

“Frequently Asked Questions” on the St.Helens Local Plan Preferred Options

Overall process

What is a Local Plan?

A Local Plan sets out the local planning policies and identifies how land is used. It determines how much development is required what will be built where.

Why are we having a new Local Plan?

Each local authority has to have an adopted local plan (national government requirement), which needs to be reviewed regularly and has to be kept up to date to meet the development needs of the area it covers. A review of our employment and housing land provision in 2015 has identified a deficit in both. This has triggered the requirement to prepare a new plan.

What period will the Plan cover?

It is proposed to have the plan adopted by 2018 to cover 15 years up to 2033. The Plan will also propose to release land from the green belt for a further 15 years period thereafter to provide greater certainty over future development in the Borough and to avoid the need for further green belt reviews in the future. This land will be safeguarded from development until the next local plan starts in 2034.

How have we got to this stage?

In November 2015 Cabinet agreed to proceed with a new local plan in light of the evidence on employment and housing land availability. A consultation was carried out in January 2016 on the scope of the new local plan. Since then the council has been collating further evidence to inform the preferred options.

Will I have a say on the Plan?

Yes, the legislation requires the council to consult on the emerging Local Plan.

Are other councils doing the same?

Yes, all Liverpool City Region Authorities as well as other neighbouring authorities have developed/ are developing new Local Plans.

Cabinet meeting on 16th November 2016

What is cabinet being asked to approve?

The Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 16th November will be asked to approve the content of the Preferred Options Local Plan and to undertake Borough wide consultation. The Cabinet is **not** approving the allocation or development of any of the sites proposed for allocation in the plan.

Consultation

What is the process?

The consultation will open on the 5th December and close at 12 noon on the 30th January 2017. Only written / emailed representations received within this period will be taken into consideration. An article has already been included within St.Helens First magazine, and the consultation will be advertised in the local press and other local media will be made aware. Residents and businesses in close proximity to the proposed allocation sites will also be notified by letter. Anyone wishing to receive an electronic consultation letter, can sign up to our Local Plan consultation database by emailing the council at **planningpolicy@sthelens.gov.uk**

Notices and copies of the documents will be made available for inspection at local libraries and the Town Hall Planning Reception, and electronic copies will also be available on the council's website from 5th December.

Online: **www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan**

Find your library: **www.sthelens.gov.uk/libraries/find-your-library/**

How can I find out if land near me is affected?

The Local Plans is accompanied by a "Policies Map", a map of the borough which shows where all the sites being allocated for development are. It will be available at the libraries and online at the Local Plan website **www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan** from the 5th of December.

Who can comment?

Anybody, there are no restrictions

How can I comment?

Please use the consultation response form to send comments to the Development Plans team by post, by email or by hand by 12:00 noon Monday 30th January 2017. Copies of the form can be downloaded at: **www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan**. In addition hard copies will be available at Town Hall Planning reception and local libraries.

When does it start and end?

Consultation opens at noon on the 5th of December and closes on the 30th January 2017 at 12 noon.

Will there be any public events?

Yes, a number of road shows will be held throughout the Borough and will be advertised in due course. Details will be available on our web page by the start of the consultation: **www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan**

How can I ask questions about the Local Plan Preferred Options?

Hopefully the Preferred Options Local Plan document, its evidence base and comment forms explanatory note will answer your questions – please take time to read them. We are also arranging consultation events about the Local Plan through the consultation period. You can

also contact the Planning Policy team by email, but please note that we may have a lot of queries and so it may take up to five working days before we respond:

planningpolicy@sthelens.gov.uk

What is the next stage of the Local Plan?

Following the consultation on the Preferred Options, Council officers will review the comments and consider whether the Preferred Option policies and preferred sites need to be changed. Then a version of the Local Plan will be prepared that the Council wants to see adopted for use in the Borough, and this will be made available for public comment. This version of the plan and the comments received will be submitted to the Government for examination by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector will examine the plan and comments, and organise public hearings about the Plan, before issuing a report saying if the Council can adopt the Plan or not.

Content of the Preferred Options

What is Green Belt land?

Green Belt is not a physical feature but a concept created by the planning system in the 1930s. It is not about the ecology or habitat value of the land and most parts of England don't have any green belt. The purpose is not to prevent development at all cost but to restrict it to ensure efficient use of land and prevent major settlements from merging into each other.

What are the proposals for the Green Belt in the Borough?

At present 65% of the Borough is Green Belt (8,844 hectares), and the preferred options being consulted on propose releasing some green belt land as there is a need for that land to be released to meet our housing and employment land need. If the Preferred Options proposals were endorsed, a total of approximately 1,187 hectares would be released from the green belt for the next 30 years, which will still leave 56% of the Borough remaining as Green Belt. The Green Belt release will be split in sites that will be allocated for housing and employment up to 2033 (approximately 730 hectares), and the remaining land to be released from the Green Belt (approximately 457 hectares) will be safeguarded for future development beyond 2033.

What about brownfield land?

The regeneration of brownfield land will remain a key priority for the council and the majority of new housing for the new plan will still come from brownfield sites (approximately 59%).

What is the difference between "allocating" land and "safeguarding" land which the plan is removing from the Green Belt?

Allocating land will remove it from the Green Belt in order to allow their immediate development (subject to adoption of the Plan and planning permission). All of the Preferred Options Local Plan housing allocations (referenced as HA) are on Green Belt land. Brownfield sites in the urban areas do not need to be allocated for housing as they are naturally favoured for redevelopment. Most of the employment allocations (referenced as EA) are also on land to be removed from the Green Belt by the Local Plan, but some (EA10, 11 and 12) are on brownfield or greenfield land that is not in the Green Belt.

"Safeguarded land" (the HS and ES sites) is land that will be removed from Green Belt by the Local Plan but these sites will only become available for development for the next Plan period. In the meantime development that would prevent their future development for housing or employment use will not be permitted. This land is intended to meet the development needs of the borough following the period 2018-2033 (the planned lifespan of the proposed plan we are consulting on). After this Local Plan is adopted, we expect that the next Local Plan (no date fixed for this) will decide if the Safeguarded sites should be allocated for development or kept as Safeguarded land. The reason they are removed from the Green Belt now is to make the changes to the Green Belt long-term (as required by national planning policy) and avoid the need for further significant changes to the Green Belt in the period up to 2033. It also allows for longer term planning of infrastructure and services by indicating the likely future direction of growth.

Do we need more employment land?

Yes, the assessment of our employment land supply by independent consultants, as well as market demand, demonstrates that we need more employment land and specifically large sites in strategic locations for the logistics industry.

Do we need more housing?

Yes, the assessment of our housing land need and supply by independent consultants demonstrate that we need more housing land.

What are the possible positive effect of the Local Plan for St.Helens?

It will help generate more jobs for local people which will support the local economy which in turn will support local retail and leisure, creating further more jobs.

More housing in all the key settlements of the Borough will create a wider choice and greater affordability for local residents.

Both increased employment and better housing will have a positive impact on the health of the Borough, and new hot food takeaways near schools will be prevented.

The Plan will require that new housing development over 10 homes in size provide a proportion of the new housing as affordable housing, as bungalows and as housing that can be adapted to the needs of the infirm or elderly.

The Plan reinforces the protection of public open space and sports facilities, and requires new development not to increase the risk of flooding, and in places it will be required to reduce the likelihood or severity of flooding.

How will this impact on other services and infrastructure, for example schools?

As part of the development of the Local Plan we will develop an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will look at the infrastructure requirements resulting from the development, for example where increased school capacity will be required.

When will I start seeing development occur on sites identified in the plan?

Each site is different and ultimately it will be up to the owner of the land and the people who are developing it to decide when they will apply for planning permission and when they start construction.