Local Plans and Climate Change

04 October 2025

Agenda

- Local plans and planning policy
- The plan making process and upcoming changes to the current system
- Climate change and sustainability in local plans
- Climate change mitigation
- Climate change adaptation

What is a local plan?

- A local plan is a Council’s main planning document.
- It sets out a vision and spatial strategy for how an area will develop, typically over a 15-year period from the date of the plan's adoption.
- Essentially a local plan contains policies and site allocations.
- Strategic and detailed policies.
- Site allocations are the specific sites or locations that will be developed over the lifetime of the plan.



Why do we have local plan?

- It is a legal duty for local planning authorities to prepare and maintain an up-to-date local plan.
- The planning system should be ‘plan-led’ and local plans are at the ‘heart of the planning system’.
- Local plans provide the policies against which development proposals and planning applications are assessed.
- Plans allow Council’s and local communities to shape the development that comes forward in their area and gives them greater control over the type and location of development.
- Local plan policies can address local issues that national policy cannot.
- Without a local plan national policy would apply making it is more difficult to influence inappropriate ‘speculative development’.

What do local plans plan for?

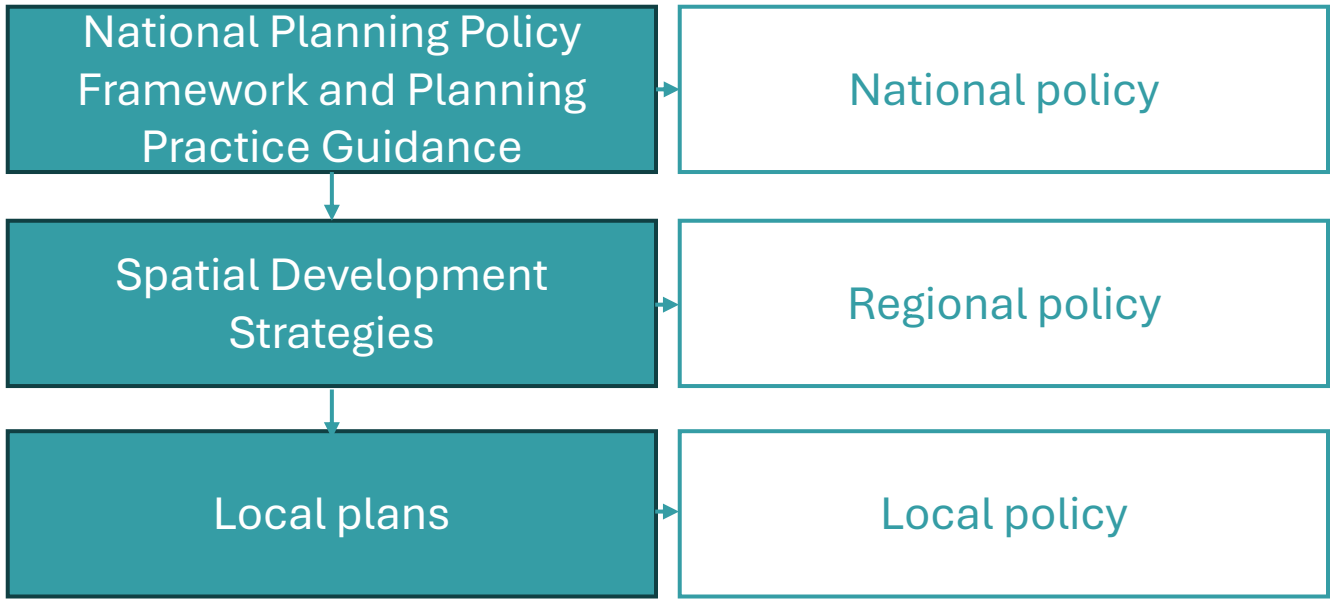
- A local plan is required to plan for meeting identified development needs primarily around the need for housing and employment floorspace and any infrastructure required to deliver it.



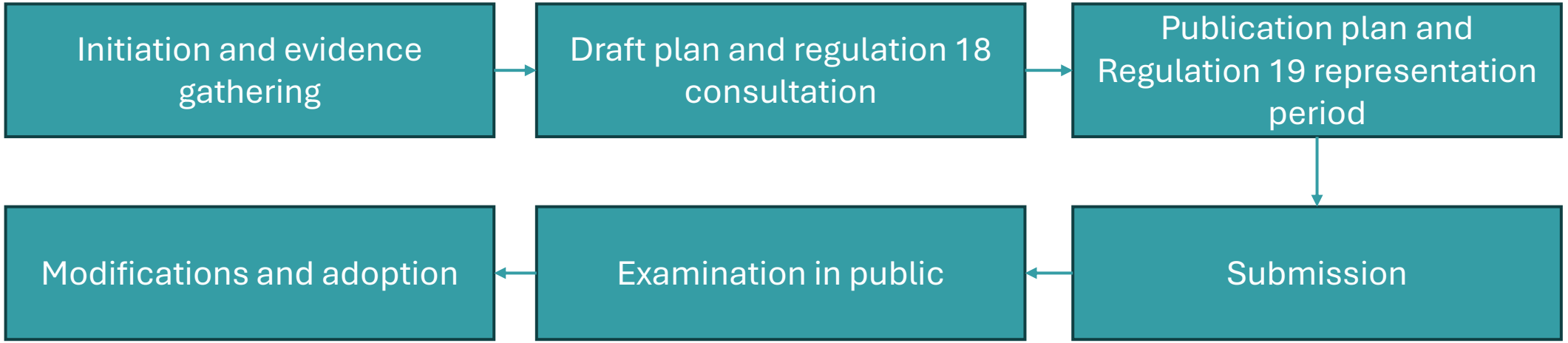


- This includes planning for a scale of development, determining where that development should be located and ensuring it can be delivered over the plan period.
- Local plans must balance growth needs with the protection of the natural and historic environment, as well as the character of an area.
- Local plans must be evidence based to justify policies and strategies.

What is the relationship between local plans and national policy?



How do we produce a local plan?



What are the tests of soundness?

- **Positively prepared** - based on a strategy that seeks to meet needs and requirements of neighbouring LPAs
- **Justified** - most appropriate strategy, when considered against reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence
- **Effective** - deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities
- **Consistent with the NPPF**

How can local plans influence climate change and sustainability?

- There is a legal requirement for local plans to contribute towards climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- The NPPF now requires the planning system to support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts and contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- Local plan policies must take a proactive approach to mitigation and adaptation.
- Evidence – studies to justify need for climate change policies as well as their impact on development.
- Soundness – will proposed policies meet the tests of soundness?

Carbon Emissions in Building:

'Upfront' Embodied Carbon and Operational Carbon



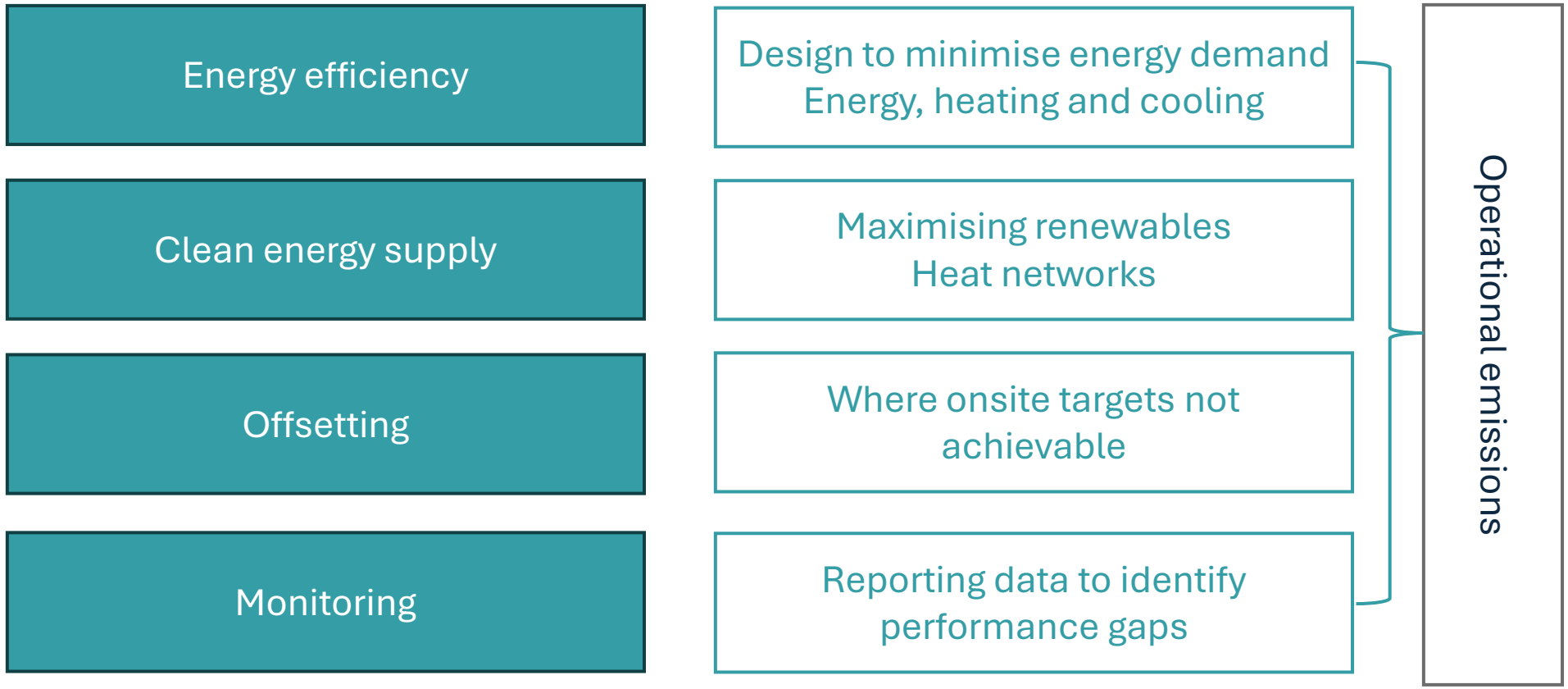
'Upfront' Embodied Carbon

Manufacture, transport and installation of construction materials

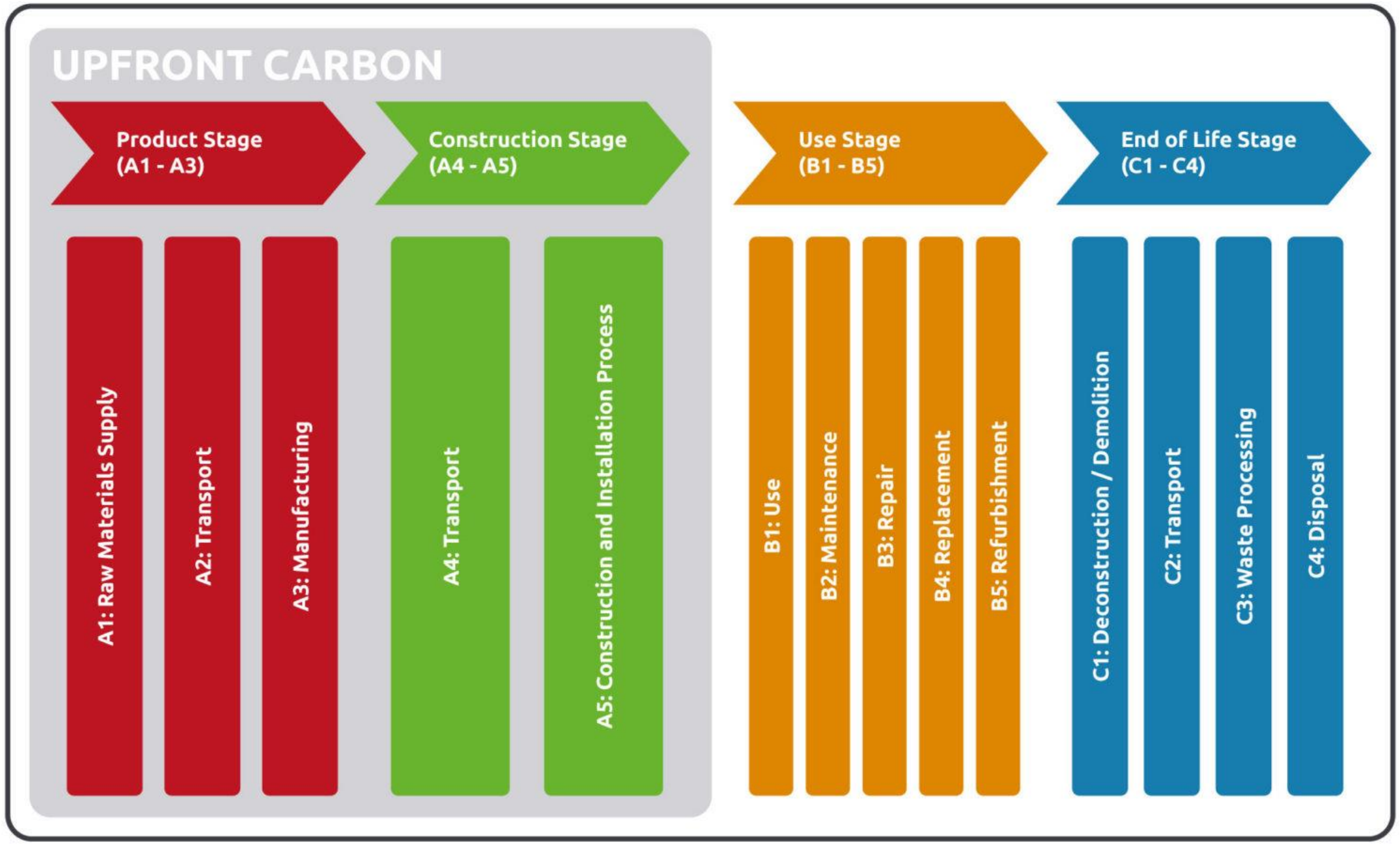
Operational Carbon

Building energy consumption

Regulated operational carbon emissions

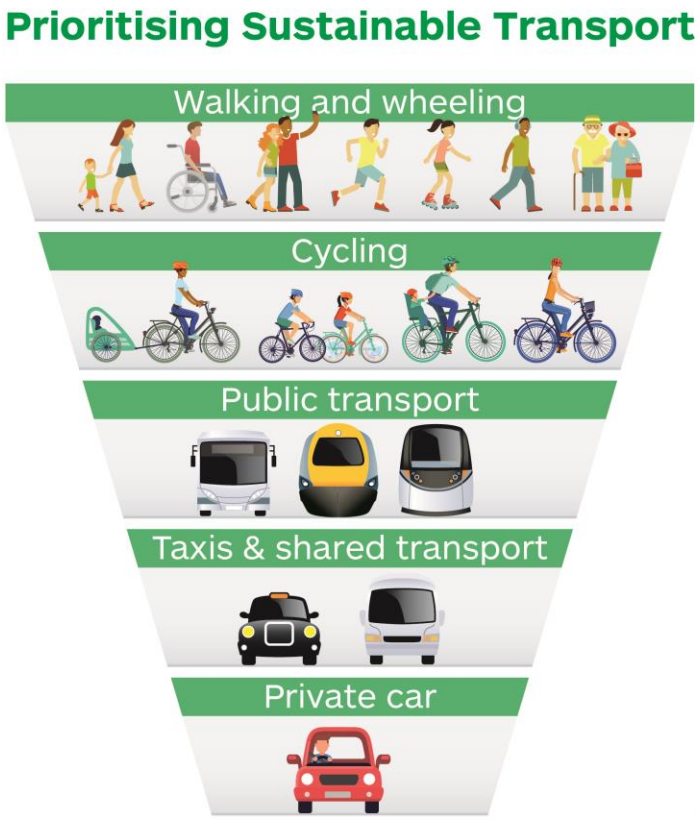


EMBODIED CARBON



Transport and air quality

- Locating development in sustainable locations
- Promoting active and sustainable transport
- Air quality



Climate change adaptation and resilience

- Flood risk and drainage
- Extreme weather
- Overheating risk
- Drought and fire



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (GI)

Green Infrastructure ONTARIO COALITION

Nature-based Solutions (NbS)/Nature-based Climate Solutions

Natural Infrastructure (NI)

Low Impact Development (LID)

NATURAL ASSETS:*
- Wetlands
- Forests
- Parks
- Meadows
- Lawns and gardens
- Soil

ENHANCED ASSETS:*
- Rain gardens
- Green roofs and walls
- Bioswales
- Urban trees
- Naturalized stormwater ponds

ENGINEERED ASSETS:*
- Permeable pavement
- Rain barrels
- Cisterns
- Perforated pipes
- Infiltration trenches

GREY INFRASTRUCTURE:*
- Bridges
- Roads
- Parking lots
- Culverts
- Pipes



Summary

Local plans

- Local plans are key planning documents that set out how an area will develop, typically over a 15-year period.
- They allow council's and communities to shape development of their area, but they must meet the requirements of national policy, including the tests of soundness, to be adopted.

Climate change and sustainability in local plans

- Climate change and sustainability policies can include a range of mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Measurable targets and standards are key to ensure policies are effective but also achievable.
- Policies must be viability tested and justified by evidence.

Thank you