What is Planning?

What's the purpose of this booklet and who is it for?

This guide will give an overview of how we develop planning policies for Wandsworth and why we need them. Anyone who wants to learn more about the built environment and how we make decisions about places should read this booklet. It will explore the role of the Local Plan, how we balance priorities and what we can all do to help shape our vision for Wandsworth.

This booklet has been produced by the Wandsworth Planning Policy team and designed by Maddison Graphic.
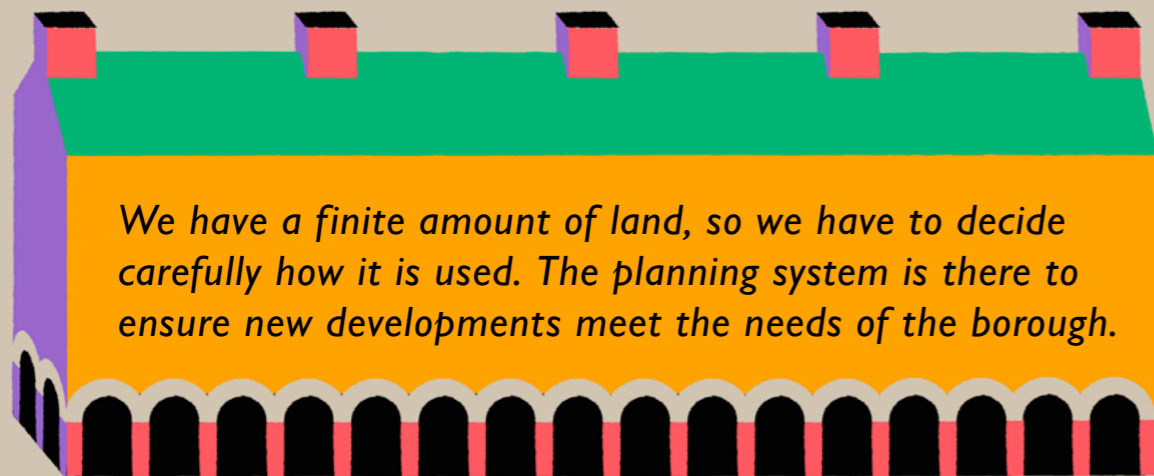
What's in the booklet?

1. What is planning?

Places are always changing. The areas where we live, work and play need to evolve to meet the changing needs of our community and respond to challenges like pressure for new housing.

We have a finite amount of land, so we have to decide carefully how it is used. The planning system is there to ensure new developments meet the needs of the borough.

Planning policy documents like the Local Plan are created to help guide this process of change to make sure it delivers what the community needs.

The goal of planning how places develop is to make sure development is fair, balanced and meets the needs of the whole community

"We need more schools and youth clubs!"

"I'd love to live in a new flat that's more energy efficient and has space for my growing family."

"My daughter rents from a private landlord and they keep raising the rent - she is really struggling to stay in the borough where she was born. It wasn't this hard for my generation."

"I'd like to prioritise new parks and greenspace. We also need sustainable development - there's a climate crisis!"

"I love living here - the community is so diverse and there is always something to do!"

Why do we need planning?

Planning is not new - it has helped us organise and manage the places where people live since early human history. Today we would call this 'the built environment'.

In many cases, the layout (known as the plan) of these areas is shaped by geographical features, cultural or religious practices, or defence mechanisms like city walls.
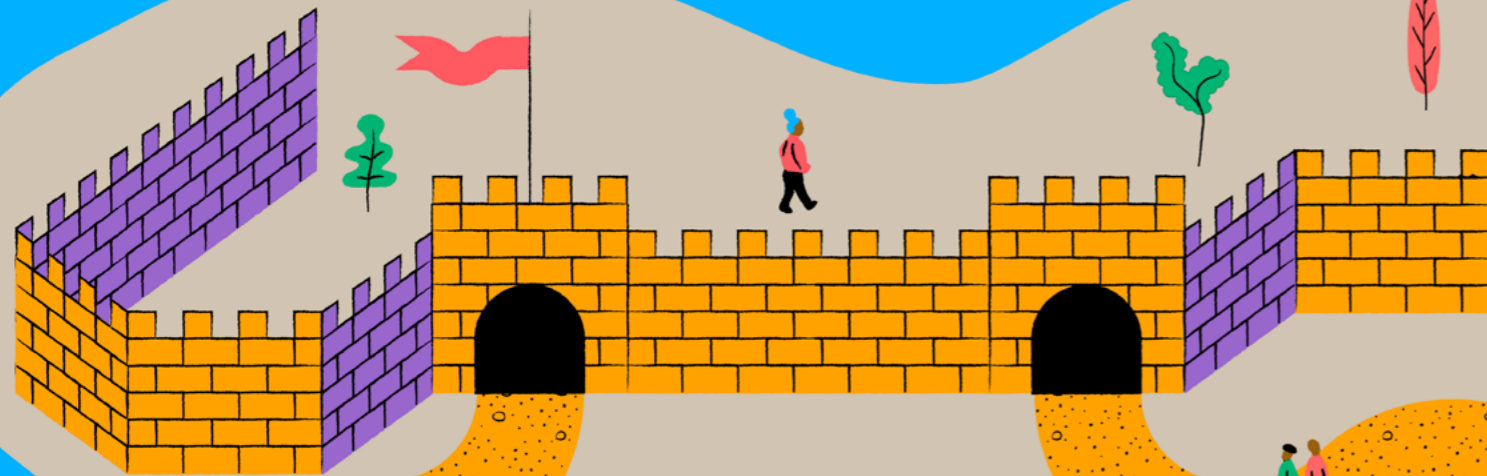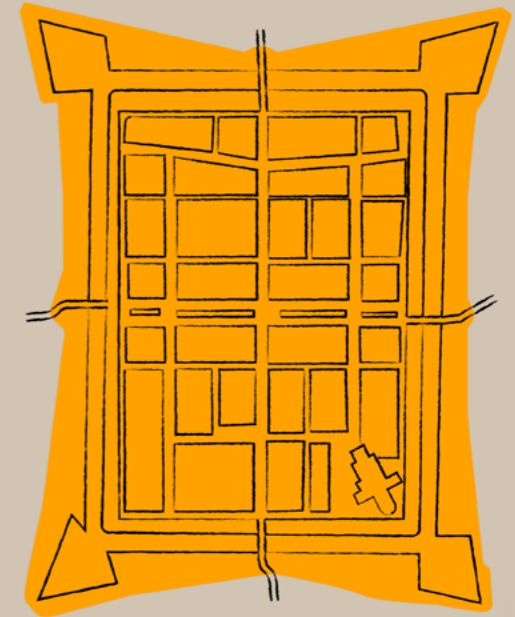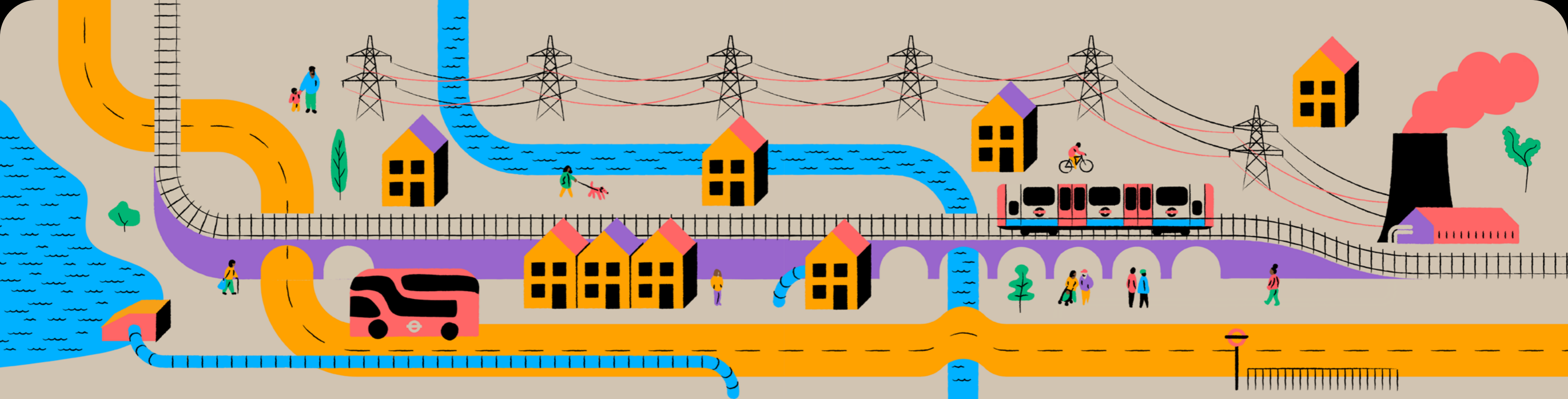
Ancient Egypt
Deir el-Medina 1550 BC
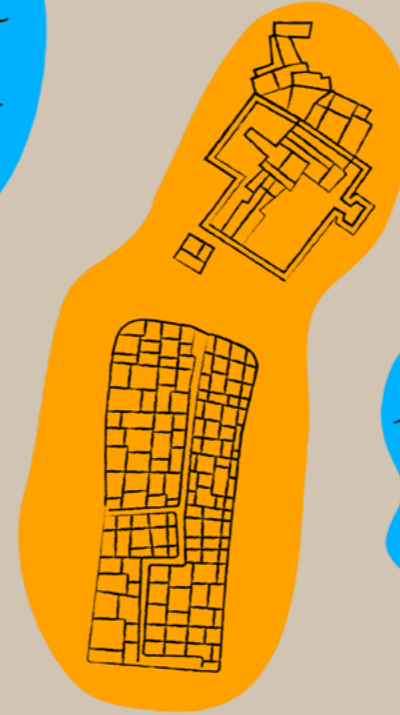
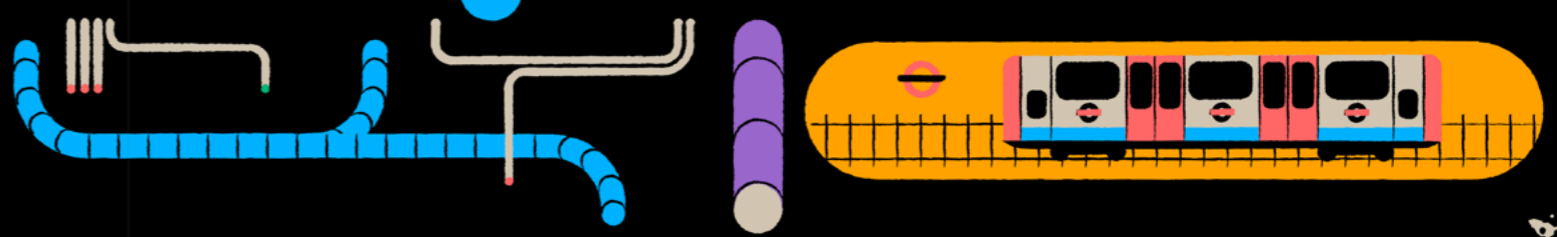**Ancient Greece**
Miletus 479 BC

Medieval
Elburg, Netherlands 1392

Think about your local area. There are so many things that flow in and out of places. How would you manage them all?

How does planning shape places?

Let's take housing as an example. Location, design quality, layout, maintenance, privacy, temperature and noise have a huge impact on our daily lives.

This area is an example of low density. This means relatively few people live in the area for its size. Housing tends to be 1 or 2 stories high and is more spread out, with private gardens and individual car parking spaces.

Detached houses or some suburban housing estates are examples of low density housing.

About 1/4 of Wandsworth's residents live in terraced housing.

This area is an example of medium or high density. This means more people live in the same sized area compared with low density places. Buildings are usually taller, ranging from 3 or 4 storey housing blocks to tall towers.

Urban areas have high demand for housing and limited supply of land, so it's important we use the available space efficiently. **Nearly 3/4 of Wandsworth's residents live in flats & maisonettes.**

Many high density areas also have lots of green and open spaces. As more people live there, it creates demand for services likes schools and GP surgeries.

Planning is constantly anticipating our needs in the future. But the way we live is always changing and some trends cannot be predicted. The full impact of decisions we make today are often not visible until many years later.

For example, in the 1960s many cities were designed with car travel in mind. Now our priorities have changed. We know we need to travel more sustainably and there is far greater demand for cycle infrastructure and safe and enjoyable walking routes.

Planning can help by factoring in demand for cycle lanes. Car free or low traffic neighbourhoods have also increased, although many of the services we rely on are still delivered by road.

Architectural trends also have an influence on what places look and feel like. This can be seen in how buildings are designed and constructed, or how they are arranged on a site. Visions for how we should live also influence planning.

The Alton Estate in Roehampton is one of the largest social housing estates in the UK. It was designed in the 1950s and influenced by Scandinavian ideas of greenness and openness. The original buildings have the highest level of protection given to buildings of national importance.
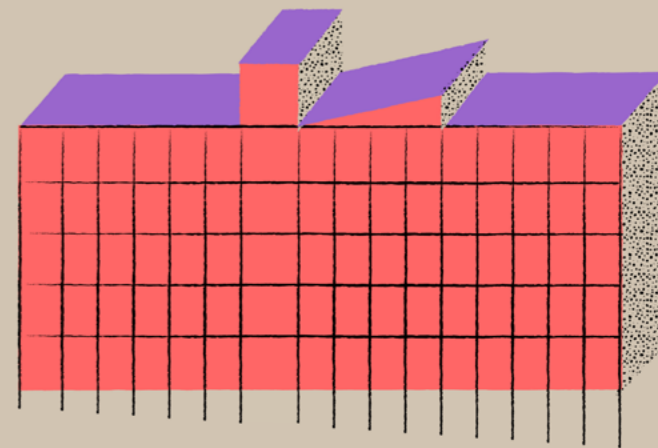
Putney Bridge was completed in 1886 and is also protected from damage or demolition. The materials we use today may have changed, but the bridge is still a magnificent achievement.
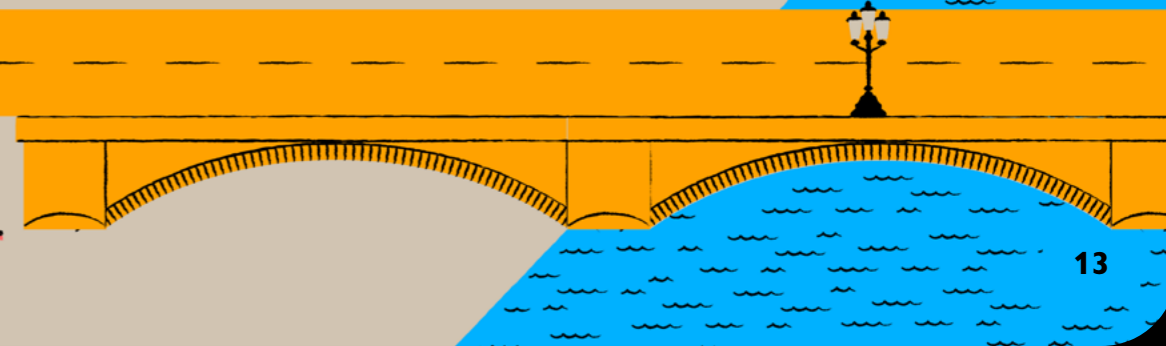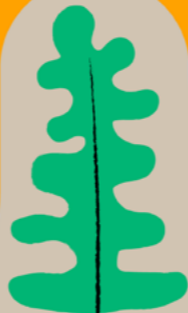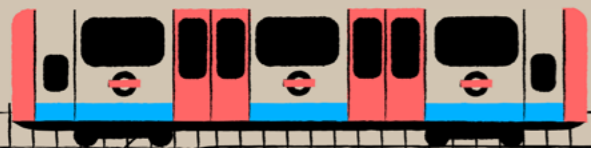
2. How do we produce planning policy and why?

Producing policy takes time and is a collaborative process. The council produces planning policy, but many people are involved in the production.

We need to make sure new development meets the needs of the community and the Local Plan is one way to help guide that process.

What do policy planners do?

Broadly speaking, the job of a policy planner is to decide:

1. *What we need or want*
2. *How much do we need or want*
3. *Where it should go*

In the UK, planning must be evidence-led, so lots of research and data is produced and commissioned by the council to help make these decisions and support the policies.

Development managers are also planners, but they have a very different role — their job is to apply policy and make decisions on planning applications.

2. Local
Borough - Wandsworth

2. Regional
City - London

National
UK

STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. Site
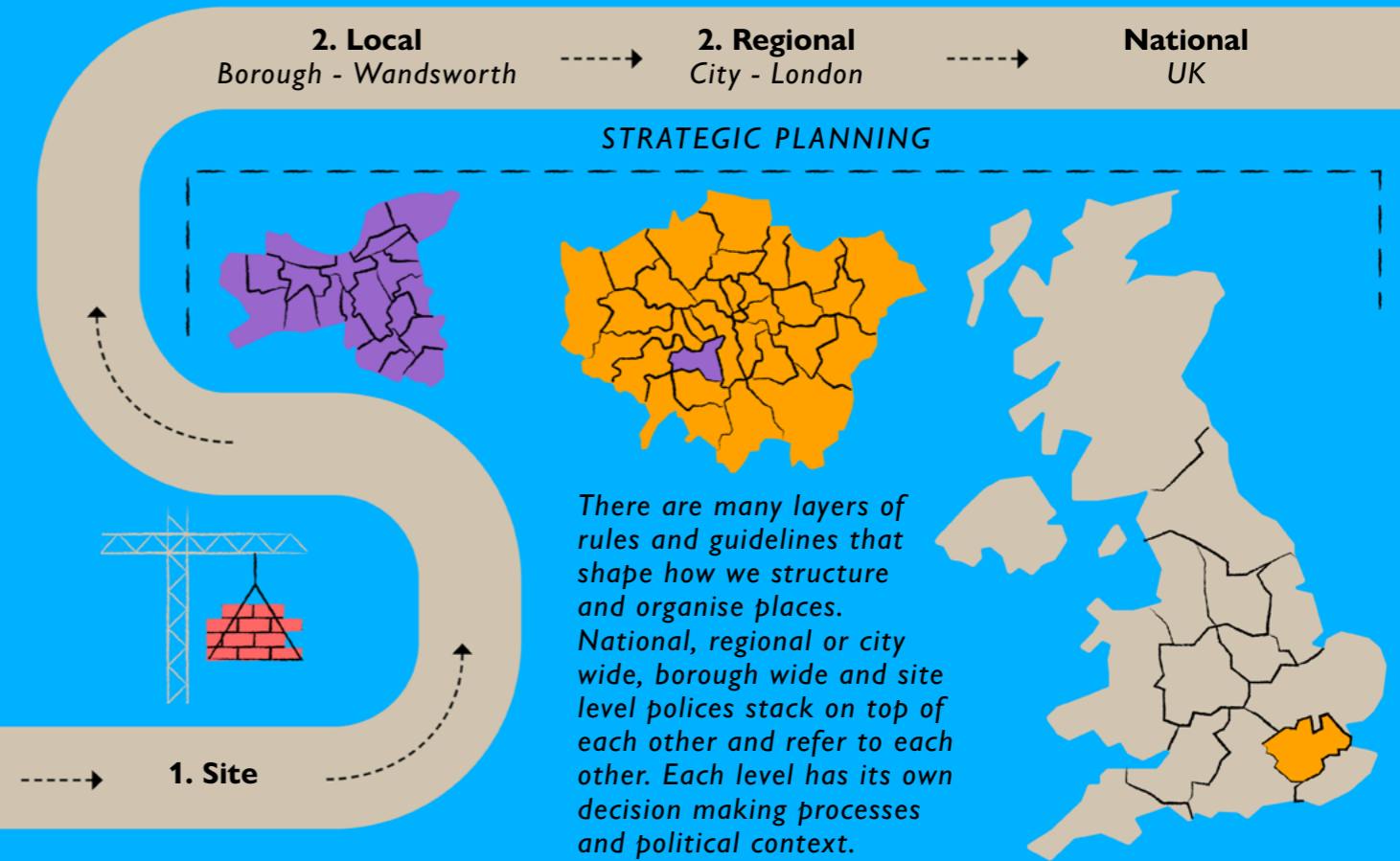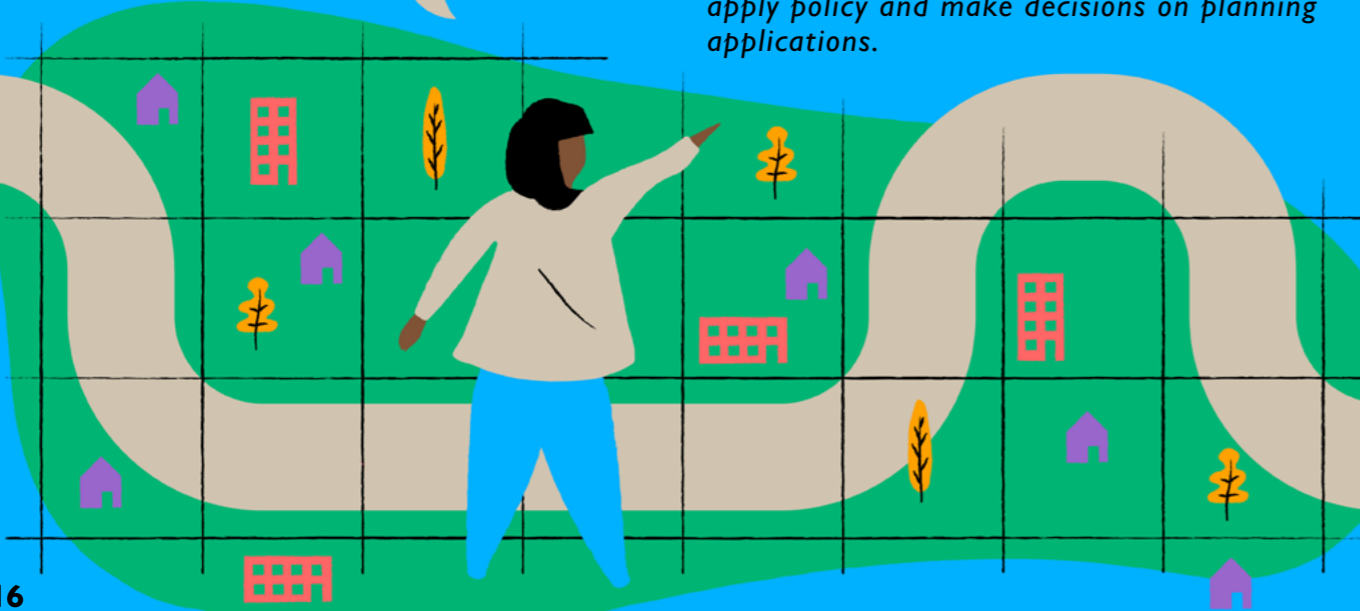
There are many layers of rules and guidelines that shape how we structure and organise places. National, regional or city wide, borough wide and site level polices stack on top of each other and refer to each other. Each level has its own decision making processes and political context.

What factors influence policy?

Here is a selection, although there are many others:

£££

Land Value
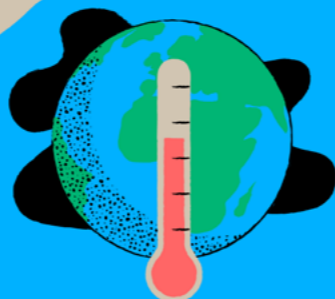
Durability and long term thinking

Health and Wellbeing

Flooding

Political decisions

Community

Demand and local need

Climate emergency

What is the Local Plan?

The Local Plan is the main planning document a Local Authority can use to set out these aspirations. It is focused on guiding development in the borough and includes a list of locations or areas where development could happen.

Once a plan is approved, it is used to help decide the outcome of planning applications and help landowners and developers understand Wandsworth's priorities.

Many of the policies focus on new development schemes, not the existing built environment or housing stock. This is often because the funding needed to make improvements to the public realm or build new schools is linked to income generated from large development projects.

Wandsworth Local Plan

Who is involved in planning?

A diverse range of individuals, community groups or service providers who have an interest in a place or a development are involved in creating policy. They are often referred to as stakeholders.

Stakeholders have different levels of input and decision-making power. It's important to remember that there are challenges, and it is not a perfect system.

Applicants:

This group is usually proposing to change the built environment. Planning applications could range from house extensions to commercial landowners proposing large scale mixed-use developments.

Sometimes land is owned by Local Authorities, but often is it owned privately. Sites can also be sold to developers as part of the development process.
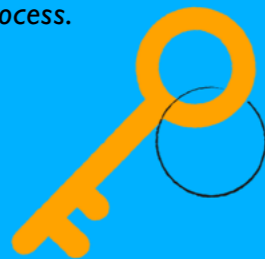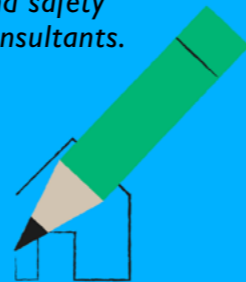
Landowners

Developers, funded by investors, are responsible for delivery on site. They often oversee the project from an early stage.

Developers & Investors

Many people with specialist skills are involved in the design team - from architects and landscape designers, to engineers and safety consultants.

Designers & Consultants

Decision makers:

This group creates the conditions for development and respond to proposed changes

Wandsworth Council	Planners	Specialist Organisations	Politicians	Local People
Local Authorities each have their own unique circumstances and priorities. Each borough's planning decisions will be different.	Planners work for local authorities, and are there to create the planning guidelines and respond to applications - either approving them, suggesting amends or rejecting them.	There are many groups that planners have a duty to engage with and keep informed of forthcoming plans - like local societies, groups and other boroughs.	Local councillors are elected by the public. They help to shape the priorities for the council. They also help make planning decisions.	The people that live, work or play in an area are a vital part of the process. They are often invited to give feedback and share their opinions, or work collaboratively to develop policy.

Our priorities

Wandsworth develops the Local Plan collaboratively
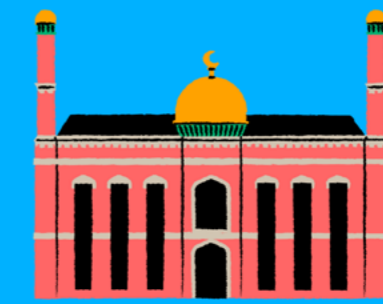
People first

Inclusive growth

Placemaking

How do we balance priorities for...

Heritage

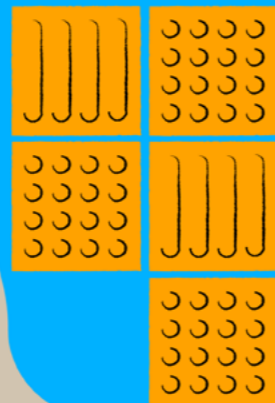Community facilities

Housing

Workspace

Space for education

Green space

Weighing the options

Not every new development will meet each policy requirement. Sometimes factors like higher quantities of affordable housing or a new school are prioritised. It depends on the type of proposal, the location or the level of need.

It's a balancing act that depends on the unique conditions of each site.

Not every decision will benefit everyone. Tactile paving on the street is needed by many people including those with visual impairments, but not always great for wheelchair users.

Exploring priorities

Wandsworth has 133.6 hectares of industrial land (about 250 football pitches). This land use provides space for things like warehouses, factories and workshops, transport depots and markets.

Land use for all

Industrial land is vital to ensure the borough can supply us with the services we all need, but like many non-residential land uses is under pressure to be used for housing due to its high value and prominent location. Deciding what to protect and what to develop is part of the challenge.

Everyone agrees we need to process waste, but few people want to live near a waste management plant due to the noise and the smell. Planners need to weigh up these considerations.
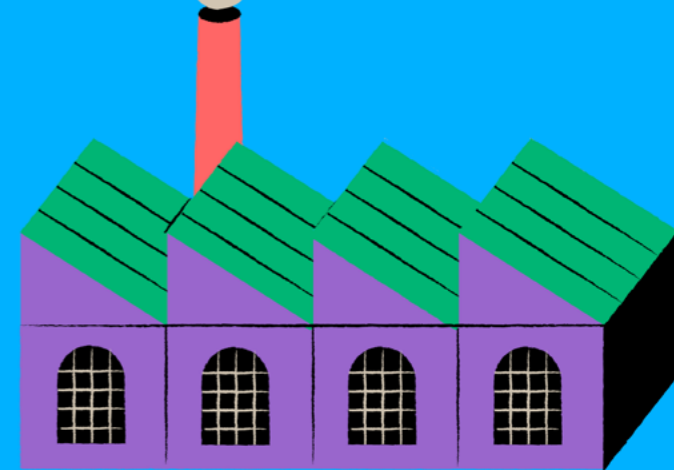
What policy can and can't do

The Local Plan DOES

Influence how we travel

Think long term to anticipate our future needs

Support our high streets & local centres

Balance the needs of all groups in society

Ensure developments are in the most appropriate places and protect land allocations

Shape how places look & feel

The Local Plan DOES NOT

Operate specific shops, services or community facilities

Control the frequency of waste & recycling collection

Resist chain shops

Cap property prices or lower rents

Control where people park or drive

Directly provide jobs

3. What can you do?

We all have different values and priorities, which is why it is important to hear from many different people when policies are being written that shape our futures. Local Plans and other types of planning policy do not solve everything, but they do shape our vision for the borough and are influential in planning decisions.

The decisions that are made in the plan will be used to decide the outcome of applications long into the future, so getting involved at an early stage is a great opportunity.
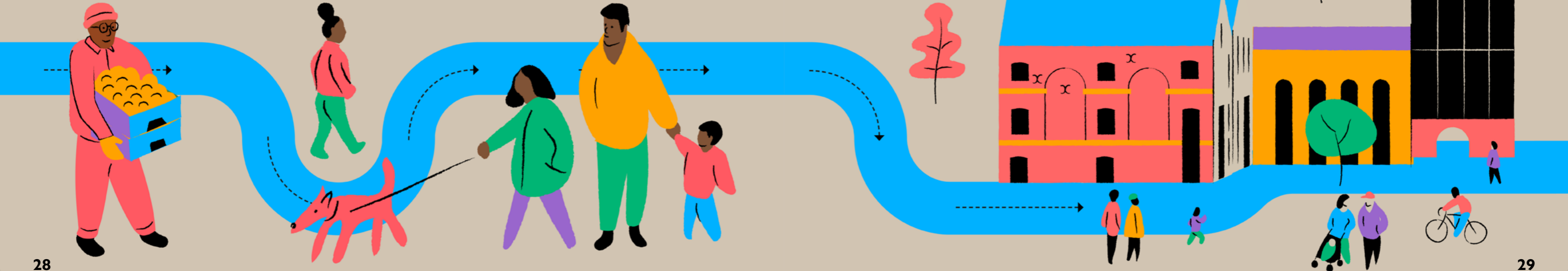
Why early engagement is key!

Many people notice the role of planning when there's an issue, or a proposed development that's local to them.

Being involved in the development of the plan is an early opportunity to shape places by writing the 'rules of the game'.
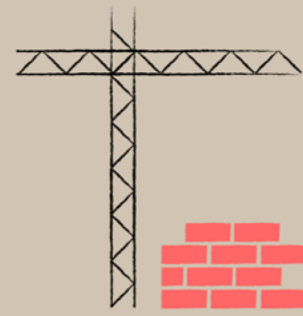
By that stage in the process, lots of decisions have already been made and there are limited opportunities to change things. That's why it's so important to be involved in policy from the beginning.
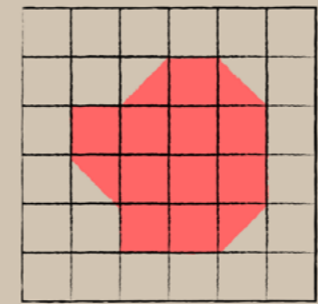
Local Plan document highlights large site is suitable for development

Landowner submits a planning application

Work starts on site & people notice new development on their street

New residents move in

Now

+5 years

+10 years

+15 years

Get involved!

We want to create a Local Plan that reflects you.

Not everyone uses shared spaces like parks and high streets in the same way - that's why we need feedback from a diverse group of people.

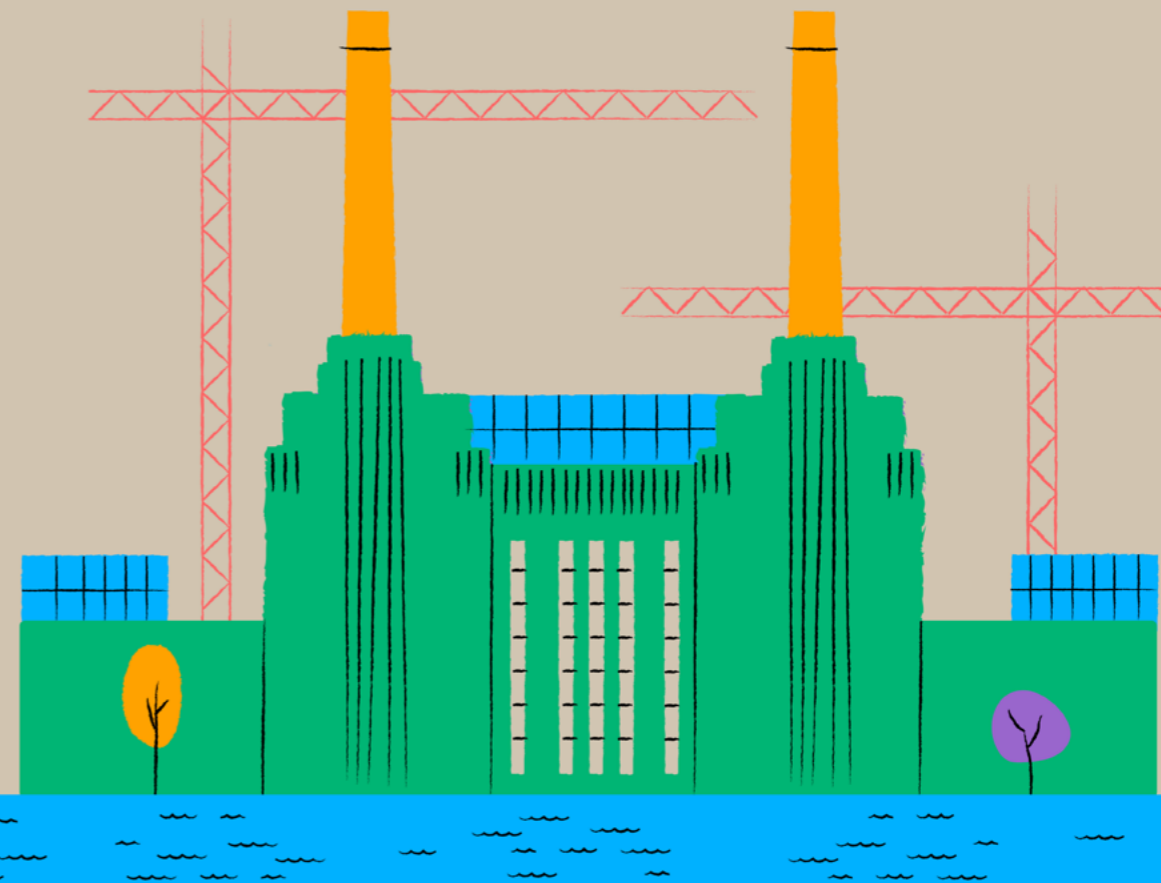*Spread the word - tell friends, family and neighbours to get involved too*

Speak to your local councillor

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Look out for new consultations

www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localplan