

Next Local Plan – Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Local Plan?

Local Plans are used to assess and decide on planning applications. They set out where and how development takes place through a series of policies and maps. The policies guide whether planning applications are considered acceptable or not. They aren't just about where new homes should go, but also the communities we live in, how we can look after the environment around us, how we get around, and making sure we have the access to the facilities and services we need.

The preparation of a Local Plan is informed by a number of public consultations, such as the one between 3 July and 28 August 2020, giving the chance for local people, businesses and organisations to comment. The Local Plan is drafted by the Planning Policy team taking account of these consultations. There are a number of consultation stages during the creation of the next Local Plan that you will be able to get involved in.

Why are you working on the next Local Plan now?

The current Local Plan was adopted in 2016 and covers the period up to 2029. However, Local Plans are normally replaced before their end date.

The government requires us to review our Local Plans every 5 years to ensure they are up to date. We need to make sure that our Local Plan remains consistent with national planning guidance, so when the Local Plan is reviewed we need to consider if this remains the case. There were updates to national planning policy in 2018 and 2019, with further changes expected.

By making sure our Local Plan is kept up to date, we have more control over where and how new development comes forward.

If we don't keep our Local Plan up to date, there is the potential the government could intervene and determine how a Local Plan for Test Valley should be prepared.

How do you know what to include in a Local Plan?

The Local Plan is based on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local evidence, an assessment of the infrastructure needs in the area, and feedback from consultation including with residents, businesses and organisations such as Hampshire County Council and the Environment Agency. National planning guidance indicates the information that needs to be taken into account and included in Local Plans. The Planning Policy team collate all of this information from different sources and draft a Local Plan ready to be independently assessed by a Planning Inspector.

Copies of the studies that have been prepared to provide evidence to help inform the next Local Plan are published on the Council's [website](#) as they are produced.

How long will it take to prepare the next Local Plan?

Based on our current timetable, it is intended that the next Local Plan will be completed and in place by mid-2024. This would mean submitting the Local Plan for examination by a Planning Inspector by mid-2023. More details on the timetable are available in our [Local Development Scheme \(LDS\)](#).

What timescale will the next Local Plan cover?

The timescale covered by a Local Plan is referred to as the plan period. National planning policy requires that we look ahead a minimum of 15 years from the date the Local Plan is finalised. A decision is still to be made on the exact timescale the next Local Plan will cover, as it depends on a number of factors including ongoing work with other local authorities in south Hampshire and the level of certainty of future circumstances. More information is available in section 4 of the Refined Issues and Options consultation document.

Why should I get involved?

The next Local Plan will play an important role in managing change and helping to shape what the area looks like. Therefore, this is an opportunity for people to influence what the Borough will be like in the future.

Comments we receive help us understand what is important to you and why, so we can take this into account as we draft specific policies and proposals for the next Local Plan.

It is really important that you let us know your thoughts at this stage. The earlier you get involved, the better the chance you can help influence the next Local Plan. However, you will have more opportunities to comment as the next Local Plan is progressed.

How do I comment on the Refined Issues and Options consultation?

The Refined Issues and Options consultation document has been published on the Council's website for your consideration. We would welcome your comments on this document, including but not restricted to the specific questions we have asked.

Section 9 of the Refined Issues and Options consultation document sets out how to get involved. All comments need to be returned to us by 4.30pm on Friday 28 August 2020 either via email or through the post using the details below.

planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk

Planning Policy and Economic Development Service
Test Valley Borough Council
Beech Hurst
Weyhill Road
ANDOVER
SP10 3AJ

If you have any queries about the next Local Plan, you can give us a call on 01264 368000 or [email us](#).

What happens to my comments on the next Local Plan?

We will review and take account of all the comments submitted in helping to inform our approach to the next Local Plan. As set out in our [Statement of Community Involvement](#), we will report back on how views expressed have been considered.

It will not always be possible or appropriate to follow all the comments we receive, for example we often get differing views or perspectives on issues, and sometimes suggestions are not in line with national planning guidance or are beyond the remit of planning.

How can I be kept informed of the future stages of preparing the next Local Plan?

The Planning Policy team has a database of people who would like to be kept informed about planning policy consultations, including the next Local Plan. If you would like to be added to the database, please call or email the Planning Policy team (01264 368000 or planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk). Equally, if you are on our database and no longer want to be, please get in contact and we can remove your details from our records.

For information, if you respond to a consultation on the next Local Plan, we will keep you informed of future consultation stages unless you advise us that you would want to opt out of such communications.

What happens to planning applications submitted while the next Local Plan is being written?

The adopted Local Plan remains the starting point for determining planning applications, until the next Local Plan is finalised.

However, as the preparation of the next Local Plan is progressed, the draft policies it contains can start to be considered. The importance (or weight) given to the next Local Plan policies will depend on a number of factors, including how advanced the preparation of the plan is and whether there are any unresolved objections to relevant policies (more information is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework).

Why do you need to plan for more houses?

As the population continues to grow and change in its make-up, we need to make sure there are enough homes to meet people's needs. National planning policy and guidance sets out an approach which provides the starting point for assessing how many homes we need to plan for. This takes account of changes in population as well as the affordability of housing in the area. More detail is provided in section 5 of the Refined Issues and Options consultation document.

Where is additional housing planned to go?

At this stage of the process we have not identified where additional housing might be located, or the total amount of new housing that needs to be planned for. We are asking for your views on a range of matters that will help us to make decisions. We will also need to account for national planning policy and other sources of information in making such decisions.

One of the sources of information we use is the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHLEAA), which is available from the Council's [website](#). This document collates information on sites that have been promoted for development (including for housing and economic development). This document does not allocated sites but includes an initial assessment on the suitability, availability and achievability of each. Further assessments would be undertaken to inform the identification of allocations as part of the preparation of the next Local Plan.

We would expect to set out our draft proposals for where housing, and other types of development, should be located within the Borough as part of the next stage of preparing the local plan.

How do we plan for infrastructure if more houses are planned for?

As part of the process for planning for more development (including housing), we need to also understand the amount of infrastructure required to support it. Alongside the preparation of the Local Plan, the Council gathers evidence from a range of organisations and infrastructure providers to understand what is needed to support additional growth while maintaining and enhancing the natural environment. This evidence will be set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) in support of the next Local Plan.

How do Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans fit together?

Neighbourhood Plans provide planning policies for a specific neighbourhood area – in Test Valley this is usually for the Parish. These plans are written by the local community, rather than the Borough Council. When they are finalised, they have the same importance, or weight, in making decisions on planning applications in that specific neighbourhood area as the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans need to be prepared to be consistent with 'strategic' policies within the Local Plan. They can have more detailed local policies, such as on design, and can identify land as Local Green Space as well as allocate land for new homes.

The next Local Plan will take account of the existing and emerging Neighbourhood Plans in the Borough, as well as providing the strategic policies for future Neighbourhood Plans.

More information on Neighbourhood Plans is available [here](#).

How will the next Local Plan take account of the climate emergency?

The Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and published its first action plan in June 2020. The action plan recognises the role the next Local Plan has in helping to facilitate the move towards carbon neutrality. More information is provided in section 2 of the Refined Issues and Options consultation document on the ways it can do this. Any proposals within the next Local Plan will need to take account of national policy, including in relation to climate change.

Will there be any implications of the withdrawal from the European Union, or the Covid-19 pandemic, on the preparation of the next Local Plan?

Section 2 of the Refined Issues and Options consultation document covers these matters, along with other factors that may influence the preparation of the next Local Plan.

In terms of the withdrawal from the European Union, we are currently in a transition period until the end of 2020. At this stage, it is not clear what specific implications there will be on the next Local Plan, or the wider planning system. This will be kept under review as we move forward with the preparation of the next Local Plan.

Similarly, there remains some uncertainties about the longer term implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have made some temporary changes to our approach to consultation, the details of which are available on our [website](#).