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England

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Healthy Places - how planning can support healthy weight environments

Public Health England South East
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Healthy Weight Environment

A healthy-weight environment supports people in avoiding becoming overweight or obese through the way in which a place is designed and the facilities it provides. It promotes physical activity, provides opportunities for sustainable transport which prioritise active travel, helping people build physical activity into daily life. Additionally, it helps people access or choose healthier food options and access support services.

The planning system has a range of powers including legislation, policy and tools which can help create and support healthy weight environments.





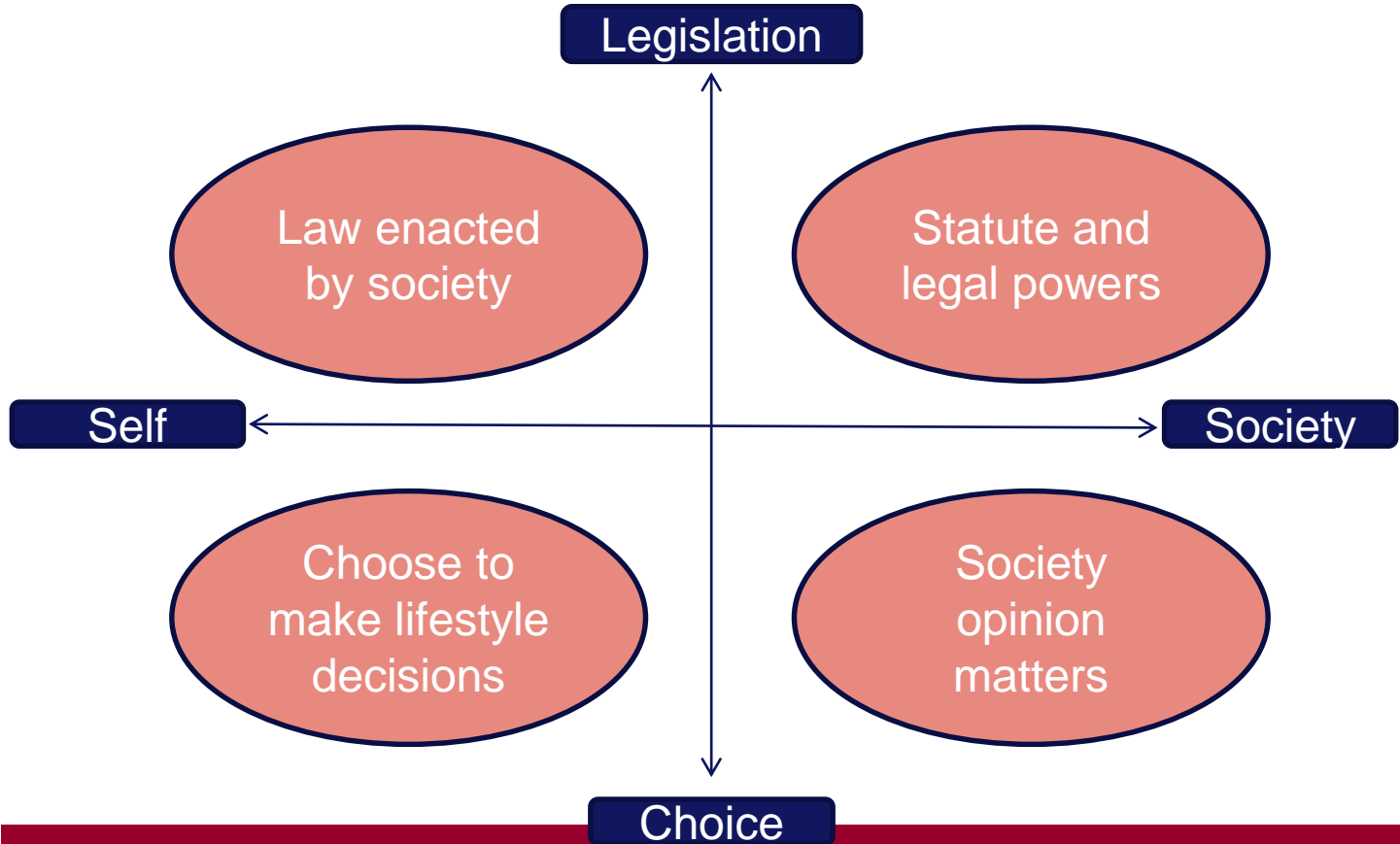


Planning Policy & Guidance

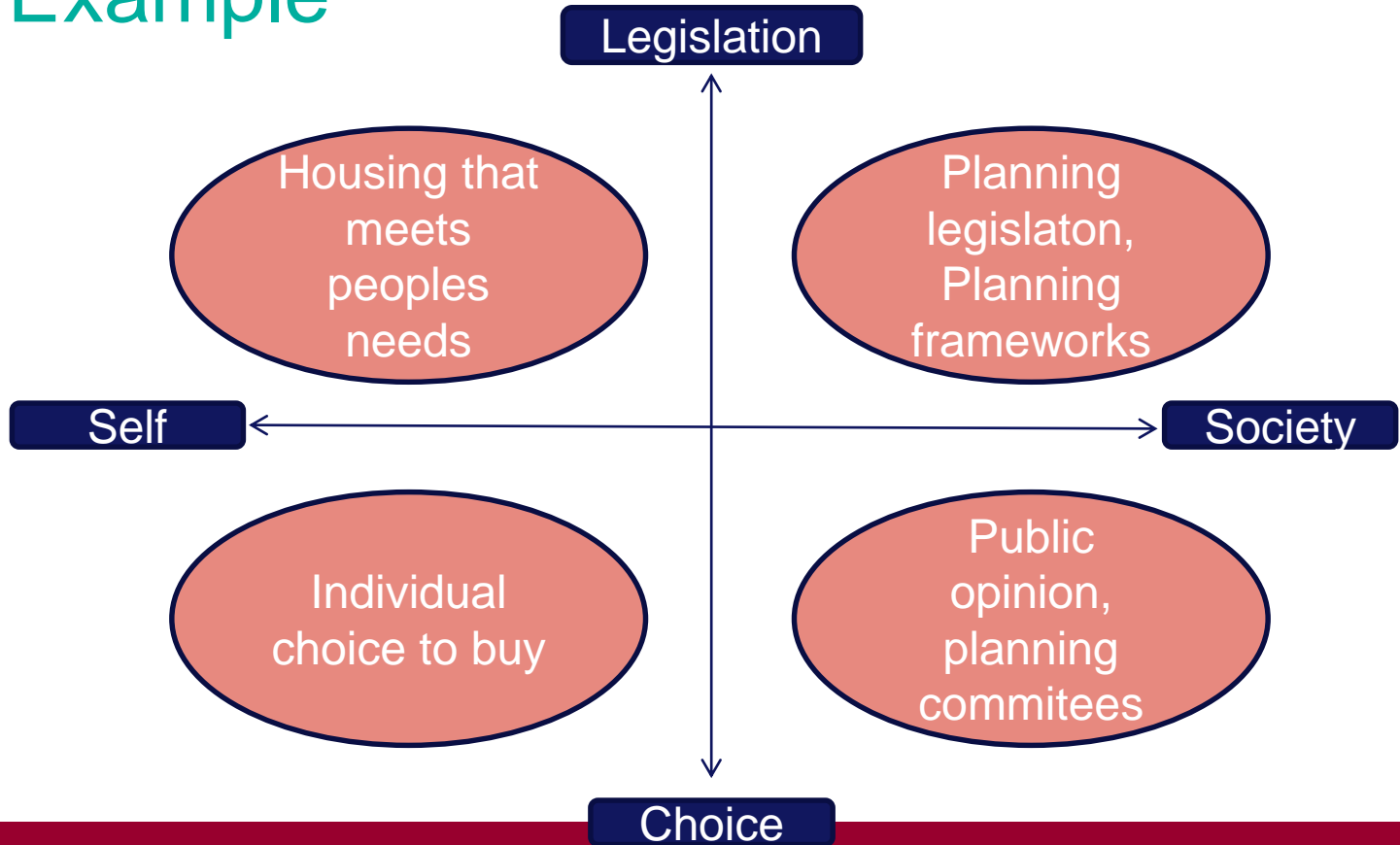
National Policy highlights the role of Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) in creating and promoting healthy, inclusive and safe communities, including;

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 91(c) outlines that “*planning policies and decisions should...enable and support healthy lifestyles....for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.*”
- The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) This guides planners about ways to apply NPPF policy. For example, the PPG on healthy and safe communities includes guidance on how planning can help to create a healthier food environment.

What does the theory tells us?



An Example

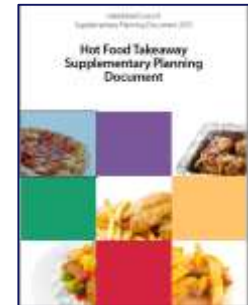


Local Planning Tools

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) can use tools such as local plan policies, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), design codes, planning conditions, Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) and developer contributions to help create and support healthy weight environments.

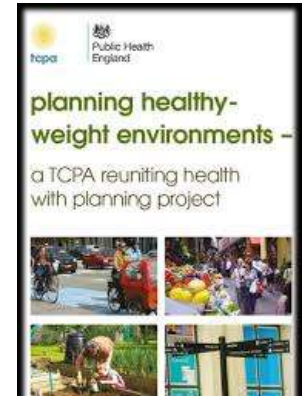
For example, planning authorities can use an SPD to provide further detailed guidance on specified local planning policies to guide applicants. Compliance with guidance set out in the SPDs will promote planning applications that have the best chance of achieving planning permission in line with the local plan.

- Leeds have developed an SPD to limit clustering of Hot Food Takeaways (HFT) and proximity to schools
- Gateshead have successfully used their SPD, supported by an integrated public health policy to control the proliferation of HFTs in areas with high levels of childhood obesity.



Planning for a healthy weight environment

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and Public Health England (PHE) set out six elements to help achieve healthy weight environments through the planning process in 2014. These are; ***movement and access, open spaces, recreation and play, food environment, neighbourhood spaces, building design and local economy***



Key features of these elements are creating places that:

- **prioritise walking, cycling and mass transit** through simple changes such as dedicated cycle lanes, well-placed bike racks and wide, well-lit pavements, which encourage individuals to leave their cars at home;
- **provide communal spaces** that support wellbeing and encourage active behaviour in children and adults;
- **create buildings which are able to promote a healthy lifestyle**, such as building homes with kitchens big enough for people to store, prepare and cook meals and eat together, or commercial building design that encourages the use of stairs;

Planning Healthy-Weight Environments

Components of a healthy weight environment: an illustration



- A Movement and Access**
 - Clearly signposted and direct walking and cycling networks
 - Safe and accessible networks and public realm for all
 - Well-designed buildings with passive surveillance
 - Walking prioritised over motor vehicles, and vehicle speed managed
 - Area-wide walking and cycling infrastructure provided
 - Use and monitoring of travel plans
- B Open spaces, play and recreation**
 - Planned network of multi-functional green and blue spaces to achieve multiple benefits
 - Easy to get to natural green open spaces of different sizes from dwellings
 - Safe and easy to get to play spaces for all with passive surveillance
 - Sports and leisure facilities designed and maintained for everyone to use
- C Food**
 - Development maintains or enhances existing opportunities for food growing
 - Development avoids over concentration of hot-foot takeaways (fast food) and restricts proximity to schools or other facilities aimed at children and young people
 - Shops/food markets sell a diverse offer of food choices and are easy to get to by bike, walking or public transport
- D Neighbourhood spaces**
 - Community and healthcare facilities provided early as a part of new development
 - Services and facilities co-located within buildings where feasible
 - Public spaces are attractive, easy to get to and designed for a variety of uses
- E Buildings**
 - Dwellings have adequate internal spaces for bike storage, dining and kitchen facilities
 - Development includes adequate private or semi-private outdoor space per dwelling
 - Car parking spaces are minimised across the development
 - Development includes a travel plan that promotes sustainable transport
- F Local economy**
 - Development enhances vitality of local centre through providing more diverse retail and food offer
 - Centres and places of employment are easy to get to by public transport, and on walking and cycling networks
 - Facilities provided for people who are walking and cycling to local centres and high streets such as benches, toilets and secure bike storage

Summary

- It is important that a whole systems approach is taken to promote healthy weight, including encouraging physical activity and other actions, to help reverse the obesity epidemic.
- Local authorities can provide local leadership and take positive action to promote a healthy weight environment by taking a coherent approach across all their relevant functions, including sport and leisure, planning, transport, public health, social care and economic development.
- Such an integrated and place-based approach is demonstrated through the TCPA Planning Healthy Weight Environments and the NHS England Healthy New Towns guidance
- Additional guidance from PHE for Local Authorities, Public Health and Planning Teams on 'using the planning system to promote healthy weight environments' is currently in development.

Further information and resources

- Local Government Association (LGA), 2017, Tipping the scales: Case studies on the use of planning powers to limit hot food takeaway
- LGA, TCPA, PHE, 2016, Building the Foundations. Tackling obesity through planning and development
- MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)
- MHCLG, Planning Practice Guidance: Health and Wellbeing
- NHS England 2019, Putting Health into Place. Summary of Learning from Healthy New Towns Programme
- Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), 2019, The State of the Union. Reuniting health with planning in promoting healthy communities
- TCPA, 2018, Securing constructive collaboration and consensus for planning healthy developments.
- TCPA, PHE, 2014, Planning Healthy Weight Environments