



## Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Frequently Asked Questions

- This is the second stage of public consultation on the new Local Plan.
- We are consulting on a strategy for broad locations for housing growth in the district. Sites will come at a later stage of the Local Plan review.
- There is an eight week period of public consultation from Thursday 17 October until 5pm on Thursday 12 December 2019 - we need your views.

### What is a Local Plan?

Every local planning authority has to produce a Local Plan which sets out the planning framework for their area. It contains the amount of housing and employment growth being planned for in the next few years and where that growth will be located. It also contains policies which will be used to decide planning applications. The policies cover many topics from Green Belt, housing, employment, and open space to design, historic buildings and environmental issues. The Local Plan is just that, local to the area it covers, so the policies in our Local Plan will be tailored to South Staffordshire.

### Why are we reviewing our current Local Plan?

All councils have to review their Local Plans at least every five years to take on board updated information, particularly about the amount of homes needed. We committed to begin this review as part of the Site Allocations document (SAD) and we hope to have the new plan in place in 2022.

### What stage is the Review at?

We carried out an Issues and Options consultation in late 2018 which asked for views on the planning issues facing us and what options we could consider. We have been collecting a great deal of evidence and used this, and the responses from the consultation, to take the review forward. Before we decide on sites, we need to agree the right broad locations where new homes should go. This **Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery** consultation sets out our preferred approach, and alternative options.



## What is the Council's Preferred Approach?

Our preferred approach, **Option G**, is very much Member led. We believe Option G will provide new homes for South Staffordshire and we are also looking to see if we can help our neighbours in the Black Country out, under our legal Duty to Cooperate. We will take account of the impact of development on current infrastructure and explore 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.

## Why do we have to help other Councils out?

All councils have to meet a legal test known as Duty to Cooperate. This means we have to engage 'constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis' with our neighbouring authorities over matters which cut across administrative boundaries. South Staffordshire already relies on Wolverhampton and other Black Country councils for shopping, hospitals, higher education and some leisure facilities. We have to at least have looked at ways in which we can help in order to meet our legal duties.

## Is 'no development' an option?

The simple answer is no. The Government is clear that housing growth is fundamental to revitalising the economy and the thrust of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to 'boost significantly the supply of housing'. The need for housing is not just a national issue, but a local one too. If we don't plan to deliver this growth ourselves, we will lose significant control over where it might go.

## What evidence do you use to guide development?

Preparing a Local Plan is not a simple process. The Plan has to be supported by robust evidence which will look at sustainability, the importance of the historic and natural environment, protecting and enhancing our landscapes, access to jobs and services and many other issues, including impact on the Green Belt. Our evidence is published at each stage of the process so that you can see how the Plan is being developed.

## Green Belt and Landscape Studies

We have asked consultants to look at what impact development might have on our Green Belt and the landscape of the district. The studies have been published alongside the consultation documents. They will help us to see where the most sensitive areas of landscape in the district are and which areas of Green Belt would be most affected by development. The outcomes of the studies do not decide where development will go, but will help us when we are looking at potential sites further down the line. The consultation is asking if you agree that we should avoid housing development wherever possible in areas of Green Belt where the greatest harm would be caused.



## **Many of these options include land in the Green Belt – isn't Green Belt land protected from new development?**

The Council is committed to the protection of the Green Belt and we know there are very difficult decisions to be made when we are looking for new sites. The Inspector who carried out the Examination into the SAD asked us to review our Green Belt capacity and we have looked at all non-Green Belt options, but our preferred approach means that some land will have to be taken out of the Green Belt. We will have to show the Inspector, who decides if the Plan is sound, the reasons why we have chosen to release some Green Belt land.

## **What is the Area of Search for a New Settlement?**

Members asked the Local Plans Team to explore whether a new standalone settlement might be a good option for new homes in the Local Plan review. We have investigated options for this, but at this time, there are no new settlement options available which would provide all the necessary infrastructure, or evidence to show a self-contained new settlement could be delivered in this plan period. However, we have included an 'area of search' in the consultation documents to keep the door open for future Local Plans which cover the period after 2037.

## **Is this consultation just about housing? What about employment, or other matters?**

Yes, this particular consultation focuses on housing – it's an extra stage of consultation because of the challenges new housing poses. It will enable us to look at infrastructure needs and opportunities, before we decide on sites. We will consider employment, gypsies and travellers, renewable energy, health and wellbeing amongst other topics at the next stage, which is a Preferred Options Plan.

## **What do I do now - why is my view important?**

We want your views on the proposed housing strategy for South Staffordshire. We are also consulting with all the necessary statutory bodies and you can find a list of the people we will consult with in our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) see [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/SCI](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/SCI)

The list includes the education and highway authorities, public health bodies, electricity, water and sewerage providers, the Environment Agency, and your parish council. Your local District Councillor will also be aware of the proposals.



## How can I make my views know?

Please take time to look at the Local Plan Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery document and let us have your views. We have also prepared an Executive Summary which sets out the key issues we want to address. You can also comment on the accompanying documents such as our Sustainability Appraisal, or Green Belt and Landscape Studies. There are response forms on the website or available from your local parish council office, or at the Council Offices in Codsall. We will acknowledge receipt of your comments, but you will not receive an individual reply to the issues you raise. This is not because your views aren't important, but because we will summarise all the responses received and this summary will be published at the next stage of consultation. **Please note that this means that your views are not confidential and will be made publicly available.**

**The consultation runs for eight weeks from Thursday 17 October until 5pm on Thursday 12 December 2019.**

## Material planning considerations

When judging the merits of potential development on a site, whether through the Local Plan or planning application process, only certain issues are taken into account. These include:

- National and local planning policies.
- Government and Planning Inspectorate requirements.
- Loss of light.
- Landscaping.
- Capacity of physical infrastructure.
- Highway issues.
- Loss or effect on trees.
- Adverse impact on nature conservation.

However, we cannot take account of factors such as:

- Loss of property value.
- Loss of views.
- Problems arising from the construction period of any works.
- Boundary disputes.
- Previously made objections.

For more information on this subject, you may find the following useful:

[www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid) or  
[www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

## What happens next?

We will take on board all the comments received to the consultation and prepare a Preferred Options document. This will contain the options we have selected, sites to deliver the options and policies to guide development, together with our reasons. There will be a further period of public consultation on the preferred approach which we hope will be in summer 2020.

## Contact us

All the information on the Local Plan review and the supporting documents are available on line at:

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk/localplanreview](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/localplanreview)

You can make comments by completing a response form, emailing us, or sending a letter. The documents and forms are also available at the Council Offices in Codsall and parish council offices.

If you need help in completing a form or have any questions please email

[localplanreview@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:localplanreview@sstaffs.gov.uk)  
or telephone **01902 696000**.



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