

Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020 - 2040

Preferred Options Consultation
Communications Plan

October - December 2022



St. Mary's Church
Crown / County Courts

Gatehouse Theatre
Ancient High House

Victoria Park
Railway Station
River Sow Walk

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options is prepared by Stafford Borough Council.
- 1.2. This Preferred Options is the second stage of consultation on the Local Plan and follows the Issues and Options stage upon which consultation took place during February to April 2020.
- 1.3. Consultation on the Stafford Borough Local Plan Preferred Options stage will run from Monday 24 October 2022 to 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022.
- 1.4. All planning authorities have to produce a development plan, which provides a framework for the future planning of their area. This is known as a Local Plan, and it provides the planning policy context for future development in the area and used to make decisions on planning applications.
- 1.5. An essential element of this work is engagement with stakeholders and the public. This Communications Plan sets out what we intend to do for the preferred option stage.
- 1.6. The consultation will be guided by Stafford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how and when Stafford Borough Council will engage with key stakeholders, including the local community and businesses, to prepare planning policy documents and determine planning applications.
- 1.7. The consultation will use a range of methods, including digital engagement / online, to engage with local residents and stakeholders.

2. Background Information

- 2.1. Paragraph 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021), states: *"The planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up to date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings."*
- 2.2. To support this requirement, local authorities have to produce a local plan which sets out land and policies for development within the area. The creation of this plan must involve communities and stakeholders in order to influence the matters addressed in planning policy

- 2.3. Currently, the adopted plan is 'The Plan for Stafford Borough', which covers the period 2011-2031 and a number of Neighbourhood Plans. The Local Plan 2020-2040 (LP) will replace the Plan for Stafford Borough Council, with policies of the new Local Plan used in the determination of planning applications for development within Stafford Borough.
- 2.4. The new Local Plan will be the development strategy which sets out the strategic approach for the levels and locations of new housing and workplaces that are to be developed in the period 2020-2040. The plan will also set out policies on climate change, economy, biodiversity and development as a whole.
- 2.5. For the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040 to be found sound by an independent inspector it must be:
- Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
 - Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
 - Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
 - Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF. Effective consultation is an important tool in demonstrating these important issues.
- 2.6 It is also worth noting that local authorities have a duty to address issues that have cross border implications with neighbouring authorities and key statutory agencies to comply with the Localism Act and the duty to co-operate. Stafford Borough Council continues to have on-going engagement with these partners to share evidence-based information and deliver planning solutions across a range of topics.

3. Present Situation

3.1. In order to inform the Local Plan 2020-2040, a range of evidence has been commissioned and processes used to inform the development of the preferred option including:

- Consideration of responses to the issues and options consultation
- National legislation and policy approach by Government
- Call for Sites to invite landowners / developers to identify potential sites
- Brownfield sites register
- Annual monitoring of development completions
- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment.
- Economic and Housing Development Needs Assessment.
- Town Centre Capacity Assessment;
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment;
- Settlement and Site Profile Assessments
- Strategic Development Site Options study
- Whole Plan Viability Study
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Ecological, Heritage and Landscape Character Site Assessments
- Habitat Regulation Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal

More information on the evidence can be found at [New Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040 | Stafford Borough Council \(staffordbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan-2020-2040)

3.2. This is a full draft plan including proposed site allocations and a proposed policies map.

4. Adopted “Statement of Community Involvement” Requirements Situation

4.1. Stafford Borough Council adopted its latest Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in November 2018 which reflects the latest legislation and requirements placed on local authorities. The SCI sets out the Council’s policy for involving the community in the planning process.

4.2. It also details how the Council intends to involve all sections of the community, through guidelines and minimum standards for the community, interest groups and stakeholders in the production of Local Development Documents. The statement provides guidance on:

- How people will have the chance to make representations on the draft Local Plan, and the process for considering and responding to their views;
- The Examination in Public.
- How the Borough Council will keep the community informed on progress and outcomes.

4.3. At this stage of the Local Plan preparation the SCI states that the following methods of engagement will be used:

- Letters and emails.
- Parish Forum meeting.
- Public exhibition and workshop(s).
- Press Release/Notice.
- Libraries.
- Council website.

4.4 The SCI states that the minimum period of consultation will be six weeks, although this may be lengthened to take account of holiday periods etc.

5. Approach to “Preferred options” Consultation

5.1. Stafford Borough’s Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document will be published, and consultation will take place from October to December 2022. This is in accordance with Regulation 18 (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012),

Scope of Consultation

5.2. The Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document will be consulted upon including the following topics:

- Vision and Objectives
- Climate Change,
- Development Strategy,
- Delivering Economic Prosperity,
- Town Centres,
- Housing,
- Environment,
- Connections.

5.3. The consultation will run from **Monday 24 October until 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022.**

5.4. The timing of the Preferred Options consultation is in line with the latest Local Development Schedule which can be found here www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-development-scheme

5.5. It is intended that the Preferred Options consultation will encourage representations from a wide range of individuals and organisations (detailed later in this paper). These representations will inform and enhance the Council’s subsequent preparation of the next stage (i.e. the “Publication Version” document) and beyond.

- 5.6. The consultation will use a mixture of online and in person methods. Online consultation has advantages in that it enables consultees to access the consultation at a time and place that suits them and does not disadvantage those who are unable to travel to destinations.
- 5.7. It is important that the consultation does not disadvantage protected equality groups and thus careful consideration must be given to how the consultation is approached within the limited staff resources and budget that Stafford Borough council has to carry out this consultation. Younger people have traditionally been under- represented in Local Plan consultations and a greater online offering may assist in bringing the consultation to a wider audience.
- 5.8. At the same time recognising that some participants may wish to speak face to face it is proposed to visit a limited number of key destinations and / or hold drop in sessions. Due to the season it will be necessary to use inside facilities but these will be circulated to stakeholders and publicised to encourage attendance by a range of audiences. Other channels including an online Q and A session and Parish Council briefing will also be used.

Audience

- General Public - Local Residents
- Local businesses
- Parish Councils and Community Groups
- Partners and Stakeholders – Government and statutory agencies, utility companies, County Council, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP,
- Land and Property Owners / Tenant.
- Politicians – Local ward and division members. MPs for Stafford and Stone.
- Potential Investors / Developers
- Visitors to the area

Channels

- Website
- Press Release
- Social Media – Twitter, Facebook, you tube, Next Door
- Community Groups and Parish Councils

- Physical copies in libraries
- Attendance at events or run drop in sessions
- Printed leaflets
- Posters
- Online zoom public meeting
- Parish Forum
- Online survey (hard copies available in libraries)

Evaluation

Outcomes

- Greater engagement with the New Local Plan process
- Evidence to support New Local Plan Publication version

Outputs

- Number of respondents engaging with the consultation
- Number of people attending online meeting
- Feedback from parish councils and community groups

- 5.9 Late responses for the Preferred Options consultation will be deemed “not duly made” but nevertheless received by the Council.
- 5.10 In order to assist respondents in communicating their views and facilitate quicker analysis of responses by the Council, an online response form is available. All respondents are encouraged to use this form.
- 5.11 For any planning-related consultation (whether this is about wider strategy, large scale strategic allocations or small sites) only certain issues (known as Material Planning Considerations) can be considered. These include, amongst other things relevant to land use planning:
- National and local planning policies
 - Government and Planning Inspectorate requirements
 - loss of light
 - landscaping
 - capacity of physical infrastructure
 - highway issues
 - loss or effect on trees
 - other environmental issues such as flooding, architecture, historic conservation
 - adverse impact on nature conservation.

5.12 There are a range of other issues that cannot be taken account of. These include factors such as:

- loss of property value
- loss of private views
- problems arising from the construction period of any works
- boundary disputes
- issues relating to the identity of a landowner or other individuals

6. Next Steps

6.1 All consultation responses submitted to the Borough Council by email will be acknowledged within five working days of their receipt.

6.2 After the Preferred Options consultation period ends, the Strategic Planning and Placemaking team will consider all of the consultation response forms received during the consultation period. This material will be summarised and will be subsequently considered during the preparation of the “Publication” document. A Consultation Summary Report will be prepared which will detail the key issues raised within the response forms received.

6.3 The Consultation Summary Report will be made available for public viewing on the Council’s website alongside the Publication version of the New Local Plan at this next stage of the process.

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