

South Staffordshire Council Local Plan Review

Spatial Housing Strategy & Infrastructure Delivery Executive Summary

This is the second stage of consultation on our review of the Local Plan for South Staffordshire. Its focus is on housing growth in the district, looking at broad locations for growth and the infrastructure benefits that will be delivered as a consequence. Sites will come later, once our overall strategy has been agreed. We will be looking in more detail at our employment growth options, and at meeting the needs of our Gypsy and Traveller Community at the next stage of consultation in summer 2020.

Following on from the Issues and Options consultation in late 2018, it was decided that because of the challenges we face in providing new homes, not only to meet the needs of local people, but also to help our neighbouring authorities, it was important to consult on our approach to housing growth in advance of Preferred Options.

In our Issues and Options documents we set out potential options to explore how housing distribution might look in the new Local Plan. Using information from responses to the consultation, and locally prepared evidence such as our new Green Belt and Landscape Studies, we now have 7 new Spatial Housing Options which are designed to consider key housing issues facing the district.

In the options we have looked at how we might keep Green Belt release to a minimum or whether to utilise land in areas of Green Belt where development would be least harmful. We also considered if development should be located in villages with the highest affordability issues, or where there were higher levels of local need. On the basis that we have to look to see if we can help to meet some of the wider housing shortfall, we have also investigated areas which were highlighted in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area Growth Study, which was prepared jointly with other authorities across the region. A further option considers whether to continue with the current approach of spreading development across different villages across the district, or to maximise locations well served by public transport.

What we're proposing

Our preferred approach, Option G, is very much Member led. We believe Option G will meet our housing numbers, make a contribution (under our legal Duty to Cooperate) to the wider unmet housing need and also take account of the impact of development on current infrastructure and what opportunities there are for new and improved infrastructure. This approach will, however, lead to Green Belt release and this is something that has been very carefully considered in formulating the options. We know there are very difficult decisions to be made in providing new homes and protecting the Green Belt.

This consultation is not site specific, but looks at broad locations for growth through the different options. Some development will be at our villages but to lessen the impact on our villages, we believe, through Option G, that urban extensions along the western and northern edge of the Black Country offer the opportunity to provide self-contained development which is located close to high level services and facilities in the conurbation.

We are continuing with an approach which proposes to meet our own housing needs and to test whether we can provide up to 4,000 new homes for the Black Country and wider region. This currently means our housing target is currently 8,845 over the Plan period 2018 – 2037. To help keep the amount of land we need to find to a minimum, we are proposing that land that already has planning permission, or is being built out post 2018, or is allocated in our SAD should reduce that overall figure. We also propose to bring forward all of the Safeguarded (non-Green Belt) land in our current Local Plan first, before we look for additional sites. This will reduce the number of new homes we need to find further still. As the Plan review progresses we will assess the contributions made towards our housing target and adjust where we can.

There are many advantages and disadvantages to each option and these are clearly set out in the consultation documents, with maps and tables, including an idea of what the indicative housing numbers might look like, reasoning behind the options and what barriers there might be to development.

A very important part of the process is the evidence we need to support our approach and we have commissioned Green Belt and Landscape Studies, in conjunction with the 4 Black Country authorities, which have helped inform the reasoning behind the options we have considered. We will also look very carefully at sustainability, transport infrastructure, access to jobs, environmental constraints, and impact on historic assets and of course the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and planning policy guidance.

We need your views

We are consulting widely with local people, infrastructure providers, statutory bodies, parish councils, developers, land promoters and planning agents. The consultation will last for 8 weeks and the responses we receive will help us to progress the Local Plan review to the next stage, which is Preferred Options.

You can see all the consultation documents and supporting evidence on the Council's website at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/localplanreview. You can contact the Local Plans Team for more information at localplanreview@sstaffs.gov.uk or by calling 01902 696000.