

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.

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. This existing plan <https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/t1/p2> 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 2039.

We have begun our review of the Local Plan and held a public consultation 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 must find enough land to provide for our housing and employment and other needs up to 2039 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 48,000 homes. To meet our housing needs it is calculated that we will as a minimum need to provide enough land to build in the region of 75,000 new homes to 2039. This leaves us with a shortage of land to build around a third of these homes.

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 is there a 'call for sites'?

The call for sites process is a government requirement that local planning authorities conduct a 'call for sites' exercise when they are reviewing their Local Plans. In accordance with Government guidance, the Black Country local authorities are therefore requesting 'call for sites' submissions from anyone who wishes sites to be considered for development as part of the new Black Country Plan.

Due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, a decision was taken by the four Black Country councils to adjust the current timetable for the production of the new Black Country Plan. As a result of the amended Black Country Plan timetable, we re-opened the call for sites process to provide a further opportunity to identify potential sites for development in the Black Country.

Why was the call for sites re-opened in July 2020?

We are keen to ensure that we identify as much land as possible particularly within the urban area. As a result of the Draft Plan timetable change, we took the opportunity to re-open the Call for Sites process in July 2020.

The Government requires local planning authorities to conduct a 'call for sites' exercise as a key component of the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment and it is a continuous process that feeds into the site assessment work. By re-opening the Call for Sites process, this will ensure that we prepare a 'sound' Plan that identifies as many sites as possible for assessment.

How many sites have been 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.

If you click on an individual site, you will be able to access details and any supporting information where it was submitted by the site's owner/promoter. Please note that any details in relation to each site are based on the information provided by the owner/promoter and are not based on any assessment by the Black Country authorities.

You can view the sites [here](#)

What is the current status of the sites submitted through the call for sites?

All sites submitted through the call for sites exercise have to be assessed. Officers from each of the Black Country local planning authorities have been undertaking assessments of all the sites that have been submitted and we envisage this will be an ongoing process taking us into 2021. **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 following [link](#).

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 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 2039, 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 Summer 2021. Members of the public will have the opportunity to comment on both the proposed Draft Plan policies and proposed land allocations.

What happens next?

Officers from each of the Black Country authorities have been undertaking assessments of all the sites that have been submitted and we envisage this will be an ongoing process.

We will be contacting site promoters individually where we require any additional information - it is therefore important that you contact us if your details have changed.

We will publish our findings when we produce our Draft Black Country Plan, which will be the subject of a comprehensive eight-week public consultation in the summer of 2021. This will be an opportunity for members of the public and other stakeholders to provide their comments on draft policies and proposed land allocations.



HOUSING



ENVIRONMENT



EMPLOYMENT



TRANSPORT

blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk