation, each opportunity (whether it is an area of regeneration, economic development or housing growth) should be considered separately. This may mean small or large changes to the spatial strategy for your area, and different pressures around specific development opportunities.



Engage Effectively to Deliver Leadership

Central to our 5 Point Plan is strong local leadership that focuses on engagement and relationship building. This relates to links that are vertical (to elected representatives, residents and business) and horizontal (with neighbouring authorities and sub-regional bodies) to deliver strategic leadership where the absence of Regional Strategy creates a vacuum.

A first step is to audit current relationships and establish the key roles and responsibilities, based on a clear understanding of how different people and organisations will exercise influence and control. This, as much as evidence base, will be important in refreshing objectives and defining the key messages for reinforced leadership.

Because local residents and other interest will be crucial, explore new models of engagement to secure a more balanced picture of the public interest in each locality. Think about how to capture the views of those who form part of the silent majority, as well as those who already participate.

The engagement strategy must be one with a reinforcing cycle that captures feedback, responds positively and builds effective dialogue.



Re-focus your Spatial Strategy

As the planning reforms take shape, new locally based objectives will be more important. You should assess how far, if at all, this will necessitate changes to the current spatial strategy and the associated process implications, to maintain progress on schemes that have good strategic fit. Be pro-active to give confidence to those seeking to deliver.

Where key tenets of plans flowed from regional strategies, these should be tested to establish a balanced view on localised benefits and impacts, better informing the local planning 'conversation'. The enhanced importance of 'sustainable development' as a test makes it more important to mainstream all sustainability impacts, addressing social and economic aspects with as much rigour as environmental ones.

Planning strategies will need to reflect not just a refresh of local objectives, but also a tougher economic and financial climate. These strategies and the work that supports them will need to engage hearts as well as minds, focusing on what local communities want and aspire to as well as technical arguments.



Deliver in an Age of Austerity

Local government will be reviewing corporate strategies in this age of austerity. Developers, although better positioned now than during the recession, still face a viability crunch. The economics of development will take time to recover, and many of the underlying drivers of the peak time boom will not return. However, properly and proportionately structured development can be an enabler for delivering some of the casualties of spending cuts.

In framing approaches to value capture you should think creatively about what development can deliver in the local community interest and re-assess restraint policies accordingly. Are there opportunities for development to combine with other funding streams or with the public sector assets to overcome future spending restraints?

Local government finance reform means the fiscal and wealth creation benefits of development need to be harnessed – how much will development mean for future costs and revenue? At the same time, you should explore how clarity and certainty in area-planning frameworks will support new financial instruments such as TIF.



Harness the Opportunities

With a new Government comes uncertainty about the extent and timing of change. We believe that with uncertainty comes opportunity.

Many localities, service providers and developers will not know how they will respond to the new planning reforms and the significant budget cuts. They will be looking to local government to exercise local leadership in tandem with their partners to map out a clear way forward in order to secure economic growth, environmental objectives, and wider policy goals. There are real opportunities for local authorities, developers and key stakeholders to work in partnership to chart a positive way forward.

Be pro-active and don't be afraid to lead from the front and offer new solutions and approaches within a new planning conversation. Localism gives greater flexibilities as well as responsibilities. If you don't do it, competitor localities will, potentially at the expense of your population and business base.

We hope our 5 Point Plan provides you with a framework for positive action to protect and enhance your wider policy objectives.

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