

## Question

## Response

**What is the Black Country Plan?**

The Black Country Plan (formerly known as the Black Country Core Strategy) is a plan prepared by the four Black Country local authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) to identify and allocate for development sufficient land for the areas housing and employment needs for the next 15 years.

**Why are you updating the current Black Country Core Strategy which runs from 2011-2026?**

Government requires us to review our land use plans every five years. Our current Core Strategy was adopted in 2011. Therefore, we started reviewing it in 2016.

It is currently projected that we adopt the new Local Plan during 2023 and allocate sufficient land to meet our needs for 15 years or until 2039.

**How do you know how many new houses will be needed?**

During 2018, Government introduced a standard calculation for working out how many new homes are required, in each local authority area, using data supplied by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Using this method the Black Country has a need for 3,761 new homes each year or 71,459 homes in total over the Black Country Plan period from 2020-2039. This calculation is updated annually to determine what our housing need is.

**Why are you looking for new sites when there are plenty of brownfield sites not yet developed?**

While there are brownfield sites which have not yet been developed, they have all already been counted in the existing land supply. We have already estimated how many houses each brownfield site could accommodate and taken this off the total number of houses required. Even allowing for the number of houses current brownfield sites can accommodate, there is still a gap which we may need to meet by looking at Green Belt land.

**Why was there a call for sites and where can I see the sites?**

The Government requires local planning authorities to conduct a 'call for sites' exercise when they are reviewing their Local Plans to ensure as many potential development sites as possible are identified. The Black Country local authorities requested 'call for sites' and received submissions from interested parties such as landowners and developers, however anybody could put forward any site they wish. The Black Country call for sites request opened in July 2017 and closed in June 2019. You can see the sites [here](#).

Following a revision to the Black Country Plan timetable in July 2020, the 'call for sites' was re-opened for 6 weeks between July and August 2020. We re-opened the 'call for sites' to provide the public and landowners with a further opportunity to identify potential sites for development in the Black Country or to update details for existing sites or to withdraw any sites that were previously submitted.

The reason why we re-opened the 'call for sites' process is to make sure we prepare a 'sound' plan that identifies as many sites as possible for assessment. The Black Country Authorities are keen to ensure that we identify as much land as possible for assessment, particularly those that have not already been identified within the urban area. The outcomes from this process will inform policies in the new Black Country Plan and will ensure that the new Plan allocates enough land to meet identified development needs.

**Why are we looking at sites in the Green Belt?**

Taking account of all of the brownfield land currently available, plus any other sites in the existing urban area, it appears that there is not enough land to meet all of the area's needs. As a result, a Green Belt Assessment has now been undertaken.

The Green Belt Assessment will help the Black Country Authorities to understand if there is any suitable land within the Green Belt, which, after further detailed assessment and consultation, could be put forward as a potential option for removal from the Green Belt for future development.

**Why are other authorities near to the Black Country looking at development in the Green Belt?**

All local authorities need to provide homes and jobs for their residents to meet their own identified needs but there is also a 'Duty to Cooperate' requirement. This is a legal test that councils have to meet and which means that our neighbouring local authorities and ourselves have to engage 'constructively' over matters which cut across administrative boundaries' to 'help' each other out. This can include considering releasing land to provide opportunities to meet some of the needs of other neighbouring areas, where there is less available land for development.

Where development is likely to take place in a neighbouring local authority to provide the housing or employment land needs for the Black Country, the Black Country Authorities will work with the neighbouring authority to ensure that all strategic cross boundary matters (such as schools, health centres, hospitals and transport and utilities) are adequately provided for.

The Black Country does not have enough land to accommodate all of its future housing and employment land. Neighbouring local authorities such as South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase and Lichfield are currently reviewing their own local plans, to determine how much land they need to provide to meet their own housing and employment needs as well as potentially meeting the needs of the Black Country. The Black Country Authorities will work with these councils to ensure that all future land allocations located close to local authority boundaries adequately take account of the impact of any proposed development on current infrastructure and explore opportunities for new and improved infrastructure.

**Has it been agreed that sites in the Green Belt can be developed?**

No. None of the sites (green belt or otherwise) that have been submitted in the call for sites process have been formally allocated for development. 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.

**Why can't you remove sites that have been forward from consideration right now? When will sites be selected?**

Government requires that we show that we fairly and thoroughly reviewed and assessed the sites that have been submitted through the call for sites process. Any sites that we allocate for development or ones that we reject will need to be considered through the Local Plan review. The sites will be selected as part of this process and included in the Draft Plan for public consultation which will commence in summer 2021.

**How will the additional schools and health centres be provided for all the extra people living in the Black Country?**

The Plan has to be supported by robust evidence which will look at sustainability, access to jobs and services and many other issues. We have to work with the NHS, Education Service and others in order to look at infrastructure needs before we decide on sites. We will look to allocate sites for development that are in the most sustainable locations in terms of transport and access to existing or new infrastructure.

**Our roads are already busy - will building more houses make this worse?**

We will look at infrastructure needs and opportunities before we decide on sites to ensure our road networks have capacity to accommodate development growth. We will look to ensure that sites are located in sustainable locations, with access to public transport links to reduce reliance on car usage.

**What about the environment - building on Green Belt sites could cause more flooding?**

Before any decisions are taken we have commissioned evidence on Strategic Flood Risk and this will be carefully studied before any land is allocated for development both in the Urban area and on the Green Belt.

**When can I have my say? Why can't I comment now?**

In line with Government requirements, we will be holding a public consultation on the Draft Plan in summer 2021, at which point members of the public will have the opportunity to comment on both the Draft Plan policies and proposed land allocations.

We have released the current evidence we have produced to date which is being used to inform the preparation of our Draft Plan. We have released this information now so that residents, businesses, visitors and communities are kept up to date with how the draft plan is progressing and to ensure that we are being as open and transparent as possible. At this stage in the process we are not consulting on the evidence work we have published. However, you will be able to make comments on the findings of the studies and all other evidence work when the Draft Black Country Plan is published for public consultation in summer 2021.

**What will happen to my letter/petition?**

If you submit a letter, evidence or petition before the summer 2021 Draft Plan consultation, this will be recorded by the local authorities but will not influence the preparation of the Draft Plan. We recommend you wait for the formal consultation to submit your response.

As part of the Draft Plan consultation in the summer of 2021, all the consultation responses will be considered and summarised and published on the website. The findings of the consultation will be formulated into a report that will be published and used to inform the next stage of plan preparation.

**How will I know when the Public Consultation starts?**

You can sign up to an ebulletin [here](#). There will also be press and media releases in summer 2021. Information will also be available on the Black Country Plan website as well as the individual Council websites, offices and libraries.

**How can I be kept up to date on the Black Country Plan Update?**

You can visit our [website](#) at any time to keep up to date and you can also sign up for our e bulletin.



HOUSING



ENVIRONMENT



EMPLOYMENT



TRANSPORT

[blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk](http://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk)