

Stafford Borough Council

New Local Plan: 2025 - 2045

Gateway 1: Self Assessment Summary (October 2026)

How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

Stafford Borough Council gave notice of its intention to begin making the New Local Plan on 3 June 2026.

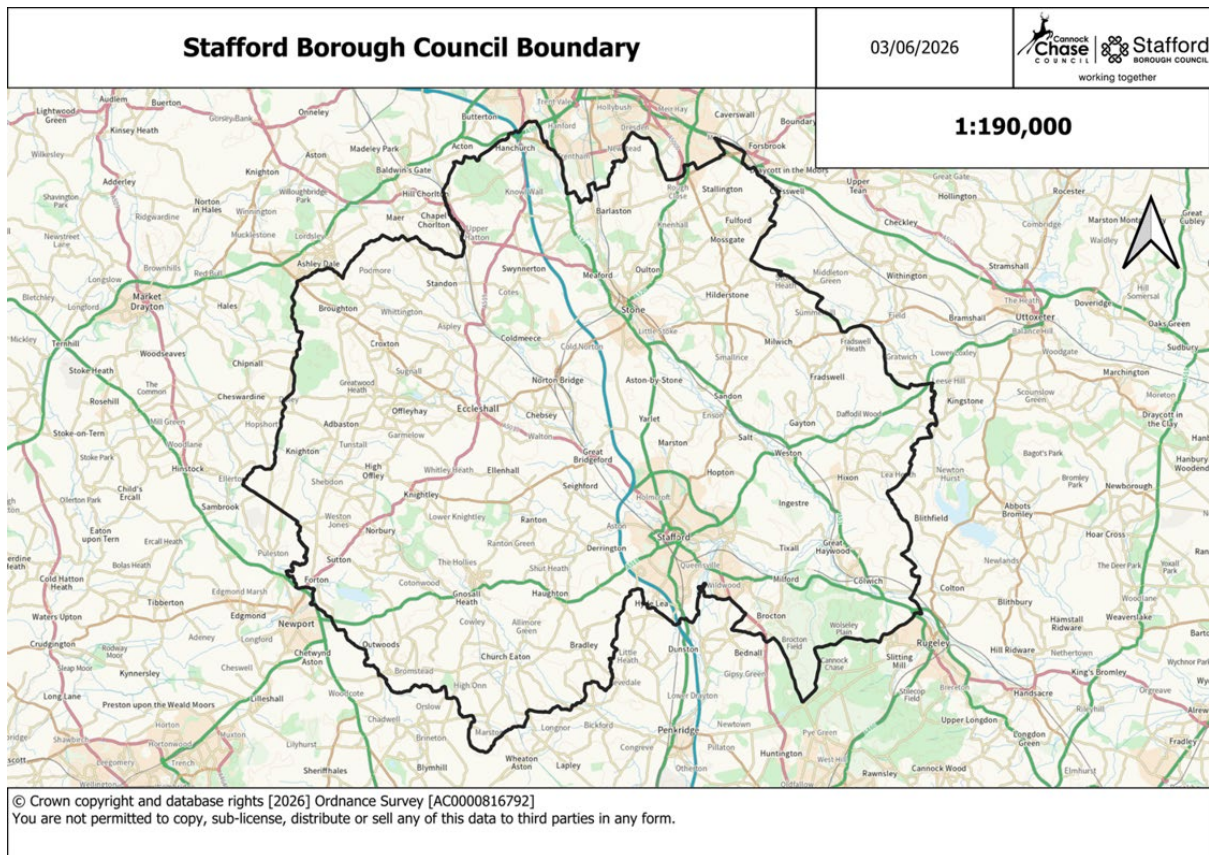
On 23 October 2026, the Council formally commenced the process of preparing the New Local Plan by passing through 'Gateway 1' and started preparing the new Local Plan for Stafford Borough.

This followed a mandatory period of 'scoping' between June and October 2026. The sections below shows how the Council has prepared itself for commencing plan-making.

Government policy states that every local authority should adopt their next Local Plan within 30 months of the respective starting date. This will ensure that every local authority has an up-to-date Local Plan that responds to the needs of their area and their communities.

This Gateway 1: Self Assessment Summary explain what the Council did to get ready to begin the 30-month plan-making timetable. We also provide links to further information, and identify where you can get updates on the preparation of our next Local Plan

We started preparing a new local plan covering the whole of the Stafford Borough administrative area, Office for National Statistics (ONS) code E07000197, on 23 October 2026. Please refer to the following relevant map:



Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.

The weblink below explains what we did to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe. It also has links to further information and where you can get updates through the New Local Plan webpage - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045

We published a timetable for preparing the plan

The New Local Plan timetable was first published on 3 June 2026 and shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing our Local Plan.

The timetable demonstrates how the Council will aim to adopt the New Local Plan within the 30-month timeframe. It details key milestones within the plan-making process, including decision dates, 'Gateway' stages and periods of consultation and engagement. We'll keep this timetable updated as we make more progress.

Currently good progress is being made for adopted the New Local Plan by April 2029, within the 30 month timeframe, as set out in the current timetable:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan-timetable.

Under the new plan-making arrangements, there are three Gateway stages. This current stage of self assessment represents Gateway 1 which is required to begin the 30-month plan-making and adoption process. Gateways 2 and 3 include discussions with the Planning Inspectorate about key aspects of the Local Plan.

These Gateways are combined with important stages of engagement to allow communities and other stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to plan-making.

To help deliver our next Local Plan within 30 months:

- The Council's Head of Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning has the authority to update the plan-making timetable to manage the process and to avoid delays.
- A consultation programme has been established to undertake appropriately timed, targeted and efficient engagement, including a digital-led approach.
- The Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee will help assess and support the plan-making process.

It should be noted that some of the key milestones in the '30-month timetable' may need to change to positively respond to engagement feedback, new evidence, national policy change, and the progress of wider infrastructure & environmental assessment work.

To allow us to respond to such changes, whilst seeking to achieve the 30-month timeframe, some flexibility may be incorporated regarding the specific timing of key milestones in the overall process.

In this way, our plan-making timetable provides confidence in the deliverability timescales of our next Local Plan, whilst allowing for monitoring and adjustments to the programme where necessary.

For this reason, the Council commits to keeping the plan-making timetable under review.

We established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing the New Local Plan is a complex process. It involves many people across the communities, key stakeholders, our Council and from other organisations in the plan-making process.

Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us monitor our progress and keep the work on track to the timescales. It also helps us anticipate and manage any risks to adopting the Local Plan within 30 months.

Prior to moving through Gateway 1, the Council have established project management and governance to ensure the New Local Plan 2025 to 2045 can be delivered.

Governance arrangements are in place through the Council's constitution for key decisions to be taken by Cabinet, consultation responses and the New Local Plan process to be scrutinised by Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee, with Full Council to agree the New Local Plan for examination.

We planned how we'll consult on the plan

Public consultation is essential for the local plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops.

By planning this early, we can ensure people are aware in advance and can get involved from the start.

A Scoping and Participation consultation on the New Local Plan took place between 8 June 2026 and 28 July 2026 to get people's views on what the plan could contain and how we propose to consult on the plan at key stages.

This included the following key themes alongside the current position and consultation questions:

- Addressing climate change
- Design, healthy lifestyles and safe communities
- Nature recovery and biodiversity
- Protecting landscapes, townscapes and heritage
- Transport and connectivity
- Right infrastructure in the right places
- Meeting our housing needs and delivering the right types of housing
- Securing economic prosperity

Based on the responses received to the Scoping and Participation consultation, the Council have established the key communication and engagement approach for the remainder of the plan-making process.

Further details will be set out in early December 2026 when the Communication and Engagement Strategy is published, based on the following vision and key objectives:

Our Vision

- The Borough Council believes that local community participation and involvement is central to the delivery of sustainable development and helps to provide effective planning for the future.
- Our vision is “to provide a platform for people to express their views on planning matters and share their local knowledge in an interactive and inclusive manner, to help inform plan making decisions and create effective strategies.”
- To achieve our vision we will:
 - create and prepare planning policy documents in a user-friendly manner
 - ensure our methods and approach are transparent and accessible to help people understand the plan making process better
 - record and assess responses to help inform Planning Policy Documents
 - seek to work with groups and individuals who do not normally engage with plan making
 - encourage developers to engage with local communities on their proposals as soon as practicable.

For further information please view the Council’s New Local Plan 2025-2045 webpage - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045.

We began scoping the content of the plan

Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions.

Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision, making it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it.

A key part of this work progressed through the Scoping and Participation consultation stage during June and July 2026.

To gain an understanding of the development needs for our area, we have looked at the existing evidence about our area and the people our plan needs to provide for. We have also considered our current local plan and how well it has delivered for our communities and what may need changing.

We are continuing to gathered baseline information and a wider evidence base to inform preparations for the New Local Plan, available via our website through the following links:

Stafford Borough Local Plan 2025-2045: Evidence Base Documents - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/stafford-borough-local-plan-2025-2045-evidence-base-documents

Stafford Borough Council - Monitoring - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/monitoring

Using the information we have gathered along with the input from our decision makers, to be made available at the Local Plan content and evidence consultation stage in June and July 2027, we will:

- draft a vision for the area
- understand the development requirements for our area
- identify where new developments could be located
- prepare new planning policies and information or data we need for decision making about new developments

For further information please view the Local Plan 2025-2045 evidence base webpage: www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

We're legally required to identify, describe and evaluate likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing the local plan on its adoption
- reasonable alternative options, taking into account the New Local Plan's objectives and scope

This process will consider how community, national and international environmental protection objectives and any other environmental challenges are taken into account in the plan. It will help us to predict significant environmental effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting them.

Across the Stafford Borough area there are a number of internationally and nationally significant nature conservation designations and sites, including their immediately surrounding areas which may not be suitable for development because of environmental factors.

It is important we start this work early and are transparent about how we are carrying out the assessment when engaging stakeholders and local communities.

The Council have already identified other relevant plans and programmes and collected baseline information, looked at the area's environment and relevant designations to identify key issues and opportunities.

A set of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) objectives and an assessment methodology to be used to assess the likely environmental effects of the New Local Plan was published for consultation in June and July 2026 as part of the Scoping and Participation stage, through the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sustainability-appraisal-strategic-environmental-assessment-scoping-report

The Council are currently progressing with the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment process alongside developing the Local Plan content and evidence consultation for June and July 2027 to work with specialists as part of an on-going assessment process to refine the SEA scope and level of detail to include in our draft subsequent environmental report.

How to stay up to date

If you wish to receive updates about the Stafford Borough New Local Plan process and be added to the Local Plan database for notification about future consultation events, please email strategicplanning@staffordbc.gov.uk.

Latest news and information on the progress of our next Local Plan will be provided as planning news on our website via:

New Local Plan 2025 to 2045 - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045

Local Plan and Policies - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan-and-policies