

The current Black Country Core Strategy identifies where the majority of the development needs of the area will be accommodated up to 2026 and focuses development into a series of strategic growth corridors and centres. Under the current Core Strategy all development needs can be met within the urban area (that part of the Black Country which does not fall within the Black Country Green Belt) and the majority of development takes place on brownfield (previously developed) land.

A review of the current Core Strategy (now called the Black Country Plan) is now underway and will consider the updated housing and employment needs of the area over a longer period, up to 2038.

The Government has introduced a standard method which must be used to calculate housing need for each local authority. Using this method the Black Country has a need for 3761 new homes each year or 71,459 homes in total over the Black Country Plan period 2019-38. A significant proportion of this need can be met by sites in the urban area, in accordance with the existing Core Strategy. National guidance requires local authorities to maximise the amount of housing development within urban areas and on brownfield land, including through increased densities.

In terms of planning for land to meet employment needs, the Black Country's Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) (2017) provides an assessment of employment land requirements over the plan period. The EDNA identifies the need for 870 hectares of employment land up to 2038, which is made up of 590 hectares to continue past trends plus 280 hectares to allow for economic growth.

The Urban Capacity Review (UCR) report sets out the current position, using best available evidence and information, regarding the need for and supply of land for housing and employment in the Black Country authorities over the Plan period.

In terms of housing supply, the UCR takes as its baseline the most recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) for the four local authorities, which will be published alongside the UCR. The SHLAAs provide lists of all suitable and developable housing sites in the Black Country as of March 2019. These include sites with planning permission, sites allocated in Local Plans and any other sites which have a reasonable prospect of being delivered within the Plan period. SHLAAs also include a "windfall" allowance, to take account of the many small housing sites which typically come forward in the Black Country each year on new sites.

The UCR reviews current assumptions about the supply of land for housing and employment developments across the Black Country. It takes current available evidence one step further to seek to maximise delivery in the urban area by reviewing previous assumptions – particularly in relation to densities and employment land evidence - with a view to optimising opportunities to identify any further additional potential development capacity across the urban area. Ultimately it provides 'potential urban capacity' figures – to seek to demonstrate how far the development needs of the Black Country up to 2038 can be accommodated within the urban area.

It is intended to periodically update the UCR in order to keep it up to date and to continue to inform the Plan preparation process.

Urban Capacity Review at a glance

What it does

Provides the current housing need and employment land need figures for the Black Country

Summarises the total amount of housing which is deliverable in the Black Country urban area by 2038, based on current SHLAAs

Summarises the total amount of employment land which is deliverable in the Black Country urban area by 2038, based on current evidence

Assesses the potential to increase the amount of housing deliverable in the urban area, through reasonable density increases, where local character allows.

Assesses the likely impact of emerging employment land evidence on employment land and housing capacity in the urban area.

What it does not do

Set out a strategy to meet all of this need within the Black Country

Propose a blanket uplift in densities, regardless of local character.



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