

**Stafford Borough Council
New Local Plan 2025 - 2045
Project Initiation Document
(October 2026)**

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Overview

Project Title:

Stafford Borough Council New Local Plan 2025-2045

Purpose of this Project Initiation Document:

- This Project Initiation Document (PID) sets out the framework and approach for producing the Stafford Borough New Local Plan 2025-2045, including explaining how the project will be managed, resourced and delivered within the 30-month plan-making system. It provides clarity on the plan's scope, governance arrangements, resources and timelines. The PID is designed as a reference tool for the Strategic Planning team, stakeholders and Council's Members to support effective decision-making and ensuring everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities throughout the plan-making process. This PID provides the basis for the management of the project and, ultimately, a basis to assess its success.
- The contents of this PID, including the timetable, are subject to the changes and updates of national planning policy through which a new Local Plan will be progressed. The new Local Plan is a statutory requirement, and the PID provides the structured programme and resources need to ensure the Council meets the new legal duties. Through the Gateway assessments it is expected by Government that all local planning authorities will prepare an up-to-date Local Plan.

Executive Summary

Stafford Borough Council is required to prepare a new Local Plan, in line with national planning legislation and the 30-month plan-making system, to replace the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031. This is necessary to ensure that a statutory Development Plan is in place that is up-to-date, reflects national policy requirements, responds to the Council's corporate priorities and addresses the Borough's development needs within the environmental, social and economic context.

This Project Initiation Document (PID) sets out the key requirements for the Council to produce the new Local Plan covering the period 2025-2045 including defining the legal requirements, scope, resourcing, programme, risks, evidence base and governance.

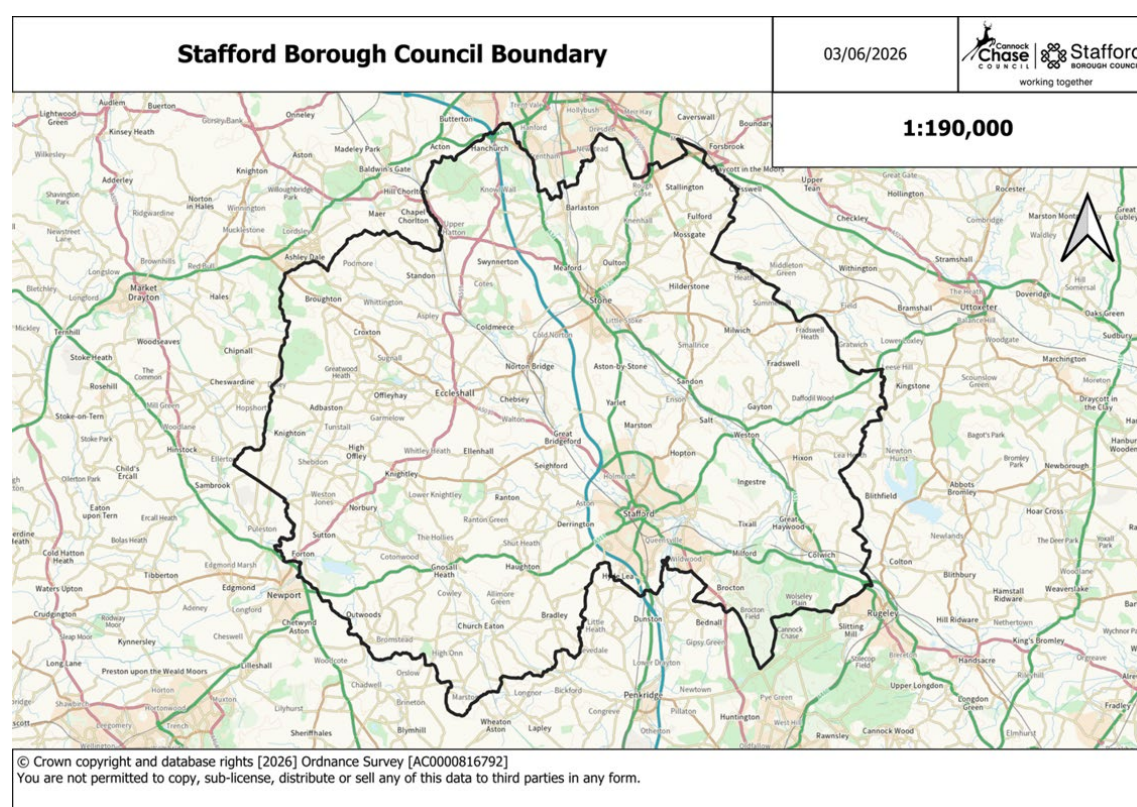
Plan-making does not take place in a vacuum and it is important to consider external factors including the relationships with stakeholder plans, programmes and activities together with cross boundary strategic issues. Ensuring value for money, joint-working and ongoing engagement with neighbouring authorities is an important consideration to future-proof the evidence base work and the plan itself. Most significantly, the New Local Plan will need to ensure alignment with an emerging Spatial Development Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent that will be prepared by the forthcoming Strategic Authority, subject to timings and progress.

The PID sets out the broad scope of the new plan process, including updated assessments of housing and economic needs, climate resilience and flood risk, nature recovery, landscape sensitivity, infrastructure capacity, heritage protection, design quality and the functional needs of the Boroughs' communities and economy. A comprehensive suite of technical evidence will support the plan, including but not limited to a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, and a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This evidence will inform policy development, site assessments, the spatial strategy, environmental constraints and the place-based approach for new development.

The Local Plan will be prepared in accordance with the new 30-month plan-making process and associated Gateway assessments through the Planning Inspectorate. The timetable in the PID aligns with expected national regulations, providing a structured pathway from initial evidence gathering to adoption. The PID also outlines the risks to delivery, particularly consultant availability, interdependencies between evidence studies, internal capacity pressures and potential shifts in national policy, and sets out mitigation measures.

The New Local Plan will address the statutory requirement for a long-term planning framework for the Borough in line with changes to national policy. The PID provides the foundation for programme governance, procurement, risk management, budget oversight and stakeholder engagement ensuring the plan can be prepared in a timely, legally compliant and well-evidenced manner that meets national requirements and supports the Council's strategic priorities.

The New Local Plan covers the whole of the Stafford Borough administrative area, Office for National Statistics (ONS) code E07000197. Please refer to the relevant map below:



Further information about the New Local Plan process and associated programme can be accessed through the following Stafford Borough Council webpages:

- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan-timetable
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/stafford-borough-local-plan-2025-2045-evidence-base-documents
- experience.arcgis.com/experience/14dfc5f5a3034bc0a7deba6c35737fa1 - interactive map providing published information about Stafford Borough on population demographics, the environment and administrative boundaries relevant to this consultation
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan-and-policies

1. Plan Scope

Role of Plan

- 1.1 As a Local Planning Authority (LPA), we have a statutory duty under both the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to prepare and adopt a Local Plan. Government expects new plans to be simpler, shorter and more visual. The Local Plan establishes how land within our area will be protected, used and developed, setting out priorities for housing, employment, infrastructure, design and environmental standards. A Cabinet decision was taken on 6 March 2025 to start a new plan-making process in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published on 12 December 2024.
- 1.2 The Government's Standard Method Calculation, published in December 2024 alongside the NPPF, provided the initial benchmark for determining local housing need. The subsequent NPPF published in August 2026 set out non-statutory plan-making and decision-making policies across a full range of planning matters including alignment with any operative spatial development strategy relevant to our area. Legislation empowers the Secretary of State to specify matters our plan must or may address. Once adopted, the Local Plan will serve as the principal basis for making planning decisions, directly shaping the future growth, development, and sustainability of our communities.

Summary of Plan Scope

- 1.3 The new Local Plan will set a vision, aim and objectives, development strategy, policies and sites for the management of land use and development in Stafford Borough, and will guide infrastructure investment. Under the new plan-making framework, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will need to be covered by a single plan within the context of the statutory Development Plan system and associated National policy context. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in August 2026 set out non-statutory plan-making and decision-making policies, including reference to Local Plans covering a period not less than 10 years from adoption (NPPF, PM2: Local Plans). Inevitably the scope that is defined here, at the outset of the project, is not exhaustive but is intended to provide an overview of the key matters and drivers that will shape this new Local Plan.

- 1.4 Under the new plan-making system, Supplementary Planning Documents will remain in force until planning authorities adopt a new style plan. There will be the opportunity to produce new Supplementary Plans which will have the same weight as other parts of the Development Plan and will be independently examined. Therefore, in scoping the new Local Plan, it will be necessary to consider whether the advice and guidance presented in the adopted Supplementary Planning Documents is still relevant and if so, whether it should be revised and re-published as guidance or integrated into the new style local plan.

Local Matters

- 1.5 One of the key matters for the New Local Plan is to assess and determine the Borough's development needs, most notably housing, including the location and form of development to ensure the Local Plan fully reflects the Council's corporate commitment to addressing the climate emergency through mitigation and adaptation - in line with national policy requirements:

- Housing
 - Reflect the new standard method Local Housing Need requirement
 - Assess the evidence regarding Housing Need in the Borough including the affordable housing requirement and meeting the needs of all
- Economy and Skills
 - Assess the evidence regarding Employment Need in the Borough
 - Support local businesses and tourism in appropriate locations, including new facilities where appropriate
 - Develop skills and training opportunities for local communities
- Transport and Infrastructure
 - Improve transport links whilst reducing carbon emissions
 - Encourage sustainable development and improve transport connectivity in relation to new development sites
 - Maintain and enhance education and health infrastructure
- Health and Wellbeing
 - Promote well-being through community engagement, and access to open space, leisure facilities and nature

- Delivering high-quality design through all new developments
- Natural and Historic Environment
 - Protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and landscape, particularly the Cannock Chase National Landscape and designated nature conservation sites including increasing biodiversity
 - Protect and conserve the historic environment through the Borough's Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

1.6 The new Local Plan 2025-2045 will replace the existing Stafford Borough Development Plan Documents, including the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031, that constitute the planning policy framework and set the overall vision, objectives and policies to guide development in the Borough. The Local Plan 2011 to 2031 covering Stafford Borough comprises the following adopted documents:

- The Plan for Stafford Borough - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/pfsb-adoption-2011-2031 (adopted 19 June 2014)
- The Plan for Stafford Borough - Part 2 - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/pfsb-part-2-adoption-2011-2031 (adopted 31 January 2017)
- Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/gnosall-neighbourhood-plan (made / adopted 24 November 2015)
- Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/eccleshall-neighbourhood-plan (made / adopted 26 July 2016)
- Colwich Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/colwich-neighbourhood-plan (made / adopted 22 November 2016)
- Hixon Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/hixon-neighbourhood-plan (made / adopted 22 November 2016)
- Barlaston Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/barlaston-neighbourhood-plan1 (made / adopted 23 July 2019)
- Stone Neighbourhood Plan for the Town Parish - www.staffordbc.gov.uk/stone-neighbourhood-plan-referendum (made / adopted 20 July 2021)

Relationship to other relevant plans and programmes at the regional or local level:

- 1.7 National Planning Reform: The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 and the subsequent secondary legislation are introducing a fundamentally restructured plan-making system, including a faster 30-month preparation period and clearer national expectations for consistency and standardisation.
- 1.8 Government guidance issued on 27 November 2025 concerning the new plan-making process included reference to using a Project Initiation Document (PID) to help getting ready to prepare a new plan through a web-link to the PAS designed suggested template.
- 1.9 During March 2026 further information was release, with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 coming into effect on 25 March 2026 together with further policy and guidance provided to support the new plan-making system. Details provided includes the requirements of work to be completed prior to the 30-month period to produce a New Local Plan beginning at Gateway 1 as well as at each stage including:
 - **Digital plan:** expectation that plans will be more map based and less wordy. Take a digital-first approach, prioritising digital formats and complying with defined data standards
 - **Timetable:** Local Development Scheme (LDS) replaced by a Local Plan timetable with a universal reporting format. Local planning authorities must revise their timetable to bring it up to date, and reviewed regularly, in line with national guidance.
 - **Environmental Assessment:** The Government expect that all local plans will need to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment. This means that the Council will need to commission a Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment to be published for consultation at the same time as the plan.
 - **Loss of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):** The existing system of SPDs has been replaced by new Supplementary Plans. These carry full statutory weight, equivalent to the Local Plan, though are generally limited to specific areas or topics, rather than being authority-wide documents; with the exception of Design Codes which can be prepared at authority-wide scale. It will be necessary to identify which current SPD-type content can be absorbed into the Local Plan or incorporated into a future Supplementary Plan or Design Code.

- **Design Code:** A type of supplementary plan that would have the same status as the Local Plan and is mandatory under the new planning system.
- **Environment Outcomes Report:** The Government intends to replace the current Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal process with the new Environmental Outcomes Report (EOR) system. The intention is for assessment to become more outcome-focused, with plans measured against a national Outcomes Framework and associated targets. This reflects the broader national direction toward simplification, standardisation, and clear reporting within the streamlined plan-making process.
- **Timings:** Publishing the timetable, the 'notice to commence' plan making alongside the notice of scoping consultation must all be published together ahead of the Scoping Consultation documentation, at least 4 months before preparing the plan
- **Evidence:** There is no definitive list of evidence that Local Planning Authorities are expected to gather at this stage. Nevertheless it is important to start working on the vision, land availability and evidence before Gateway 1. The Government suggest gathering general evidence such as 'retail, Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment, Employment land and strategic flood risk assessment' during months 1-23 although other evidence based studies will also be required.
- **Consultations:** Notice of Scoping Consultation to be published alongside the notice of intention to commence plan making (no duration specified). There are two stages of public consultation as part of the New Local Plan process with intended durations of 6 weeks and 8 weeks respectively, with consultation summaries to be published following each consultation period.
- **Gateway supervision:** Gateway 1 is self-administrated (must fill in and publish information on a set template), with Gateways 2 and 3 subject to external assessment which determines whether and how the authority proceed. The advice received must be published.
- **Work with key stakeholders throughout:** supplement formal consultations with informal interactions on a more ongoing basis as appropriate, to maintain progress and resolve challenges more proactively. Preparing Statements of Common Ground may also be needed.

- **Examination:** after a local plan has been submitted for examination, the Local Planning Authority may only withdraw the plan if the examiner recommends that they do so or if the Secretary of State directs that the plan is to be withdrawn. There is still the option of a maximum 6 month length pause during the examination to do further work, with the potential to allow an extension to the timeframe if it's necessary to consult on modifications.
 - **Policies Map:** The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 require local planning authorities to bring their policies map up to date as soon as is reasonably practicable after an identified event occurs.
 - **Monitoring:** In addition to Authority Monitoring Reports (AMR's) the Council must publish a plan evaluation report in year 4 after the Plan has been adopted which informs the next version of the plan and considers which policies and sites to be taken forward into the next version.
 - **Review:** Every 5 years as a minimum - but it may be able to bring existing sites and policies into the new version of the Local Plan.
- 1.10 Further updates have been shared and continue to be provided through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Local Plan roadmap web-page to assist with progress different elements of the programme.
- 1.11 On 3 June 2026 the Council published the New Local Plan 2025-2045 timetable, based on the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and associated guidance which was submitted to Government alongside the Notice of Intention to Commence (Regulation 19) with the Local Plan process and the Notice of Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20) on the New Local Plan.
- 1.12 Consultation on the New Local Plan 2025-2045 'Scoping the Issues and Early Participation', the 'Communication and Engagement Strategy', and 'Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report' took place from 8 June until 28 July 2026.

- 1.13 The National Planning Policy Framework was published as a new version on 17 August 2026 containing non-statutory plan-making and decision-making policies. Paragraph 3 of the NPPF reflects the position of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2024 that requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with an adopted Local Plan:

'If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, 38(6)

- 1.14 National planning policy changes will be considered in the new Local Plan alongside emerging national planning reforms as appropriate.

2. Plan Timetable

Programme and Process Stages

- 2.1 The published Local Plan Timetable sets out the programme for producing the new Local Plan and is presented below. This programme is based on more detailed work plans covering different workstreams, their interdependencies, resource availability and the 30-month Local Plan process published by the Government.

Process Stage	Proposed Completion Date
Publish Local Plan timetable	3 June 2026
Publish Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation	3 June 2026
Publish Notice of Scoping Consultation	3 June 2026
Scoping Consultation	8 June to 28 July 2026
Gateway 1: self assessment of readiness	30 October 2026
Publish Notice of Proposed Local Plan content and evidence consultation	2 June 2027
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan content and evidence	7 June and 27 July 2027
Gateway 2	20 December 2027
Publish Notice of Proposed Local Plan consultation	27 May 2028

Process Stage	Proposed Completion Date
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan	5 June and 17 July 2028
Gateway 3	29 September 2028
Submission to Examination	30 October 2028
Adoption	30 April 2029

2.2 The Local Plan Timetable is based on the following Town and Country Planning (Local Plans) England Regulations 2026 as set out in the Notice of Scoping Consultation published on 3 June 2026:

- Consultation on proposed Local Plan content and evidence (Regulation 23)
- Publication of observations or advice
- Consultation on the Proposed Local Plan (Regulation 27)
- Submission of the Proposed Local Plan for Examination (Regulation 31 - 34)
- Independent Examination of the Local Plan (Regulation 35)
- Decision of the Examiner to consider further matters and pause the Examination
- Publication of document and evidence related to further matters
- Publication of the Examiner Report with recommendations and reasons (Regulation 37)
- Adoption or approval of the Local Plan (Regulation 39)

2.3 Further details are set in the Table below as a Plan Summary Timeline:

Stage	Activity	Indicative Start
0	Developing project management process and structure, governance risk register and ensuring resources are in place to begin the project (including completion of this PID)	Summer 2026 - Completed
1	Publication of Notice of Intention to Commence Regulation 19	3 June 2026 - Completed
1	Initial Evidence Base Review	June / July 2026 - Completed

Stage	Activity	Indicative Start
1	Call for Sites	On-going. Expiring SHELAA 2026 submissions: 31 August 2026
1	Scoping and Participation consultation Regulation 20 • Scoping the Issues • Communication and Engagement Strategy • Strategic Environmental Assessment	8 June to 28 July 2026 - Completed
	Gateway 1: Self-Assessment Regulation 21	30 October 2026
1	Proposed content of Plan and Supporting Evidence • Early stage visioning and options • Vision and Strategic Options • Publication of summary of scoping consultation Regulation 22 • Initial Evidence Base Review	November 2026 - July 2027
1	Local Plan Content and Evidence consultation Regulation 23	June - July 2027
2a	Proposed Local Plan preparation • Publication of summary of Local Plan content and evidence consultation Regulation 24 • Site Assessments • Strategic policy drafting • Prepare for Gateway 2	September 2027 - October 2027
	Gateway 2: MHCLG Review of Proposed Plan Regulation 26	December 2027
2b	Proposed Local Plan preparation • Draft Local Plan • Draft Policies Map	October 2027 - May 2028
2b	Proposed Local Plan consultation Regulation 27	June - July 2028

Stage	Activity	Indicative Start
2c	Proposed Local Plan preparation for Submission • Publication of summary of Draft Local Plan Consultation Regulation 30 • Finalise submission documents • Prepare for Gateway 3	July - September 2028
	Gateway 3: Submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State Regulations 31- 33	September 2028
3	Submission and Examination • Submit to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) Regulation 34 • Independent Examination Regulation 35 • Hearings • Main Modifications (if required) • Receipt of Inspector's Final Report Regulation 37	October 2028 - March 2029
4	Adoption Regulation 39 • Adoption by Full Council • Publication of Adoption Statement • Update Digital Local Plan	April 2029

3. Governance and Decision-Making

- 3.1 The Local Plan is a significant corporate project to be delivered under tight time constraints prescribed by central Government being 30 months. As such, the governance and sign off arrangements for the new Local Plan will be kept under review to ensure Constitutional requirements can continue to be met alongside a more agile approach for oversight of the plan-making process by Councillors.
- 3.2 It is important that the governance arrangements and administration of the process are not too onerous so that the new Local Plan can progress at pace and have the greatest chance of meeting the ambitious timetable, with the approach agreed by October 2026. Use of delegated powers by the Cabinet Member and Head of Service will be required within the context of the current Constitution whilst continuing to report to Cabinet, the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee (EDPSC) and Full Council at appropriate stages.

3.3 Summary of Governance

- New Local Plan process including all relevant work programmes overseen by the Planning Policy Manager and the Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Quarterly senior officer updates through Leadership Team, as required
- Member engagement at key milestones and when required
- Engagement reporting included through Gateway submissions

3.4 Council Lead (Portfolio Holder):

Economic Development and Planning

3.5 Local Plan Sponsor (Lead Officer) and Senior officer engagement approach:

Head of Economic Development and Planning

4. Staff Resource and Management

- 4.1 The Stafford Borough Strategic Planning and Placemaking team comprise of thirteen permanent team members, who work both full and part time. Of those roles, three are specialist officers who focus on Design, Historic Environment / Conservation, and Leisure with four officers working for the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Partnership.
- 4.2 Five officers spend time dedicated to producing the new Local Plan alongside other duties, as set out in the table below. The current resources within the Strategic Planning and Placemaking team are considered sufficient when these roles are filled, but currently there is 1 FTE vacancy being carried by the team.

Full Time / Part Time	Job Title	Estimated % time in a 12 month period on Local Plan
Full Time	Planning Policy Manager	60%
Part Time - 22.2 hours per week	Principal Planner	50% of part time hours
Full Time - Vacant	Senior Planning Officer	80%
Full Time	Planning Policy Officer	80%
Full Time	Assistant Planner	80%

Full Time / Part Time	Job Title	Estimated % time in a 12 month period on Local Plan
Full Time (2 year fixed term to September 2028)	Assistant Planner	80%

Corporate Engagement

4.3 The Local Plan programme and its delivery are supported by other Officers across the Council through policy inputs alongside other work that contributes to the roles and responsibilities of these roles:

- Corporate Support
- Finance Services
- Legal Services
- Procurement
- ICT GIS and Digital (interactive mapping / digital planning requirements)
- PP team - Design, Heritage / Conservation, Leisure

4.4 **Identification of any additional skills and requirements:**

- Specialist consultancy support for the preparation of technical evidence base and advice at the Examination in Public
- Digital Planning support to necessitate the digital format required for Local Plans
- Co-ordination and liaison with central Government through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Planning Inspectorate National Service (PINS) alongside other relevant Departments and statutory agencies

5. Evidence

5.1 Government has emphasised that under the new plan-making system, it is important the baselining information is produced and the evidence base for Local Plans is proportionate and appropriate to the Local Planning Authority area. Progressing work and making an early start on preparing the new Local Plan is considered key to meeting the 30-month timeframe.

5.2 Set out below is a table detailing the key evidence required for the New Local Plan process. Please note that this table may be updated through the process to take into account updated national planning policy and / or guidance.

Key Evidence	Area Covered (e.g. just Local Planning Authority (LPA) or cross border)	In house, externally commissioned	Key stakeholders who need to input	Dependencies with other evidence documents
Strategic Environmental Assessment / Environmental Outcome Report	LPA	External	All / Statutory Agencies	Yes including site assessments
Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)	LPA	External	All / Statutory Agencies	Yes including HRA transport and air quality
Economic Development and Housing Needs Assessment (EDHNA)	LPA	External	All / Housing and Employment sectors	Yes including Gypsy and Traveller, Town Centre Capacity Assessment
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Study	LPA	External	All	Yes including Whole Plan Investment Programme
Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Assessment (GTAA)	LPA	External	All / Housing sector	Yes including EDHNA
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)	Broader - Joint Commission	External	All / Environment Agency / Local Lead Flood Authority	Yes including WCS and site assessments

Key Evidence	Area Covered (e.g. just Local Planning Authority (LPA) or cross border)	In house, externally commissioned	Key stakeholders who need to input	Dependencies with other evidence documents
Water Cycle Study (WCS)	Broader - Joint Commission	External	All / Environment Agency / Local Lead Flood Authority	Yes including SFRA and site assessment
Strategic Transport Assessment (STA)	LPA	External	All / Local Highways Authority	Yes including site assessments
Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and Sports Facilities Strategy (SFS)	LPA	External	All / Non Governing Bodies	Yes including Green Space Assessment
Green Space Assessment	LPA	External	All / Non Governing Bodies	Yes including PPS and SFS
Landscape Character Assessment	Broader - Joint Commission	External	All	Yes including site assessments and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment	LPA	External	All	Yes including site assessments
Ecological Sensitivity Assessment	LPA	External	All / environmental sector	Yes including site assessments
Green Belt Assessment (Part 1)	Broader - Joint Commission	External	All	Yes including site assessments
Town Centre Capacity Assessment	LPA	External	All / retail and leisure sector	Yes including site assessments and EDHNA

Key Evidence	Area Covered (e.g. just Local Planning Authority (LPA) or cross border)	In house, externally commissioned	Key stakeholders who need to input	Dependencies with other evidence documents
Agricultural Land Assessment	LPA	External	All	Yes including site assessments
Education Provision study	LPA	External	All / Local Education Authority	Yes including Whole Plan Investment Programme and Infrastructure Delivery Plan
Whole Plan Investment Programme Assessment	LPA	External	All	Yes including site assessments and Infrastructure Delivery Plan
Heritage Sensitivity Assessment	LPA - Site Specific	External	All / Historic England	Yes including site assessments
HRA Transport and Air Quality Update	Broader - Joint Commission	External	All / Natural England	Yes including HRA
Transport Modelling	LPA	External	All / Local Highways Authority	Yes including STA, site assessments and Infrastructure Delivery Plan
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	LPA	External / Internal	All / utilities / education and transport sectors	Yes including site assessments, education, transport and utilities, Whole Plan Investment Programme
Identifying and Assessing Sites for Selection	LPA	Internal	All / utilities / education and transport sectors	Yes including Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Key Evidence	Area Covered (e.g. just Local Planning Authority (LPA) or cross border)	In house, externally commissioned	Key stakeholders who need to input	Dependencies with other evidence documents
Strategic Employment and Housing Land Availability Assessment	LPA	Internal	All / developers and landowners	Yes including site assessments
Design Code / Design Guide	LPA	External	All	Yes

6. Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement Approach

6.1 A Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) has been developed to support the required public engagement for the Local Plan and other relevant planning policy documents setting out the approach to engaging with stakeholders. Furthermore an updated Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared for adoption to reflect the changes to regulations and support the CES.

6.2 Accessibility Commitments:

- Printed copies made available at the Civic Centre and public libraries across the Borough
- Plain English FAQs and Summaries available alongside formal consultation documents, where appropriate
- Officer support for those with mobility or digital access barriers
- Support for accessing and understanding online documents and forms (telephone or in-person)

6.3 Timeline Summary (Engagement Only)

Plan Stage	Engagement Activity
Stage 1	Database Refresh, early stakeholder discussions, Scoping and Participation consultation (online)
Stage 2a	Landowner / Developer Engagement, Statutory / Key Stakeholder Engagement
Stage 2b	Draft Proposed Local Plan Consultation (Online and in-person)
Stage 3	Examination notifications, hearing logistics, main modifications consultation (if required)
Stage 4	Adoption communication, publication of plan

7. Budget Overview

- 7.1 The majority of the costs associated with the production of a new Local Plan will be required for staff time and the preparation of evidence based studies using external consultants. Other costs to be taken into consideration relate primarily to consultation processes (e.g. specialist software, printing, hiring of premises for consultation events) and for the formal examination process (e.g. employing a programme officer, planning inspector fees, and legal support).
- 7.2 Based on these assumptions and resource profiling, the total cost of a new Local Plan, at March 2026, is estimated at £888,056. The actual spend for 2025/26 was £56,090 with the balance of £831,966 to be spent over the budget period 2026/27 to 2029/30 including 10% contingency and excluding permanent staff costs. In addition £108,474 was received from MHCLG on 25 March 2026 to be used for technical studies, additional staffing and engagement work. Details on the budget and costs for the Local Plan are presented in the table below:

	Spend Period: 2025 / 2026	Period Year 1: 2026 / 2027	Period Year 2: 2027 / 2028	Period YR 3: 2028 / 2029	Period Year 4: 2029 / 2030	Total
Evidence / Consultancy costs	£56,090	£378,411	£279,596	£22,400	£13,559	£750,056
Engagement and consultation	-	£10,286	£26,714	£11,000	-	£48,000
Examination (PINS costs and programme officer)	-	-	-	£90,000	-	£90,000
Total	£56,090	£388,697	£306,310	£123,400	£13,559	£888,056 (excluding staff)

- 7.3 Budgets will be reviewed on an annual basis to align with Autumn budget setting processes. The Council will continue to seek additional funding through central Government grants and bidding processes, as appropriate to work on the New Local Plan.

8. Risks and Mitigation

Dependents to New Local Plan Process

- 8.1 Over the course of the proposed programme, there are a number of risks that could affect the quality, cost and timings of delivering the new Local Plan. These relate to changing legislation, policy and guidance; Local Government Reorganisation and devolution; staff resources; technical skills; evidence base; consultation, engagement and cross border matters; preparation of the Spatial Development Strategy; finance; and governance.
- 8.2 A full risk register with identified mitigation measures will be developed and available through the New Local Plan process, being maintained during the lifetime of the project and used as a reporting tool. The table below sets out dependency areas for the process with a description and potential impacts leading to delays.

Dependency Area	Description of Dependency	Potential Impact if Delayed
Timely Consultant Procurement	Procurement of key pieces of evidence relies on timely preparation of briefs, evaluation and appointment of consultants	Slippage in procurement delays evidence delivery which in turn delays preparing the spatial strategy, site assessments, policy drafting and Gateway stages
Availability of Specialist Consultants	Limited availability of specialist consultants in some areas and high-demand nationally with LPAs progressing plans at similar times through the 30 month programme	Difficulty securing consultants at the right time may delay evidence production and constrain programme delivery as well as sequencing
Alignment between Interrelated Studies	A range of studies are required to inform site selection together with information from key stakeholders, such as Staffordshire County Council.	Any delay in one evidence stream can cause knock-on delays across others, potentially affecting the Local Plan timetable and soundness later in the process
Seasonal and Environmental Constraints	Certain studies must be carried out at specific seasons or are weather dependent for site work	Missing survey times may mean waiting until the next field season, resulting in multi-month delays
Internal Capacity	Small wider planning team with competing statutory duties and publication timescales (DM caseload, monitoring, year end, S106 processing etc.)	Limited capacity for internal review and integration of technical outputs may create bottlenecks at drafting and sign-off stages

Summary of Key Risk Involved:

8.3 The following list identifies key risks to the New Local Plan process, those in **RED** being high risk and those in **BLUE** considered moderate.

- **STAFFING AND RESOURCES** - One of the most important factors in the production of the New Local Plan is having sufficient qualified staff. The timescales for preparation identified are based on an assumption of full staffing. However it is noted that staff turnover, recruitment challenges and sickness absences can all have impacts. Furthermore, consultants and key stakeholders are relied upon for production of the evidence base where specialist expertise is needed, with the programme dependent upon consultants meeting required deadlines.
- It is important to use resources effectively and efficiently, having clear priorities which are supported corporately. At key stages of the New Local Plan process consultation responses are received which could lead to significant levels of resources required in a short timescale to maintain programme delivery.
- **THE POLITICAL PROCESS** - The active involvement of Members is important to the successful progression of the New Local Plan, with regular briefing where appropriate to work jointly with officers to help progress the Local Plan through its various stages. This helps to ensure early understanding of and buy-in to the plan along with helping to anticipate some of the challenges which might occur and where possible to mitigate accordingly is important.
- **BUDGET CONSTRAINTS** - Rising market rates may exceed allocated budget for technical studies or examination costs. This may result in the need to re-scope studies and has the potential for a risk of delay if funding cannot be secured. To mitigate this early tendering and scope prioritisation will be undertaken as well as phased commissioning but this could be hindered by procurement processes.
- **CHANGES IN LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND NATIONAL POLICY** - The Government could bring forward new legislation and Regulations as well as propose further changes to the national planning system and the National Planning Policy Framework published in August 2026. Depending on the extent of changes this could require further evidence being commissioned and revisions to the timetable. Furthermore the wider Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation changes will need to be accounted for through the New Local Plan process and have a range of implications for timescales, budget, staffing and co-ordination.

- **CROSS BOUNDARY COLLABORATION** – Whilst the Duty to Cooperate has ceased to exist with the new Regulations being brought into force, cross border partnership working will continue to be required to address development and infrastructure requirements, for example. Many different local authorities with different political balances are having to work together to address strategic issues in the absence of a higher tier of planning in some areas. The strategic geography and preparation of the Spatial Development Strategy is still emerging. The Council will need to continue to be proactive and engage positively in cross boundary discussions and actions.
- **PLANNING INSPECTORATE** - The timetabling and the requirements of the Planning Inspectorate are beyond the Council's control and will have implications at both Gateways 2 and 3 for the progression of the New Local Plan and subsequently the Plan's submission. The Council will have to be proactive in ensuring that they meet the criteria to enable each Gateway to be passed through and will have to be reactive once the plan is submitted for examination.
- **ASSESSMENT OF 'SOUNDNESS'** - As the 'soundness of the plan' will be tested at Examination together with legal conformity and the statement of compliance, the Council will need to consider and address any shortcomings at Gateway 2 that will hinder Gateway 3 and submission of the plan.
- **LEGAL CHALLENGE** - Every effort will be made to minimise the risk of Legal Challenge by ensuring robust community involvement throughout the process, through compliance with the Regulations, the Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) and ensuring the 'soundness' of the New Local Plan and other policy documents. Any challenge through High Courts or Judicial Review could affect the defined timescales.

8.4 The Council will continue to closely monitor changes to legislation, Regulations and policy as part of updating the Local Plan whilst deploying robust programme management techniques to deliver evidence and digital services as required through the process, including regularly engaging with the Planning Inspectorate. All internal risks will be reviewed when required and proposed actions delivered efficiently.

9. Approval of this PID

Author Name:	Title:
Alex Yendole	Planning Policy Manager

Author Name:	Title:	Date Approved
Cllr A F Reid	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio - Cabinet Member	22 October 2026
Mr G Stott	Deputy Chief Executive - Place	22 October 2026
Mr D Piper	Head of Economic Development and Planning	22 October 2026

10. Version Control / Change Log

Date of change (Specifying version)	Author	Reason	Updated Version Title
23 October 2026	Alex Yendole	New version	23 Oct 2026 New Local Plan Project Initiation Document FINAL

