



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19) Publication (June 2021)

Question	Response
General	
<b>What is a Local Plan?</b>	<p>A Local Plan is a borough-wide plan produced by the local planning authority setting out the vision and aspirations for the future of an area. It is comprised of planning policies and proposals specifying the individual sites or areas which are considered appropriate for development as well as those which should be protected. It is an important document that will have a major influence on how the local area will change, develop, look and feel in the future.</p> <p>Barnet's Local Plan has been produced in consultation with local people and other organisations whose activities influence or are affected by what happens across the Borough. It identifies the number of new homes and jobs required to meet local needs over the next 15 years and where development should take place to accommodate growth. The Local Plan is helping to guide and shape Barnet up until 2036.</p> <p>The Local Plan sets out the level, distribution and density of growth. The Plan also stipulates areas of the Borough, (e.g. those designated as Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land), that must be protected from development, as well as including a suite of policies to be used to assess any future planning applications that come forward.</p>
<b>Why does the London Borough of Barnet need to produce a new Local Plan?</b>	<p>The Government requires all councils to have an adopted up-to-date local development plan in place by December 2023. It is a necessary and key part of creating a robust planning framework to support the future development of the Borough. Without it, the Council would lose the ability to secure and co-ordinate the development and infrastructure that are needed.</p>

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The current Barnet Local Plan from 2012 consists of a set of documents used to guide development. The evidence base behind the 2012 Local Plan has become dated. If we were to continue to rely on the current plan, then we would only be able to meet a fraction of the expected housing need in the Borough. This would result in an even more acute shortage of new and affordable homes. Therefore, it is now time to create a new overarching plan that will help shape the way the Borough develops into the mid-2030s, based on up-to-date objective evidence.

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**Doesn't Barnet already have a Local Plan?**

Yes. The Council's current Local Plan comprises the Core Strategy (2012) and Development Plan Policies (2012). The policies in these documents are still in force but since the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2019 some are now out of date. We therefore now need to develop an up-to-date Local Plan to meet Barnet's future potential, planning for the next 15+ years up until 2036.

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**How often should a plan be reviewed?**

To be effective, plans must be kept up-to-date. The NPPF states policies in local plans and spatial development strategies such as the London Plan should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary.

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**What weight does an emerging Local Plan carry in decision-making?**

The NPPF states that decision-makers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies, and their degree of consistency with policies in the NPPF.

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**I thought the Mayor of London had recently produced a planning document.**

The Mayor's London Plan was published in March this year (2021) and provides an overarching planning policy framework for the capital. All London Boroughs are then responsible for preparing Local Plans for their own areas that need to take account of the Mayor's London Plan and be in "general conformity" with what it says. Barnet's draft Local Plan has therefore been prepared to be in general conformity with the policies in the London Plan (2021).

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**What role does the London Plan play?**

The London Plan sets Borough level housing targets and identifies locations for future growth along with strategic policies for delivering the identified growth.

London Boroughs are required to consult with the Mayor at different stages in the production of their Local Plan documents and other documents.

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**The Government is about to radically overhaul the planning system – especially local plans – so aren't you wasting your time producing this old-style plan?**

No. Although the Government issued a radical set of proposals last August 2020 in its Planning for the Future consultation White Paper, and included a Planning Bill in the Queen's Speech in May 2021, little is known of the detail in terms of how and when this will affect the production and content of local plans. It is also likely to take several years before any changes take full effect as, in addition to the Act itself, Government will also need to produce a raft of secondary legislation as well as substantially revise the existing planning guidance set out in the NPPF and online PPG.

Meanwhile, Barnet's existing Local Plan is now nearly ten years old and, working under the current system, all local authorities are required to have an up to date Local Plan in place by December 2023 at the latest. Therefore, Barnet cannot afford to just sit back and wait for if and when a new planning system and format for local plans is introduced.

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**What about the impact of COVID-19?**

The shadow cast by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid changes to how people live, learn, work and travel has had a major impact. Many of these changes have wide-ranging and long reaching consequences and it is likely that many of these could remain in the medium to long term, extending some way into the lifetime of the Local Plan.

A new section on the response to COVID-19 is set out in Chapter 2 of the Local Plan. This covers issues including getting the economy going again, improving access to open space, supporting active travel and delivering good quality homes.

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**What account is being taken of the recent revisions made to the Use Classes Order – in particular the introduction of the new**

Since we consulted in early 2020 on the Preferred Approach (Reg 18) Local Plan the Government has made a number of significant changes to the Use Classes Order. These have the potential to have wide reaching consequences in many areas, including within Barnet's town centres. The principal

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**'E' for everything use class?**

changes involve the introduction of a new use class E (Commercial, Business and Services) which covers a wide range of uses including retail, food, offices and light industrial uses, where it is no longer necessary to obtain planning permission when switching between uses. Such changes are down to permitted development. Another significant revision due to take effect from August this year (2021) will similarly allow existing shops and offices to be converted to residential uses through permitted development without requiring the need to first obtain planning permission. Local Plan policies reflect that with greater permissiveness there is a need for the Council to focus on managing and safeguarding commercial uses in Barnet's town centres and employment areas, relying more on non-planning interventions.

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**Consultation and next steps**

**What are we consulting on now?**

In early 2020 we consulted on the Preferred Approach Local Plan (Regulation 18. We are grateful for the large number of helpful and well considered comments that we received about the Preferred Approach. We have carefully considered these responses in producing this Local Plan document, commonly referred to as the Regulation 19 publication draft, and which represents the second stage in the Local Plan Process.

The Council considers that this version of the Local Plan – together with supporting evidence base - is now ready to go forward for independent examination by a Government appointed planning inspector. Before it does so however we are inviting representations on the Local Plan as well as the evidence that underpins it.

The formal six week period for representations will start on **Monday 28th June 2021 and run until Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021**. During this time, interested parties and stakeholders may make comments, also known as 'representations', on the draft plan.

Following the end of the six-week representations period, all responses received will then be forwarded onto the Planning Inspectorate to take into account, together with the Local Plan itself and the supporting

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	<p>evidence base documents. The draft Local Plan document and all the supporting documents can be found on the Council's website at:  <a href="https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/">https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>You consulted about this last year so why are you are doing it again?</b></p>	<p>The Council follows good practice by giving the public and other interested parties the opportunity to comment at various stages in the development of the new Local Plan. The previous consultation on the Local Plan in 2020 sought views on the preferred options that the Council wanted to pursue. We have since taken account of responses received, revised the plan accordingly and produced this version that the Council wants adopted as the future planning framework for Barnet. However, before that can happen, we need to give everyone another opportunity to comment and then for these representations to be considered alongside the plan and supporting evidence, by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Government.</p>
<p><b>I responded to the previous draft plan surely the Inspector can look at those comments and I needn't write again?</b></p>	<p>Unfortunately, not. The Council has revised the Reg 18 draft plan that you and others may have commented on previously. In many cases revisions made were in direct response to representations. In order to make representations it is necessary to look at the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan. The Inspector is only sent responses made to the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan and this also affords the right to request to present evidence orally at one or more of the hearing sessions that the planning inspector once appointed will arrange as part of the examination process.</p>
<p><b>Where can I view the Local Plan documents?</b></p>	<p>The Reg 19 publication stage draft Local Plan and accompanying documents are available to view at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local libraries (details and opening hours available at <a href="https://www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries/library-opening-times">https://www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries/library-opening-times</a>)</li> <li>• online at <a href="https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/">https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Are there any public events about the draft Local Plan?</b></p>	<p>Yes. Due to COVID19 restrictions these will be held online. The Planning Policy Team will be giving a presentation on the Publication Local Plan on the following dates. These online events will be supported by an independent facilitator.</p>

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**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July** between 6pm and 7.30pm  
**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July** between 6pm and 7.30pm  
**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August** between 6pm and 7.30pm

These events are open to anyone.

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**Who can comment?**

The opportunity for making representations is open to everybody. The Council encourages all local residents and stakeholders to comment on the proposed modifications to the Local Plan and to ensure that they submit their representations within the allotted timeframe.

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**How can I comment on the draft Local Plan?**

Comments can be made the following ways:

- In writing using the standard proforma produced by the Planning Inspectorate via Planning Policy Team, sending responses to 7th Floor, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 4EW or respond by email to [forward.planning@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:forward.planning@barnet.gov.uk).

Further information is also available through Planning Enquiries on 020 8359 3000

When making your comments, please clearly state which policy or section of the plan that you are referring to and, if objecting, where possible suggest an alternative form of wording that would address your concerns or specific additions / deletions from the draft plan.

Written Representations about the Local Plan must be submitted by one of the methods specified above no later than 11.59 on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021. **It is very important to ensure that this deadline is adhered to as failure to do so is likely to mean that your representations cannot be considered by the Inspector and you will not be able to participate in the Examination in Public.** This is because the inspector is only able to consider comments that are 'duly made' i.e. received within the period allowed on this draft of the plan.

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**I commented on the previous consultation draft but how can I tell whether you took any notice of what I said?**

The Council has produced a Schedule of Representations and Responses to the Regulation 18 Local Plan. This records all the representations received to the previous draft plan, who made the comment and importantly how the Council has

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responded to each of the comments made. Elsewhere in the table, the Council notes and welcomes supportive comments received. Where a decision has been taken not to make changes to the plan in the light of the comment received this is stated together with the reason(s) given as to why this is the case. The Council has also published a Consultation Report that sets out the engagement activities that were carried out to publicise the Regulation 18 Local Plan.

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**What about digital exclusion? How can people without access to internet or email respond?**

We realise that not everyone has access to or is comfortable using the internet. Hard copies are available in Barnet's libraries. Contact the Policy team through 0208 359 3000 or write to them and they will provide assistance.

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**How long is this all going to take?**

Preparing a new Local Plan takes time. Apart from the fact that we need to collect lots of information ('evidence') to justify the policies and proposals that the plan contains, we also need to allow time for local people and other organisations to have their say. There are also Regulations setting out a number of stages and timescales with which we have to comply.

**What is the timetable for the Local Plan?**

Having consulted on the Preferred Approach (Reg 18) Local Plan last year (January – March 2020) we have produced this revised draft Plan (Reg 19) which the Council intends to submit for independent examination and then subject to any modifications advised by the Inspector, ultimately adopted to replace the current Local Plan documents.

The current timetable for completion of the remaining preparation stages of the Local Plan is set out below:

<b>Key Stages</b>	<b>Date</b>
Reg 19: Publication of Local Plan and Consultation	June 2021
Reg 22: Submission	Autumn 2021
Reg 24: Examination in Public	Winter / Spring 2022
Reg 25 Publication of Inspector's Report	Summer 2022
Reg 26: Adoption	Autumn 2022

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**Evidence Base**

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**What does the evidence include and why is it necessary?**

The Council's evidence base is comprised of a suite of documents produced to support and justify the policies and proposals in the Reg 19 Draft Local Plan.

An Integrated Impact Assessment (comprising of Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)) and Infrastructure Delivery Plan have been published and are available for review and comment.

Whilst we recognise that a number of these are detailed and fairly technical documents, we have tried to make them as concise as possible to help ensure that the evidence is as easily accessible as possible.

The evidence base will continue to be updated, and if necessary added to, as the Local Plan progresses onwards towards the submission and examination stages.

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**Where can I view the evidence to support the Draft Local Plan?**

Supporting evidence can be found on our website: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policies-and-local-plan/local-plan-review/local-plan-evidence-and>

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**Why are you not considering building in the Green Belt?**

Our approach continues to focus new development within the built up areas through the re-use of brownfield or previously developed land. We also need to safeguard existing land for employment uses to help support the local economy and provide space for businesses to grow.

There is still room within our existing town centres and the surrounding built up areas to provide sufficient land to accommodate the amount of growth that we are planning for. Through high-quality design, it is possible to achieve higher densities than is currently the case. To do so represents a much more sustainable option than developing on Barnet's greenspaces.

What is important is that we build the right types and scale of development in the right places and in so doing ensure that all new development is achieved in the most sustainable and attractive way possible.

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**Content of the draft Plan**

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**How many new homes will be built as a result of the new plan?**

The Local Plan will help protect the existing housing stock while also providing the basis for new homes to be delivered to meet the needs of the growing population. In accordance with the London Plan, we anticipate a need to plan for at least 2,364 new homes per year, in Barnet over the plan period up until 2036. New homes will be delivered in the most sustainable locations that are capable of accommodating growth and is supported by appropriate infrastructure.

**Didn't household projections recently indicate a reduced level of housing need in Barnet?**

**Hasn't the Government said authorities need to use a standard method to calculate their housing numbers?**

The Government (MHCLG) introduced a Standard Method for calculating local authorities' housing needs, based on national population and household forecasts. Since its introduction in 2018 the algorithm behind the Standard Method has been revised several times and housing requirements have gone up and down. The national housing target of 300,000 new homes per annum has remained unchanged. London boroughs are not directly subject to the MHCLG's standard method's local housing need figures as the recently published London Plan (March 2021) sets their housing targets.

The Government signed off the London Plan in 2021. The local housing need uplift will, therefore, only be applicable once the London Plan is subject to review. The next London Plan will be required to redistribute to the London boroughs the numbers created by the Government's Standardised Method and whatever algorithm is being used at that time.

**Where have the housing need numbers come from and why do they keep going up?**

The rate of housebuilding has not matched housing need. This is a national problem and there is a range of well documented reasons for this. Barnet's population has been increasing with people living longer, birth rates exceeding death rates and more people moving into the Borough than leaving it. Changes to how people live their lives also affect the need for homes. For example, if more people live on their own rather than as couples or families this will change the number and types of homes that are needed. The housing need figure reflects those changes. It's too early to say what the impact of COVID19 will be on London's demographic growth. The next round of demographic projections will provide a better insight.

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The historic backlog of housing need plus demographic growth makes the housing requirement go up.

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**How will the Local Plan help meet affordable housing needs?**

The London Plan sets the Londonwide context for the delivery of affordable housing in that 50% of all new homes will be affordable. Within that context Barnet will seek a minimum of 35% as affordable accommodation. This will be a mixture of homes for rent and forms of affordable home ownership.

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**Why are you planning for more houses than you need?**

Each year the Council must demonstrate that it has planned or granted planning permission for enough houses to meet housing needs for the next five years. If the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing supply it is more exposed to development in unwanted areas as refusal decisions on planning applications are challenged at Planning Appeal and overturned by the Planning Inspectorate. The draft local plan shows that it can deliver more new homes than the minimum housing target. This provides flexibility to account for any unexpected issues with delivering sites and ensure there are enough homes in the pipeline to meet the Borough's needs and maintain the five-year housing land supply.

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**How do we ensure that these new homes actually meet housing need?**

The Plan sets out space requirements on the size of homes. It also sets out dwelling size priorities. It protects family housing from conversion and sets out policy for managing vacant homes as well as short-term lets. It sets out a clearer approach on housing options for older people. It also has policy on student accommodation and HMOs. The Plan supports wider housing choice. However, the planning system does not control who lives in these new dwellings. Most housebuilding is dominated by major housebuilders and houses for sale. The Government and Mayor of London is keen to support smaller housebuilders and different forms of tenure in order to diversify the market and speed up build out rates.

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**Will more homes lead to more congestion in the Borough?**

Levels of car ownership in Barnet are high but attitudes are changing particularly among younger residents. Car sharing schemes have become more popular as have more active and sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. The draft Local Plan recognises that the

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car is an important travel options for parts of the Borough where alternative options such as public transport is more limited and we have developed policy to reflect this. The Local Plan also seeks to improve its management of residential car parking and aims to tackle inefficient use of land created by surface level car parking.

In addition, the draft Local Plan promotes more sustainable travel modes where possible and the delivery of new transport infrastructure to support the travel needs of a growing population.

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**What impact will COVID19 and Brexit have on housing numbers?**

It is generally accepted that the UK is facing a housing crisis, which is partly due to the historic under delivery of houses. The Government wants to build 300,000 new homes every year and has much higher expectations of housing delivery in Barnet.

The next London Plan and Barnet Local Plan will reflect the results of the 2021 Census. Household projections may change because of Brexit and the longer term impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic.

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**What about infrastructure? Barnet's existing services can't cope with existing demand and pressures. We need new GP surgeries, schools, public transport services and higher quality utility provision.**

The Local Plan is not just about new homes and jobs; we also need a range of infrastructure to support growth including schools, GPs, public transport, roads, utilities, parks and leisure facilities. The Plan set out what infrastructure provision is needed when new homes are being built and the application of the plan's policies will ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided when and where it is needed to support growth.

This infrastructure is supported to mitigate new growth. It is capital expenditure for new or improved facilities. It is not intended to pay for new nurses or teachers or compensate for historic cuts to public spending. National taxation is the main source of funding for such essential services.

The Local Plan is underpinned by supporting evidence - including an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP provides an assessment of current infrastructure provision, future needs, gaps and deficits, along with an indication of costs of providing infrastructure. It ensures infrastructure requirements are fully taken into

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	<p>account when preparing the plan and that all the necessary infrastructure providers are involved in the plan preparation process. The IDP therefore clearly sets out the details of the what infrastructure provision needed to ensure that it is provided in a timely manner.</p>
<p><b>How will the new infrastructure identified be funded?</b></p>	<p>One of main mechanisms for ensuring or contributing to the delivery of infrastructure that will be required to support new development is via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).</p> <p>CIL is a planning charge that Local Authorities and the Mayor of London can set on new development to help pay for community infrastructure. It is intended to offer transparency, consistency and fairness for all developers and local authorities, whilst keeping a balance between the cost of funding infrastructure and the viability of development.</p> <p>Most development is subject to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Barnet CIL Charging Schedule is currently being revised</p>
<p><b>Will the Local Plan help stop town centre decline?</b></p>	<p>Town centres are a major focus for this Plan and the Council. We want to attract inward investment into these places acknowledging that they remain important centres for commercial, leisure and community uses as well as providing new homes. Making town centres thriving, attractive and safe places where people want to work, rest and play is a priority for the Plan. Investment in food and drink uses is set to increase as is the evening economy.</p>
<p><b>Will the Plan do anything to help mitigate and adapt to climate change?</b></p>	<p>The Council is on a credible path to achieving net zero emissions. The Council uses planning policy and guidance produced by the Mayor of London to make London a zero-carbon city by 2050. We have existing guidance on sustainable design and construction from 2016 which we will revisit following adoption of this Plan.</p> <p>The Plan is addressing the inefficient use of land created by surface level car parking. More is done to promote active and sustainable travel; car free development may be appropriate in areas with good public transport access. Growth is focused in the most sustainable locations with good public transport connections.</p>

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**What does the new Local Plan mean for any neighbourhood plans produced in Barnet either now or in the future?**

Neighbourhood planning is an important part of the Government's effort to devolve decision-making down to local communities, so they have a greater say in issues that affect them. Neighbourhood plans, once finalised, form part of the statutory plan. They can include general planning policies and design codes for the development and use of land in an area and can also allocate sites for development.

Currently, only West Finchley is actively progressing the production of a neighbourhood plan which, subject to a confirmatory referendum on July 8th, is expected to be adopted this autumn.

Any neighbourhood plans produced need to be consistent with national planning policy as well as the Mayor's London Plan and the Council's latest adopted plan. Once a neighbourhood plan comes into force the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan covering the neighbourhood area if the event of there being any conflicts. Equally, once our new Local Plan is adopted, there will be scope for any neighbourhood plans to reflect our new strategic priorities for the Borough.

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## **Sites**

**Why is council-owned land included when the future of those sites has not yet been properly consulted on and agreed?**

Prior to identifying for redevelopment any Council owned land and other assets in the draft Local Plan, the decisions taken regarding how these will be used in the future will have been made having carefully considered. As part of this all viable options were looked at and we also listened to any views expressed by the community.

It is important, as part of the plan-led system, that any potential development opportunities are highlighted in the Local Plan at this stage. This then provides certainty about not only the locations chosen but also what form and quantum of development is likely to be considered accepted, and so guides future planning applications that come forward on individual sites.

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**How have proposed sites for new housing and**

The Council has used a thorough process to identify the proposed housing and other uses land allocations set out in the draft Local Plan. Further details can be

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**other uses been selected?**

found in the Site Selection Background and Sustainability Appraisal documents that form part of the supporting evidence base. These sites have been submitted by landowners and their selection for inclusion in the Reg 19 Draft Plan reflects an extensive information gathering and assessment process. We consider these sites to be developable. Based on this work we have set out principles of development. On this basis, we would expect a planning application to come forward with more detail.

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**Will the sites chosen automatically get planning permission?**

No, any planning application to develop a site will be subject to the relevant planning procedures and assessed accordingly.

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