

Question

Response

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 15 years and where that growth will be located. It also contains policies which will be used to decide planning applications.

The four Black Country local authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) have been working together since 2008 to prepare a shared planning framework for the Black Country. The decision to prepare a joint Plan is in recognition of the economic advantage to each Local Authority area. This includes expansion of employment areas, retail-led development, housing growth and improving infrastructure to support growth at the heart of the sub- region.

What is the Black Country Plan?

The Black Country Plan (formerly known as the Black Country Core Strategy) is a shared planning framework for the whole of the Black Country and is prepared by the four Black Country local authorities.

The existing Plan - [Black Country Core Strategy](#) - covers the Plan period of 2006 to 2026 and was adopted in 2011.

What is the Black Country Plan Review?

We are currently reviewing the Black Country Plan which will set out how much land will be required to meet future needs for housing, employment and other uses over the next 15-20 years to 2038.

We have begun our review of the Local Plan and held a public consultation for eight weeks in July 2017 to September 2017 on the issues facing us and some possible solutions.

Why is the Plan being reviewed?

Every local planning authority must produce a local plan to steer future development needs over a period of at least 15 years, this means allocating land for future employment and housing provision. Our current strategy has allocated land for housing and employment needs up to 2026. We now need to start thinking about where future development will go after 2026 and we therefore need to identify more land.

Do we have development land in the urban area of the Black Country?

The current Plan for the Black Country has allocated enough land to build up to 63,000 homes and 1000 ha of employment land between the years of 2006 to 2026. Up to now we have been successful in allocating and building on brownfield sites (i.e sites that have been developed before, such as former employment sites). We will continue to allocate land in the urban area and on brownfield sites. However, we have to find enough land to provide for our housing and employment and other needs up to 2038 and we simply don't have enough land in the urban area to do this.

We have reviewed our land supply and we currently have enough land to provide around 44,500 homes. We need to provide enough land to build 71,500 new homes to 2038 and we therefore have a shortage of land of approximately 27,000 to meet our housing needs.

We therefore need to look at other options. This includes asking our neighbouring local authorities if they can allocate more land within their area to meet our future land requirements. In addition we have to look at the potential to build on some of the Green Belt within the Black Country.

Why has there been a ‘call for sites’?

The Government requires local planning authorities to conduct a ‘call for sites’ exercise when they are reviewing their Local Plans. In accordance with Government guidance, the Black Country local authorities requested ‘call for sites’ submissions from anyone who wished for their sites to be considered for development as part of the new Black Country Plan. The Black Country call for sites request opened in July 2017 and closed in June 2019.

How many sites were submitted and where are they?

We received around 400 sites across the Black Country and some sites that cross the boundary with neighbouring local authorities such as South Staffordshire, Cannock and Lichfield. Some of these sites are located in the urban area and include brownfield sites (sites that have been previously developed). They also include sites located in the Green Belt.

You can view the sites on the [Black Country Plan website](#).

What is the current status of the call for sites?

All sites submitted through the call for sites exercise have to be assessed. It is important to note that none of the sites that have been submitted have been formally allocated and not all sites put forward in the call for sites will be found to be either suitable, available or achievable for future development.

For any land to be removed from the Green Belt and developed it would need to be considered through the review of our Local Plan. We have undertaken a Green Belt Study which helps us to identify the most sensitive areas of Green Belt. You can see a copy of the Green Belt Assessment on the [Black Country Plan website](#).

Have we reviewed the Green Belt before?

The Green Belt around the Black Country has been in place since 1975. Green Belt is a national planning designation and relevant national policy strictly controls which types of development can take place within it.

National Policy requires Green Belt boundaries to remain unchanged, unless a Local Plan review takes place that demonstrates that “exceptional circumstances” exist to change the boundary and release land for development. A full review of the Black Country Green Belt has not taken place since it was established because it has previously been possible to accommodate all of the housing and employment development needed within the urban area.

The evidence produced to support the current Black Country Plan has demonstrated that the Black Country Authorities have considered all other reasonable options to accommodate future housing and employment growth (i.e. we have considered the capacity of the existing urban area to accommodate future housing/employment growth and have entered into discussions with neighbouring local authorities to determine if they would consider accommodating some of our housing and employment land needs) and that “exceptional circumstances” now exist to justify a review of the Green Belt. This is because the Black Country Plan covers the period up to 2038, and the amount of development land needed by this date is so large that it is unlikely that all of it can be provided within the urban area and by working with neighbouring authorities.

Can I make comments on the sites that are put forward for potential development?

Not at this time. We will be holding a public consultation on the Draft Plan in Autumn 2020. Members of the public will have the opportunity to comment on both the Draft Plan policies and proposed land allocations.



HOUSING



ENVIRONMENT



EMPLOYMENT



TRANSPORT

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