

Draft Sandwell Local Plan Consultation

Summary Document

6 November – 18 December 2023

Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012



At least **11,167 new homes** with 97% built on previously developed land



At least **1,206 hectares** of employment land on retained and new sites



Strong policies to **protect our natural environment** and to achieve our **carbon net zero** target by 2041



Regeneration across the borough with **new growth** focussed in West Bromwich and the Regeneration Areas



The delivery of a **modern and sustainable transport network** that links our towns and communities

We are preparing a new Local Plan for Sandwell and we want to hear your views

Introduction

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is consulting on a new Draft Sandwell Local Plan. This Plan identifies where new employment and housing development will be located and where investment for new infrastructure, such as transport, schools and green space will be made. The Plan will cover the period to 2041.

This document provides a summary of the main proposals in the Draft Sandwell Local Plan. You can find the full version of the Draft Plan on the Council's website and at all Sandwell's libraries. You can comment using the online digital comments form. Details can be found at the end of this document.

What is a Local Plan?

All local planning authorities are required by Government to write a Local Plan. It should explain where the development that is needed over the next 15 years or so will be located and how it will be dealt with through the planning process.

The Local Plan includes policies which are used to help decide planning applications. It considers the amount of land required to support future jobs and provide new housing and where additional retail, office and leisure development should go. The Local Plan also considers whether additional supporting infrastructure (like schools, green space, utilities, health services, public transport, cycle paths and road improvements) is needed.

What happened to the Black Country Plan?

In the past Sandwell Council has worked with the other Black Country Authorities (Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton) to prepare a Local Plan for the whole region called the Black Country Plan. The four authorities had prepared a draft version of the Black Country Plan and consulted residents and interested people.

The four authorities decided to stop work on the Black Country Plan in October 2022 as an agreement could not be reached on the approach to planning for future development needs across the region. The main issue was that the Black Country Plan proposed to release Green Belt land in Dudley and Walsall to build the new homes that the region needs.

As a result, the Black Country authorities have decided to prepare individual Local Plans for their own areas. The Councils continue to work together on planning issues that affect the whole region.

Why are we preparing a new Local Plan for Sandwell?

The Government requires Local Authorities to have Local Plans in place that are less than five years old and are based on up to date information. If a Local Plan is not up to date it will

be given less importance when deciding planning applications and at planning appeals. This means that the local planning authority is less able to control new development.

Having an up to date Local Plan in place helps local planning authorities direct investment and development to the right places and helps it refuse development proposed by landowners and developers in the wrong places.

We need a new Local Plan for Sandwell so that we can plan for new homes and jobs in the right places, and to prepare us for the big challenges of the future like addressing climate change.

Do we have a Local Plan in place now?

Yes. Our current plan, called the Black Country Core Strategy, was prepared with the other Black Country authorities and formally adopted in 2011. This Plan provides the current framework for the growth of the Black Country up to 2026.

We have four other documents that include more detailed policies and allocate specific land for development. The documents are called the Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document (SAD) and the West Bromwich, Smethwick and Tipton Area Action Plans (AAPs). These documents were all formally adopted over a decade ago.

When it is finished and adopted, the new Sandwell Local Plan will replace the Black Country Core Strategy, the SAD and the AAPs.

What are the stages for preparing a new Local Plan?

We began work on the new Sandwell Local Plan at the end of 2022. In February – March 2023 we held a public consultation on the issues facing Sandwell and some possible options for addressing these challenges. We have used the responses from the Issues and Options consultation and a large amount of technical evidence to produce the Draft Sandwell Local Plan. Some of the information used to prepare the Black Country Plan remains relevant and we have reused it.

The current consultation is asking residents and interested people to provide their views on the Draft Sandwell Local Plan. Details about how to get involved are provided at the end of this document.

We will use the responses to inform the preparation of the next stage of the Plan, which is called the Publication Sandwell Local Plan. There will be a further consultation on the Publication Plan in July 2024 – however, at this stage responses will only be sought on whether the Plan has been prepared in accordance with legislation and national planning guidance.

Following this, the Publication Sandwell Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State along with relevant technical evidence and consultation responses. The Secretary of State will appoint an independent Planning Inspector who will examine the Local Plan in a public forum called an Examination in Public.

If the Planning Inspector is happy with the Local Plan and finds it ‘sound’ they will recommend that it is adopted by Sandwell Council. The Planning Inspector may require changes to be made to the Local Plan before it can be adopted.

The Council will then decide whether to adopt the new Local Plan.

Preparation Timeline for the Sandwell Local Plan	
Stage	Date
Consultation on Issues and Options	February – March 2023
Consultation on the Draft Sandwell Local Plan	November – December 2023
Consultation on the Publication Sandwell Local Plan	July 2024
Submission of Plan to Secretary of State for Examination	November 2024
Examination in Public	Late 2024 – early 2025
Adoption	Late 2025 – early 2026

What does the Sandwell Local Plan need to plan for?

The Draft Sandwell Local Plan sets out proposed planning policies and proposed land use allocations to guide and manage the development of the borough up to 2041.

Our population, economy and the number of households are growing. The Local Plan needs to find land to meet our future employment needs and to ensure that enough homes can be built to accommodate new households.

Government formulas tell us that we need to provide enough land to build around 29,773 new homes by 2041. However, the latest evidence suggests we only have space for around 11,167 new homes. That means that there is a need for 18,606 new homes that we cannot meet, and we are working with other authorities in the West Midlands to see if they have space to accommodate some of Sandwell's needs.

The evidence base suggests there is demand for at least 185 hectares of new employment land by 2041. We only have 42 hectares of new employment land available on empty sites and by recycling land. That means there is a need for 143 hectares of employment land that we cannot meet. It is likely that there is space within the Black Country and other nearby authorities to accommodate all of Sandwell's needs, and we are working with other Councils to reach an agreement about how this could be distributed.

We also need to plan for:

- How we will address climate change mitigation and adaption
- How we will improve our natural environment and support wildlife
- How we will create healthy and safe places
- How we will protect and enhance our heritage
- The design standards that new development should meet
- How we will provide housing to meet the needs of different residents, including affordable housing and homes for the less abled
- How we will make our town centres more vibrant and attractive
- How we improve our transport network and support sustainable travel
- How we will minimise and manage waste, safeguard mineral resources, and reuse secondary and recycled aggregates

What development does the Draft Sandwell Local Plan propose?

We need around 29,773 new homes by 2041 however the latest evidence suggests we only have space for around 11,167 new homes. The Draft Sandwell Local Plan says where these new homes should be built, including:

- On sites already under construction (1,060 homes)
- On sites with planning permission and other commitments (1,069 homes)
- On land allocated for housing within the Draft Sandwell Local Plan including aspirational growth in West Bromwich and the Regeneration Areas (6,951 homes)
- On small windfall sites (1,868 homes)
- Above high street shops and other empty spaces in town centres (219 homes)

Around 97% of new homes will be built on previously developed or brownfield land.

There is demand for at least 185 hectares of new employment land by 2041. The evidence suggests that we only have 42 hectares of land available on empty sites and by recycling land.

What about the Green Belt?

Sandwell's Green Belt is all located in the north east of the borough. It includes land in Sandwell Valley and land between Yew Tree and Great Barr. The Green Belt plays an important role by preventing further urban sprawl between Birmingham and the Black Country, and by keeping land permanently open.

The Draft Local Plan protects all Green Belt land in Sandwell. It does not propose any changes to the boundaries of the Green Belt and does not propose any new development within the Green Belt.

There are large areas of open space in Sandwell that are not within the Green Belt, such as the Rowley Hills. The Draft Local Plan includes policies that will help protect and improve our most important open spaces.

Are we able to build all the housing and employment land that Sandwell needs?

No. Sandwell is a very urban area. There is little undeveloped land left and it is vital that we protect our most important open spaces from development.

There was a lot of mining and heavy industry in Sandwell's past. This has left a legacy of previously developed or 'brownfield' land. The borough has experienced incredible amounts of regeneration in previous decades. Places that were once polluted and degraded are now green and healthy and home to thriving communities. There is some brownfield land remaining, but not enough to meet the development needs of our growing population.

Government formulas tell us that we need to provide enough land to build around 29,773 new homes by 2041 but we only have space for around 11,167. Around 97% of new homes will be built on previously developed land. The evidence tells us that there is demand for at least 185 hectares of new employment land by 2041 but we only have space for around 42 hectares.

This means we have a need for 18,606 new homes and 143 hectares of new employment land that we cannot meet. We are asking if the other Black Country authorities and other nearby authorities like South Staffordshire, Lichfield, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have space to accommodate Sandwell's unmet needs. Birmingham has already said that it does not have enough space to meet its own housing need and might not have enough space to meet its own employment land needs.

What are the main pieces of evidence?

Local Plans must be based on up to date evidence. We have produced or commissioned studies to provide the evidence for the Draft Sandwell Local Plan on the themes of: housing, the economy, town centres, health and wellbeing, minerals and waste, transport, the environment and landscape, the Green Belt, and infrastructure. We have also assessed different sites to decide whether they are appropriate for development.

We have a legislative duty to assess the sustainability impacts of the Sandwell Local Plan in a document called the 'Sustainability Appraisal', and any effect the Plan could have on people with protected characteristics in an 'Equality Impact Assessment'.

All the evidence documents are available online and can be accessed using the details at the end of this document.

Where will the growth in Sandwell be?

The map on the following page shows the Spatial Strategy for the Draft Local Plan.

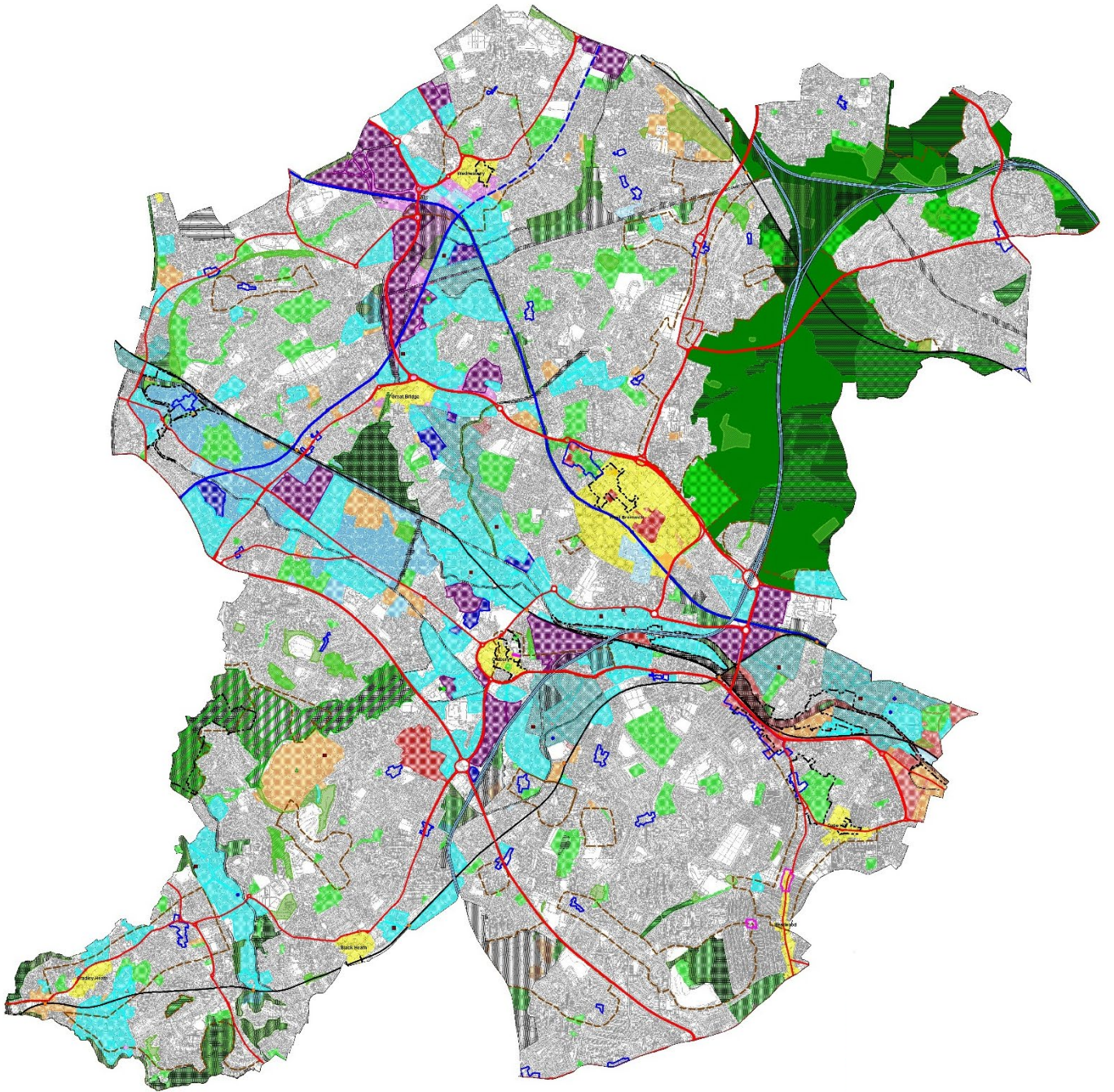
The Spatial Strategy says that West Bromwich town centre and the four Regeneration Areas in West Bromwich, Smethwick, Wednesbury and Dudley Port/Tipton will be the focus for new development, regeneration and investment in the borough up to 2041.

Other sites within the borough are identified for new homes and employment land.

All Green Belt land and areas of public open space shown on the map will be protected and will not be lost to development.

We have produced an interactive map which shows the detailed proposals for the whole of the borough. The last page of this document explains how to access the interactive map.





Sandwell Local Plan Policies Map



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How do I get involved?

It is really important that all interested people get involved in the consultation, and you don't miss your chance to have a say.

The consultation starts on Monday 6 November and **ends on Monday 18 December 2023**.



You can view the Draft Sandwell Local Plan, access the interactive map, and complete the digital comments form by scanning the QR code or visiting

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/planning/sandwell-local-plan>

Paper copies of the Draft Sandwell Local Plan and other consultation documents are also available in all Sandwell's libraries.

If you have any issues accessing the consultation documents, or would like to arrange to speak to a Planning Policy Officer, please email Sandwell_LocalPlan@sandwell.gov.uk

Or call **0121 569 4054**

What happens next?

We will use the responses to the consultation to inform the preparation of the next stage of the Plan, which is called the Publication Sandwell Local Plan. There will be a further consultation on the Publication Plan in July 2024 – however, at this stage responses will only be sought on whether the Plan has been prepared in accordance with legislation and national planning guidance.

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