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Re: Local Plan Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20)

This advice sets out ATE's expectations for the early stages of preparing new-style Local Plans. It aligns with MHCLG's [Local Plan guidance](#) and highlights the active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and public transport evidence needed to support plan-making.

ATE will provide bespoke advice at the Regulation 23 (Consultation on Proposed Local Plan Content and Evidence) and Regulation 27 (Consultation on the Proposed Local Plan) stages of the Local Plan process. ATE will also engage, where requested and appropriate, during the preparation of these documents.

Baseline Information

ATE expects Local Plans to be informed by a robust, data-led understanding of existing and future active travel and public transport networks, travel patterns and connectivity. Baseline work should establish current conditions, identify barriers and opportunities, and take account of planned transport infrastructure, services and policies.

Baseline evidence should include:

- Analysis of travel patterns and mode choice across different population groups and journey purposes.
- Mapping of existing and planned active travel networks, public transport services and key local amenities, including schools, parks, play areas, food shops, healthcare facilities and community facilities; together with an assessment of their connectivity by active travel and public transport, informed by the [DfT Connectivity Tool](#).
- Identification of existing deficiencies in connectivity, accessibility and mode share, and opportunities for improvement over the plan period.
- Identification of factors affecting the suitability and attractiveness of active travel and public transport, including route audits of networks serving potential strategic sites.
- Review of Local Transport Plans (LTPs), Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs), Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), and other relevant local transport and infrastructure strategies.

Vision

Local Plan visions should be informed directly by baseline findings and adopt a vision-led approach, consistent with national planning policy, that prioritises sustainable travel from the outset. The vision should seek to maximise journeys made by active travel and public transport, reduce reliance on private car travel, and support wider health, equality, climate and environmental objectives.

ATE expects vision statements to:

Commit to growth that improves health, wellbeing, quality of life and environmental outcomes through increased use of active travel and public transport, including measurable increases in active travel and public transport mode share over the plan period.

- Set clear and differentiated ambitions across settlements, neighbourhoods and accessibility contexts.
- Define the connectivity and infrastructure standards expected of new development, which should be consistent with Manual for Streets, Inclusive Mobility and Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design.
- Promote equality of access, inclusive design and affordable travel choices.
- Support environments that are safe, inclusive and accessible for all users, including women and girls.
- Support carbon reduction and wider environmental objectives through reduced dependence on private motor vehicle travel.

Evidence to Support the Spatial Strategy and Site Allocations

While the purpose of the baseline information is to establish existing conditions, future trends, constraints and opportunities, additional evidence is required to test options and demonstrate why the proposed spatial strategy and site allocations are the most effective means of delivering the Local Plan vision.

This should include:

- Forecasts of active travel and public transport demand that are aligned with mode share targets and reflect the characteristics of different places, settlement types and accessibility contexts.
- Demonstration that the proposed spatial strategy and site allocations have been informed by, and selected on the basis of, their ability to maximise access by active travel and public transport, minimise reliance on private car travel, and support mode shift.
- Demonstration of how the proposed strategy will improve connectivity and accessibility to key destinations, and address identified constraints and deficiencies.
- Identification of the active travel and public transport infrastructure and services required to support planned growth, together with evidence of their deliverability, including infrastructure requirements, costs, funding sources, phasing and implementation risks.
- Assessment of the cumulative impacts of proposed development on active travel and public transport networks, including cross-boundary impacts where relevant.

- Assessment of the contribution of the proposed strategy to public health, equality, inclusion, carbon reduction and wider environmental objectives.

Evidence gathering should continue throughout the Local Plan process, in line with MHCLG guidance.

Site Assessment

The initial site assessment exercise should consider the extent to which potential allocations can support and deliver the Local Plan vision and a vision-led transport strategy. This should include an assessment of a site's ability to:

- Maximise accessibility to key destinations by active travel and public transport.
- Support high levels of active travel and public transport use and minimise reliance on private car travel.
- Connect effectively to existing and planned active travel and public transport networks.
- Support the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure and services from an early stage of development.
- Contribute to the creation of complete, connected neighbourhoods and wider health, equality, climate and environmental objectives.

Where new or improved transport infrastructure is required, priority should be given to active travel and public transport interventions before consideration of highway capacity enhancements, in accordance with the transport hierarchy.

Further Engagement

ATE hopes that this advice is helpful at this stage of the Local Plan process. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this advice further, please contact us at Planning-Advice@activetraavelengland.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Spatial Planning Team,
Active Travel England