

Planning Aid for London

Factsheet

What is Planning?

Planning Aid for London

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Contents

Planning Aid for London Guide: What is Planning?	2
Who does what?	3
Why should you get involved?	4
How to get involved	5
Finding a local community group	5
Tips to remember	6
Further reading	7

Planning Aid for London Guide: What is Planning?

London is a city that is always changing and developing and planning plays a huge role in making that happen. We have developed this guide so that you can understand the basics of planning in England and why you should get involved. If you would like to find out more about planning in other parts of the UK and Northern Ireland, please visit [Planning Aid Scotland](#), [Planning Aid Wales](#) or [Community Spaces for planning in Northern Ireland](#).

This guide explains:

- What planning is
- Who is responsible for what
- Why you should care about planning
- How you can have a say and make changes in your neighbourhood

What is Planning?

Planning is about designing new homes, protecting buildings you value, improving parks, making space for local food and dealing with climate change. It can help to shape communities so that everyone can live a healthy life in a safe neighbourhood. Planning also determines if you can get building work done on your own home, such as roof extensions or change of use. When planning is done well, it can create places that work for people and help to bring communities together, but when it doesn't it can make people's lives harder and their health worse.

Planning is complicated, but with help and support, you can have a say and make positive changes in your neighbourhood.

Who does what?

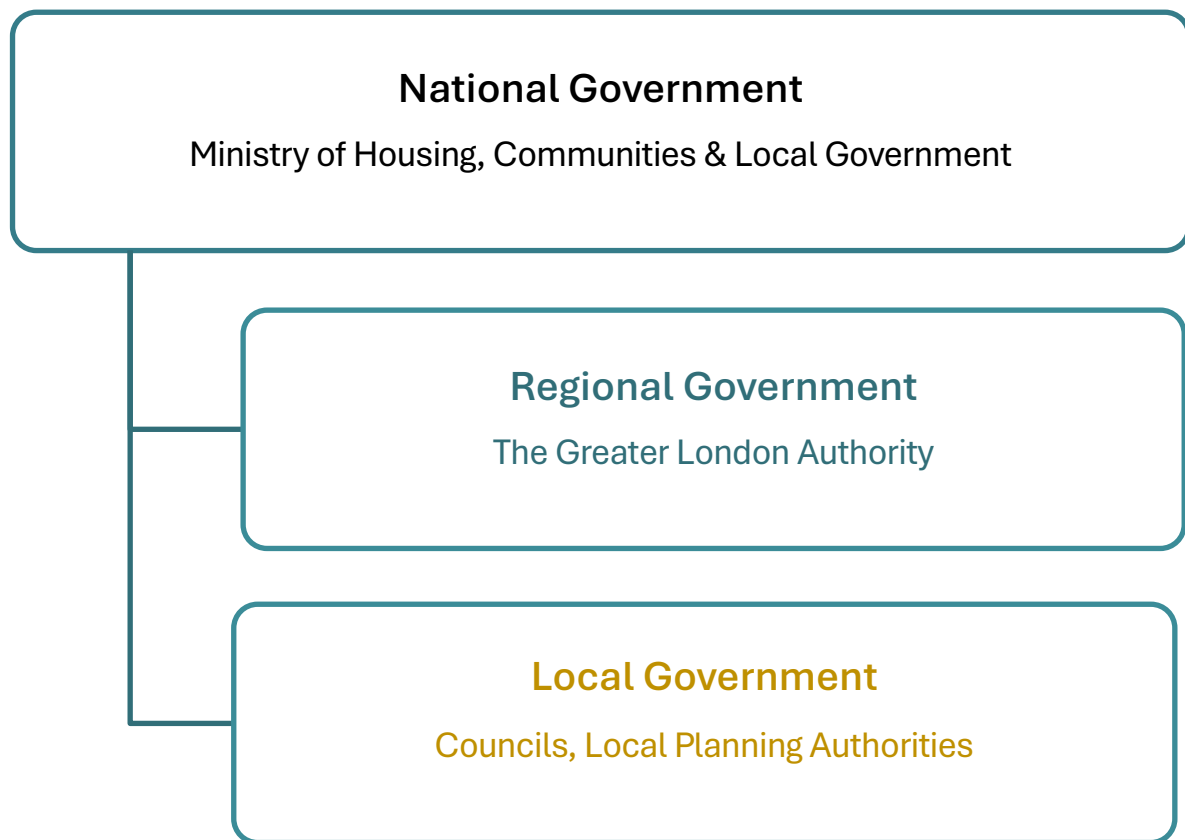


Figure 1 - a diagram of the English Planning System

The English planning system is governed by legislation, national government policy, regional (the Greater London Authority for London) and [Local Plans](#). Each level of government has its own responsibilities, but in short:

National Government: Has overall responsibility for planning policy in England. This is managed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. This department will update the National Planning Framework (NPPF) and other policies which regional and local government are expected to follow (for example housing targets). They can also call-in planning applications at local authority level if the application conflicts with national policy or is deemed nationally significant.

Regional Government: London has a devolved regional governance body called the Greater London Authority which is governed by the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. Their main planning duty is to update [the London Plan](#); a strategic document that sets out the framework for development and use of land (including green and grey belt land) in London. It also sets out the social, economic and environmental priorities of all 32 London boroughs and the City of London Corporation. They are also the planning authority in certain strategic sites such as the Olympic Park in Stratford and can [call-in](#)

[planning applications](#) from local authorities where the application is of Potential Strategic Importance. Policies in the London Plan must take National Government policy into account.

Local Government: Each London Council or Local Planning Authority (LPA) is responsible for determining planning applications for housebuilders and homeowners, undertaking planning enforcement and producing a Local Plan. A Local Plan is a document that sets out the development priorities for a borough for 10-15 years at a time. It is open to consultation from the public at two stages (Regulation 18 and Regulation 19) usually for six weeks. Any planning policy made at this level, must take Regional Government policy and National Government policy into account or they risk being called-in by either the Mayor of London or the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. On average, [it takes 7 years for a Council to produce a local plan](#) but National Government has plans to speed-up this process.

To summarise; most housing developments in an area or building work done on a single home will need planning permission. Your LPA decides on whether the application can be approved based on national policy and their Local Plan. The first time that most people become interested in planning is when they see a notice on a lamppost or receive a leaflet in the post from a housing developer. However, If you take notice at the Local Plan stage, you can make a difference at a strategic level!

Tip: We have free video guides to National Government, Regional Government and Local Government planning duties on our website!

<https://planningaidforlondon.org.uk/planning-library/guides-2/>

Why should you get involved?

Whilst council planning officers and planning committee members make a lot of the planning decisions for your neighbourhood, they also have a statutory responsibility to consult residents, community groups, local businesses and other consultees before approving a planning application. Though planning decisions might not always be made in your favour, if you choose not to get involved at all, you miss out on having influence on:

- The design of new buildings
- The number of new homes build in your neighbourhood
- Protecting a park or a community centre
- Protecting trees from development
- Protecting locally listed buildings

Tip: Sign up to our newsletter to find out about consultation opportunities in your area:

<https://planningaidforlondon.org.uk/contact/join-our-mailing-list/>

How to get involved

There are different ways you can have your say and get involved in planning. The five main ways to do so are:

- Respond to planning applications in your neighbourhood
- Report breaches of planning law and regulations to your council
- Respond to consultations for your Local Plan
- Develop your own Neighbourhood Plan or community plan
- Develop your own campaign to save a community space

Finding a local community group

When it comes to planning, there is power in numbers. If you have concerns about a local development, or you want to create a space for communities such as a community orchard, you can use the following sources to find active groups in your neighbourhood:

Local History and Heritage Groups	www.londonhistorians.org
Local community groups	www.justplace-london.blogspot.com
Neighbourhood Forums	www.neighbourhoodplanners.london
Local Amenity Societies	www.londonforum.org.uk/boroughlist.php
Tenant or Residents Associations	www.londontenants.org

If there is no group interested in planning active in your area, you can set up your own together with your neighbours. We can help with this.

Tips

- At first site planning can seem complicated, but don't panic! Planning Aid for London is here to help
- Get involved as early as possible, using Local Plan and Planning Application Consultation periods to have a say
- If you are concerned about a development, saving a local amenity or even setting up one of your own, then try and find other residents and community groups so that you can make an effective representation

Further reading

Planning Aid for London

Guides to planning

<https://planningaidforlondon.org.uk/planning-library/guides/>

Friends of the Earth

Guide to community rights, environment and planning laws series

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/guide-community-rights-environment-and-planning-laws>

The English planning system: An overview

<https://cdn.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/English%20Planning%20System%20an%20overview%20FoE.pdf>

How-to: Run local campaigns

https://campaigning.friendsoftheearth.uk/resources?_ga=2.179486500.143575968.1609936271-906712487.1609936271

Planning Portal

About the planning system

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200127/planning/102/about_the_planning_system

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Plain English guide to the planning system

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plain-english-guide-to-the-planning-system>

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