



# Local Development Scheme 2025

Stafford Borough Council

# **Stafford Borough Local Plan 2025 - 2045**

## **Local Development Scheme: March 2025**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Stafford Borough Council is required to produce a Local Development Scheme which sets out the Council's commitment to the production of various planning policy documents and a timetable for their production.
- 1.2 This Local Development Scheme covers the period 2025 – 2029. It replaces all previous Local Development Schemes. The Stafford Borough Local Development Scheme will:
  - Define the Development Plan for the area
  - Set out a schedule and a profile for proposed planning policy documents
  - Explain how progress in producing planning policy documents against the Local Development Scheme will be monitored, and how the LDS will be reviewed.
- 1.3 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024 and came into immediate effect for decision-taking on 12 December 2024. For plan-making the NPPF came into effect on 12 March 2025. The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Local Authorities must each produce a Local Plan that is in conformity with the NPPF and the NPPG.
- 1.4 The NPPG (December 2024) states that local planning authorities must keep communities informed of plan making activity, by publicising and keeping up to date their timetable for producing their Local Plan in a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS should be published on the authority's web site.
- 1.5 A Written Ministerial Statement on 12 December 2024 by Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Planning and Housing required all local planning authorities to update their plan making timetables and provide a copy of them to the Secretary of State by 6 March 2025. The LDS should be made publicly available and include clear, realistic and specific dates for consultation upon, and submission of the Stafford Borough Local Plan for examination.
- 1.6 Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. The adopted Statement of Community Involvement establishes the community engagement and involvement techniques for planning documents. Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For this reason, Local Planning Authorities should have an up to date Local Plan in place.

- 1.7 Under the Localism Act 2011, Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by a Parish Council, or an organisation or body designated as a Neighbourhood Forum to provide detailed guidance on specific issues. These will be subject to independent Examination and a local Referendum. If approved at the Referendum the Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the Development Plan used for decision making.

## **2. Stafford Borough Development Plan**

- 2.1 The Development Plan for Stafford Borough currently consists of the Plan for Stafford Borough adopted on 19 June 2014 and the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 adopted on 31 January 2017. These Plans replace and supersede all saved policies of the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001. In addition Stafford Borough is covered by the Minerals Local Plan for Staffordshire 2015-2030, adopted on 16 February 2017, and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Waste Joint Waste Local Plan 2010-2026, adopted on 22 March 2013, both produced by Staffordshire County Council.
- 2.2 The Plan for Stafford Borough sets out the vision, key objectives and spatial strategy for the Borough. It is the over-arching policy document to which any other planning policy documents must comply. The Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 sets out the approach to development in the sustainable settlement hierarchy by establishing settlement boundaries for Stafford, Stone and the Key Service Villages, and boundaries for the Recognised Industrial Estates. It also includes a policy on protecting social and community facilities.
- 2.3 As stated above Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by a Parish Council, or an organisation or body designated as a Neighbourhood Forum to provide detailed guidance on specific issues. The following Neighbourhood Plans have been made (adopted) and form part of the Development Plan for Stafford Borough in determining planning applications within the relevant Parishes alongside the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough and Part 2:
- Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan made on 24 November 2015
  - Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan made on 26 July 2016
  - Hixon Neighbourhood Plan made on 22 November 2016
  - Colwich Neighbourhood Plan made on 22 November 2016
  - Barlaston Neighbourhood Plan made on 23 July 2019
  - Stone Neighbourhood Plan made on 20 July 2021

Further information on Neighbourhood Plans contained in section 3.

- 2.4 Monitoring the delivery of the Plan for Stafford Borough and Part 2 policies is undertaken annually, the results of which are reported in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

### 3. Planning Policy Documents

#### Stafford Borough Local Plan 2025 - 2045

- 3.1 The Local Plan 2025 - 2045 will fully replace the Plan for Stafford Borough (PFSB) and the PFSB Part 2 with a new development strategy, site allocations and Development Management policies.
- 3.2 Councils must review their Local Plans at least once every five years from the adoption date to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community.
- 3.3 The new Local Plan will be prepared as a new-style Development Plan as part of the Government's reforms to the plan making system. The Local Plan timetable set out below is indicative and based on the new 30-month plan system approach which is anticipated to be introduced later in 2025 when further information is made available.

| <b>Process Stage</b>                    | <b>Date</b>              |
|---|--------------------------|
| Scoping and early participation         | September 2025           |
| Notice period intention to start plan   | May 2026                 |
| Gateway 1                               | September 2026           |
| Plan visioning and strategy development | September 2026           |
| Mandatory public consultation           | October - November 2026  |
| Evidence gathering and plan drafting    | October - December 2026  |
| Gateway 2                               | December 2026            |
| Mandatory public consultation           | January - February 2027  |
| Engagement, changes and submission      | April 2027               |
| Gateway 3                               | May 2027                 |
| Examination                             | June - November 2027     |
| Adoption                                | November / December 2027 |

## **Policies Map**

- 3.4 Local Plans must be accompanied by a policies map to illustrate geographically the policies and development allocations. The policies map for Stafford Borough will be prepared and adopted as part of the New Local Plan process.

## **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)**

- 3.5 In April 2018 the Council adopted a Design SPD and a Shopfronts and Advertisements SPD to provide further guidance on specific matters linked to adopted policies within the Plan for Stafford Borough. SPDs do not form part of the statutory Development Plan but are subject to consultation prior to adoption. The Design SPD replaced the previous Space About Dwellings and Extensions to Dwellings Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## **Developer Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

- 3.6 The Council is considering its approach to securing developer contributions through new developments in light of National legislation and planning policies, including a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) alongside the new Local Plan.
- 3.7 CIL is a levy that local authorities in England and Wales can choose to charge on new developments in their area together with Section 106 developer contributions. The money raised from CIL can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the Council, local community and neighbourhoods need, such as new or safer road schemes, footpaths and park improvements, or a new health centre for example.
- 3.8 It should be noted that the Council publishes an Infrastructure Funding Statement in December each year to provide further information about developer contributions.

## **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

- 3.9 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted on 20 November 2018. It sets out how and when people can get involved in the planning process. It explains the different stages of the plan-making process, and the various methods the Council will use to gather views on emerging planning policy. It also sets out how planning applications will be publicised, and how to put forward views. It outlines who is involved in making planning decisions, their roles, and how people can get involved in the process. A new Statement of Community Involvement will be prepared, consulted upon and adopted prior to Gateway 1 in September 2026.

## **Supporting Evidence**

- 3.10 Sound Planning Policy documents rely upon a robust and up to date evidence base. The Council will maintain an up to date evidence base to support policy production. All revised and updated evidence documents will be published on the Council's website.
- 3.11 Whilst a number of current evidence based documents are listed below, it should be noted that the Council will publish others in the course of preparing new planning policy documents to improve the evidence base for the Development Plan.
- 3.12 Background and technical studies forming part of the evidence base include:
- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy
  - Playing Pitch and Sport Facilities Strategies / Assessments
  - The Housing Monitor: Land for New Homes and 5 year Housing Land Supply
  - Economic and Housing Development Needs Assessment
  - Settlement Assessment of Services and Facilities
  - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments
  - Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)
  - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Water Cycle Study
  - Town Centre Capacity Assessment
  - Integrated Transport Strategy and associated Transport reports
  - Historic Environment Site Assessments
  - Ecological Site Assessments
  - Landscape Character Site Assessments
  - Design Coding
  - Infrastructure Delivery Plan
  - Staffordshire County Council Education update

- Whole Plan Viability Assessment – Stage 1
- Developer Site Information – proposed allocations

### **Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment**

3.13 The production and consultation on planning policy documents is assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal process, incorporating the requirements detailed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The requirements for the Habitats Regulations Assessment Directive are dealt with separately.

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

3.14 Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by a Parish Council, or an organisation or body designated as a Neighbourhood Forum to provide detailed guidance on specific issues. The initial stage in production of a Neighbourhood Plan is the designation of a Neighbourhood Area. In Stafford Borough thirteen Neighbourhood Areas have been designated, all of which are Parishes. The dates of designation are set out below together with relevant web-site links for the Parish Councils.

3.15 The individual Parish Council's are responsible for producing the Neighbourhood Plan. For information regarding production timescales of emerging Neighbourhood Plans please contact the relevant Parish Council, details can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Parish Council name and web address, the designation date for a Neighbourhood Area and the made / adopted date for their Neighbourhood Plan.

| <b>Parish Council</b> | <b>Web Address</b>   | <b>Designation date</b> | <b>Made / adopted date</b> |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Barlaston             | <a href="http://www.barlaston.org.uk">www.barlaston.org.uk</a>                                     | 4 Jul 2013              | 23 Jul 2019                |
| Colwich               | <a href="http://www.colwich.info">www.colwich.info</a>   | 7 Feb 2013              | 22 Nov 2016                |
| Doxey                 | <a href="http://www.doxeyparishcouncil.gov.uk">www.doxeyparishcouncil.gov.uk</a>                   | 2 Jul 2020              | N/A                        |
| Eccleshall            | <a href="http://www.eccleshallparishcouncil.org">www.eccleshallparishcouncil.org</a>               | 4 Jul 2013              | 26 Jul 2016                |
| Gnosall               | <a href="http://www.gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk">www.gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk</a>               | 4 Jul 2013              | 24 Nov 2015                |
| High Offley           | <a href="http://www.highoffleyparishcouncil.org.uk">www.highoffleyparishcouncil.org.uk</a>         | 3 Mar 2016              | 20 Mar 2020                |
| Hixon                 | <a href="http://www.hixon.gov.uk">www.hixon.gov.uk</a>   | 4 July 2013             | 22 Nov 2016                |
| Hopton and Coton      | <a href="http://www.hoptonandcotonparishcouncil.org.uk">www.hoptonandcotonparishcouncil.org.uk</a> | 5 Mar 2020              | N/A                        |

| <b>Parish Council</b>    | <b>Web Address</b>   | <b>Designation date</b> | <b>Made / adopted date</b> |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Sandon and Burston       | -  | 7 Feb 2013              | 5 Jan 2017                 |
| Stone Town               | <a href="http://www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk">www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk</a>               | 8 Dec 2015              | 20 Jul 2021                |
| Swynnerton               | <a href="http://www.swynnertonparishcouncil.org.uk">www.swynnertonparishcouncil.org.uk</a> | 3 Jul 2014              | N/A                        |
| Yarnfield and Cold Meece | <a href="http://www.ycm-pc.org.uk">www.ycm-pc.org.uk</a>                                   | 5 Aug 2021              | N/A                        |
| Fulford                  | <a href="http://www.fulfordparishcouncil.gov.uk">www.fulfordparishcouncil.gov.uk</a>       | 5 Dec 2024              | N/A                        |

## **4. Council Procedures and Risk Assessment**

### **Council Procedures**

- 4.1 Stafford Borough Council has a Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and Full Council structure. The Cabinet will agree proposals for all draft policy documents, will review evidence, lead the consultation process, and assess results from the community involvement and consultation stages.
- 4.2 Full Council will approve the submission and adoption of the finalised policy documents, based on recommendations from Cabinet.

### **Risk Assessment**

- 4.3 In preparing the Local Development Scheme it is important to acknowledge that the work programme has been established on the existing maximum resource capacity contained within the Strategic Planning and Placemaking Team. This resource capacity is 4 Full Time Employees.
- 4.4 The principle ‘risk’ for the process would be a delay occurring in any preparation stage through to adoption of an individual planning policy document. The main areas of risk, which may lead to a delay in the implementation of the work programme, are set out below.
- 4.5 Whilst the Council will seek to ensure that the Local Plan is progressed in accordance with the latest timetable and minimise any risks of delay, it should be noted that the following external factors are beyond the Council’s control and may have an impact:

- Changes in Government legislation, regulations and policy

- Unanticipated scale and nature of consultation responses received including new evidence submitted unexpectedly
- Failure of key partners and other agencies to deliver evidence on time and make responses to key elements of the process
- Unanticipated delays in external events such as resource capacity of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for the Examination process or failure to deliver robust arrangements for this process

4.6 It should be noted that the following risks can be considered and effectively managed by the Council:

- Staff turnover, recruitment difficulties and sickness absences leading to inadequate skills base
- Political changes, procedural delays or failure to meet Council deadlines
- Non-conformity and failure in the tests of soundness for new planning policy documents

## **5. Monitoring and Review**

### **Monitoring and Review**

- 5.1 The Government requires that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) is reviewed, when necessary, and kept up to date by taking account of progress on the programme and monitoring of the evidence base and adopted policies. However there may be the need to review the LDS more frequently if unforeseen changes occur to the Local Plan programme.
- 5.2 The LDS will be reviewed through the annual Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), which monitors policies from the beginning of April to the end of March. The AMR will be published before 31 December each year.
- 5.3 The AMR will review actual plan progress over the year compared to the targets and milestones set out in the LDS. It will assess:
- whether Stafford Borough Council is meeting, or is on track to meet, the targets and consultation milestones set out in the Local Development Scheme;
  - if the Council is falling behind schedule or has failed to meet a target or milestone, the reasons for this;
  - the need to update the LDS in light of the above, and if so, the necessary steps and timetable;

- whether any policies need to be replaced to meet sustainable development objectives; and
- what action needs to be taken if policies need to be replaced.