



Delivering a thriving, growing and active borough

SANDWELL LOCAL PLAN

2024-2041

Publication Version

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

23 September - 4 November 2024





Sandwell Local Plan Publication

Summary Document

23 September – 4 November 2024

Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012



At least **10,434 new homes** with 97% built on previously developed land



At least **1,221 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 have prepared a new Local Plan for Sandwell and we want to hear your views on its soundness and legal compliance

Introduction

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has prepared a new Local Plan for Sandwell which covers the period to 2041. The 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. Before the Plan is submitted to Government to be examined, we want to hear your views on its soundness and legal compliance.

This document provides a summary of the main proposals in the Sandwell Local Plan as well as information about what 'soundness' means and what the legal requirements are. You can find the full version of the Publication version of the Local 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 and adopt 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 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 remained relevant and we reused it.

In November – December 2023 we held a public consultation on the Draft Sandwell Local Plan. We asked residents, business and interested people for their views on our draft planning policies, the places we think development should happen, and the places we think should be protected from development. We received over 600 comments and have used this feedback and further technical evidence to improve the Local Plan.

Before we submit the Local Plan to Secretary of State to be examined, we are asking for your views on its soundness and legal compliance. Information about what 'soundness' means and what the legal requirements are is provided below. 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. Any comments made at this stage will be sent

directly to the independent Planning Inspector who will consider them whilst examining the Plan. The Planning Inspector will only take account of comments made about the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan. Details about how to comment are provided at the end of this document.

If the Planning Inspector is happy with the Local Plan and finds it ‘sound’ and legally compliant they will recommend that it is adopted by Sandwell Council. The Planning Inspector may require modifications 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	September - November 2024
Submission of Plan to Government for Examination	November/December 2024
Examination in Public	Late 2024 – early 2025
Adoption	Late 2025 – early 2026

What does the Sandwell Local Plan need to plan for?

The 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 26,350 new homes over the period 2024-2041. However, the latest evidence suggests we only have space for around 10,434 new homes. That means that there is a need for 15,916 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 additional 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 Sandwell Local Plan propose?

The latest evidence suggests we only have space for around 10,434 new homes. The Sandwell Local Plan says where these new homes should be built, including:

- On sites already under construction (889 homes)
- On sites with planning permission and other commitments (925 homes)
- On land allocated for housing within the Draft Sandwell Local Plan including aspirational growth in West Bromwich and the Regeneration Areas (6,243 homes)
- On small windfall sites (2,100 homes)
- Above high street shops and other empty spaces in town centres (172 homes)
- On sites identified in the Wednesbury Master Plan (105 homes)

What about the Green Belt?

Sandwell's Green Belt is 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 keeping Birmingham and the Black Country separate and by keeping land permanently open.

The Local Plan protects all Green Belt land in Sandwell 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 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.

We are asking if the other Black Country authorities and other nearby authorities like Birmingham, South Staffordshire, Lichfield, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have space to accommodate Sandwell's unmet needs. The mechanism for doing this is called the Duty to Cooperate. We will publish regular updates on Duty to Cooperate discussions with other authorities during the publication, submission and examination of the Local Plan.

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 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, open space, climate change 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 Local Plan.

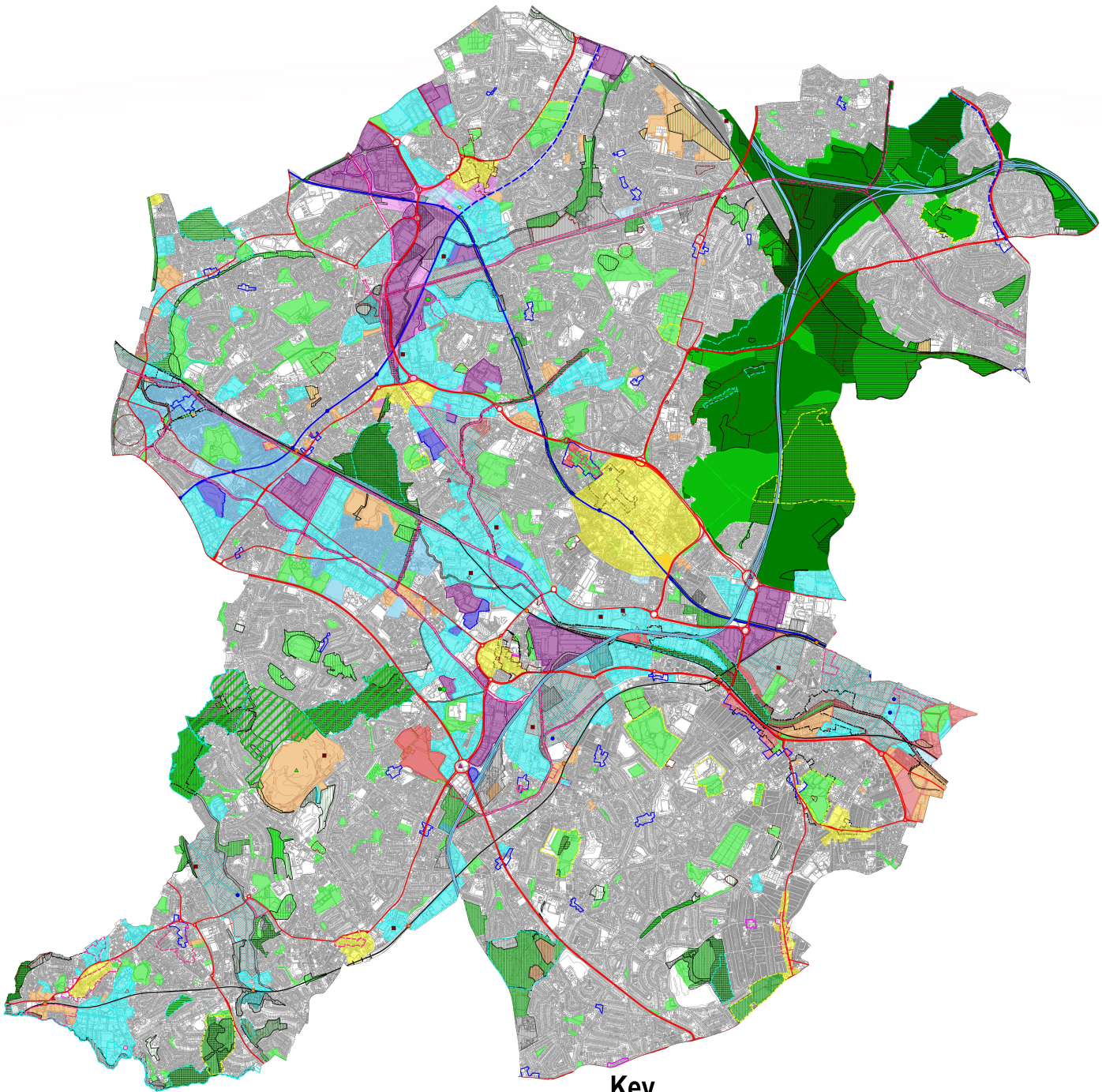
The Spatial Strategy says that West Bromwich town centre and the four Regeneration Areas in West Bromwich, Smethwick, Wednesbury and Dudley Port/Tipton will be the focus for new development, regeneration and investment in the borough up to 2041.

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



NORTH

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Key

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Employment Sites | Strategic Employment Area | Local Employment Area | Other Employment Site |
| Significant Waste Facility | Significant Metal Recycling Facility | Sandwell MBC Support Waste Facility | Hazardous Waste Facility |
| Waste Disposal Installation | Preferred Areas for New Waste Facilities | Green Belt | Dudley Port and Tipton Regeneration Area |
| Smethwick Regeneration Area | Wednesbury Regeneration Area | West Bromwich Regeneration Area | Aggregates Recycling |
| Coating Plant | Concrete Batching Plant | Rail Linked Aggregates | Archaeology Priority Area |
| Conservation Areas | Community Open Space | Local Nature Reserve | SINC |
| SLINCs | Wildlife Corridor | Key Route Network | Metro |
| Metro Stops | Rail | Rail Stations | Cycle Route - Existing |
| Cycle Route - Proposed | Housing Allocations | Gypsies, Traveller and Travelling Show people | Mixed Use Allocations |
| Town Centres | District and Local Centres | Strategic Open Space | Centres Proposals |
| Ancient Woodland | Geosties | Areas of High Historic Townscape Value | Area of High Historic Landscape Value |
| Designated Landscape of High Historic Value | Higher Value Affordable Housing Zone | Medium Value Affordable Housing Zone | Lower Value Affordable Housing Zone |
| Junction Improvements | | | |

What does ‘soundness’ mean?

For a Local Plan to be ‘sound’ it must meet four requirements set out in national planning policy:

1. **Positively prepared** – that it is planning for at least all the development Sandwell needs to accommodate the expected amount of growth, and that discussions have taken place with nearby authorities to help find space for any development needs that can’t be accommodated in Sandwell.
2. **Justified** – that the Local Plan is an appropriate strategy which has been informed by evidence, and consideration has been given to alternative strategies.
3. **Effective** – that the Local Plan can be delivered, and that issues which affect the wider region (such as building enough homes in the West Midlands) have tried to be resolved.
4. **Consistent with national policy** – that it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and other statements of national planning policy.

What are the legal requirements?

All local authorities are legally required to prepare a Local Plan.

The **Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012** (as amended) sets out the statutory process that local authorities must go through when preparing a Local Plan, including:

- What a Local Plan should include,
- Who should be consulted during its preparation and for how long,
- That the local planning authority must take into account any comments made during the consultation period, and
- What information should be submitted to Government for examination.

The **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004** (as amended) details other statutory requirements, including:

- That consultation on the Local Plan has complied with the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement,
- That the Plan contains strategic priorities, and
- That the Duty to Cooperate has been carried out with nearby authorities and prescribed bodies.

Local authorities must also comply with other legal requirements, including:

- Giving regard to people with protected characteristics and seeking to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation (**S149(1) of the Equality Act 2010**)
- Evaluating likely significant effects of implementing the plan on the environment and considering reasonable alternatives (**Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004**)

- Considering the impacts of the plan on protected habitat sites including Cannock Chase (**Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**) (as amended)

What about future changes to the plan-making system and the 2024 consultation on the revised National Planning Policy Framework?

The new Government is pursuing wide ranging changes to the plan-making system, including changes to how Local Plans will be prepared in the future and proposed amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Sandwell Council intends to benefit from the transitional arrangements proposed in the consultation version of the NPPF which was published in July 2024. The transitional arrangements allow for the Sandwell Local Plan to be prepared under the current plan-making system and for it to be examined against the current NPPF (2023).

Should the Sandwell Local Plan pass examination and be adopted by the Council, under the transitional arrangements it is likely that a review of the Plan will need to be commenced immediately.

How do I get involved?

It is really important that all interested people that have views on the soundness and legal compliance of the Local Plan get involved in the consultation.

The consultation **starts on Monday 23 September and ends on Monday 4 November 2024.**



You can view the 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/localplan>

Paper copies of the 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 submit the Local Plan, all the consultation responses, and supporting evidence and information to the Secretary of State who will appoint an independent Inspector to examine the Plan. The Inspector will examine the Plan in an open forum called an Examination in Public and may invite interested people to participate.

The Inspector will decide whether the Plan is sound and legally compliant and will recommend if the Council can adopt it as policy. They may require the Council to modify parts of the Plan to make it sound and legally compliant. The Council will then decide whether to adopt the Plan.

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