

# Local Plan Issues & Scope Consultation

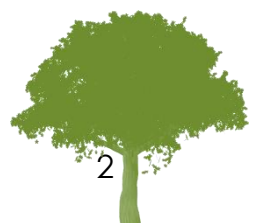
## A Summary of Key Issues

(Please see the full document for detail)



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# Introduction

We are preparing a new Local Plan for Cannock Chase District and this consultation is the first stage in that process.

The Local Plan has to look forward over at least fifteen years. It will determine how much, and what kind of development is needed for the district, and where this should go. It has to make sure that development is provided in a carefully balanced way, meeting our needs but protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment, especially our highest quality and most sensitive areas. It sets the policy against which planning applications are considered so that we know whether or not they should be approved or refused.

Preparing a Local Plan is a complex process and has to follow strict legal procedures. This first, 'survey' stage is about considering the subject of that plan i.e. the issues and scope which it needs to cover.

Our current Local Plan (Part 1) was adopted in 2014, where we set out the strategic issues and policies. It was due to be followed by Local Plan Part 2 where we would decide which sites would be allocated for different kinds of development. However, since we consulted on this in 2017 the Government has been making a lot of changes to the planning system which means that we now need to review the Local Plan in its entirety.

Therefore we are starting again at the beginning of the process – although we will be using comments submitted to the last consultation to help inform the work going forward.

Our starting point for the new plan will be to review the policies in Local Plan Part 1 (which will continue to set policy for the district until it is replaced).

We have set the document out to reflect the order in which our policies appear in our existing Local Plan, summarising the main areas they cover, and suggesting the areas we think may need to change and new issues we think we now need to cover. You are welcome to add in ideas of your own, as long as they are relevant to planning.

We want your views on what the new plan needs to deal with. We set out how you can respond to this consultation at the end of the document.



## The Strategy

Our current strategy is urban-focused and distributes housing development roughly in proportion to the scale of our existing communities. It addresses employment and retail growth and includes an option for considering further employment growth at Kingswood Lakeside in Cannock. It balances growth with environmental protection and enhancement.

We now need to look at how much development we need in the future and, once we know the quantities and types needed, whether or not we can continue to operate on similar principles, or whether we need to look at alternative approaches.

As part of this we will need to consider how much brownfield land we have including the Rugeley Power station site, whether we can build at a higher density whilst still maintaining high quality development, and whether or not we need to look at possible Green Belt options.

**We want to know what you think!  
Find out how to give us your views  
on page 12.**



## Developer Contributions

We have a policy which sets out how we expect developers to pay for / deliver affordable housing and infrastructure (such as schools, open spaces and so on). We have to make sure that this policy does not place so many demands on developers that their proposals then become financially unviable (and so can not be built). We need to review this policy to make sure that it is up to date and reflects national policy and the economic climate.



## Design

We think our design policy is generally up to date, and it is supported by supplementary guidance. However we may need to update part of it as the Government wants us to consider higher density developments, the theory being that if we fit more development into the same sized area, this should reduce the pressure on the Green Belt and open countryside. However this should not be at the expense of quality so this will need careful thought. We think we also need to update our approach to parking standards as our policies are out of date (we haven't reviewed these since 2005).



## Neighbourhood Plans

We are questioning whether we still need a local policy on neighbourhood plans as we seem to be duplicating national policy. We are asking if you agree or if you think we should still have a policy and if so what should it say which does not repeat the national policy.



## Social Inclusion & Healthy Living

Our policy currently focuses mainly on the delivery of infrastructure (such as health and education facilities, sport, play, cultural, leisure and community facilities etc.) and securing contributions from developers to pay for / deliver these. It also protects green spaces and community buildings unless they are surplus to requirements or if other proposals are of more value to the community. We are asking if you agree or if you think there are other issues which could be included here. We think issues around air quality and pollution are one possible area we should pick up here.



## Housing Land

Our current plan runs from 2006 – 2028 and we have to find room to deliver an average of 241 homes per year at the moment. The Government is changing the way the figures are calculated and it looks possible that this figure will increase although at the time of writing this document we are still awaiting the final details. As a council, our performance on delivery will be measured by the Government's new Housing Delivery test (again details are awaited). There is also a significant shortfall of housing across the West Midlands and we will be expected to work constructively with other councils to address the situation.

At the moment we don't know how much housing we will need to find room for, but it is clear – as for all councils in the area – we will be expected to do our bit. Once we know the figures we will need to identify enough sites: as part of this work we will need to consider whether we can find any other brownfield sites over and above the ones we already have recorded on our 'Brownfield Register' (it is a legal requirement we keep this register), and whether we can increase the densities of development. If we still can't accommodate enough new homes then we may need to look at whether we should be looking at some other options, we may potentially include some Green Belt land. We have not drawn any conclusions on this yet as a lot of technical work needs to be undertaken



# Housing Choice

We need to make sure that new homes meet the needs of our communities – ensuring that a right mix of size, type and tenure is delivered, based on local evidence. Our current evidence is now six years old and needs updating, but the Government has also changed policy nationally so we will need to consider what implications this has locally.

The Government has previously defined ‘affordable housing’ as including ‘social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market’. Our current policy seeks to achieve 20% affordable housing on schemes of 15 or more homes (or for schemes of 11 – 14 homes an off site financial contribution is sought).

Now, however, the definition of ‘affordable’ is changing, with more emphasis on a range of options to include ‘build to rent’ schemes and starter homes and more emphasis on ownership. The policy needs to be reviewed to take these changes into account, as well as any possible changes to the level of affordable housing we should be seeking (e.g. whether the current 20% requirement should change).

We also need to consider how we will meet the changing needs of groups of people in our community, for example making sure we meet the housing needs of an increasingly ageing population or people who may have particular accommodation needs. We also need to ensure we have enough sites to meet the needs of our gypsy, traveller and traveling showpeople communities.



## Employment Land

We need to ensure that we provide enough land to meet our employment and growth needs. Currently, our supply of such sites is showing that a shortfall is emerging. We need to update the information we have, based on national and local economic projections so that we can work out how much employment land we need to be providing and then ensure that we have a suitable number of sites to deliver this over the plan period.

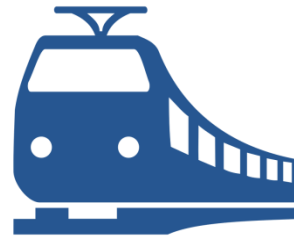


## A Balanced Economy

Our existing policy aims to identify and support particular job sectors which help to regenerate the district (including tourism) and provide more opportunities locally, supported by skills and training to help our communities access those jobs. We will now need to consider if we should make any updates in the light of more recent changes including the growth of the Local Economic Partnerships and the Council's role in the recently established West Midlands Combined Authority, all of which have major economic growth ambitions.

## Sustainable Transport

Our current policy sets out our commitment to working with bus and rail operators and other organisations and partnerships who co-ordinate transport matters, including roads, cycling and walking routes and associated issues such as parking and air quality. We think we need to update this to take account of recent changes for example new partnerships, local changes (such as the recent designation of a new Air Quality Management Area at Five Ways island in Heath Hayes), and changes nationally – such as new technologies including the increase in electric vehicles and much more emphasis upon air quality.





## Town Centres (Centres Hierarchy)

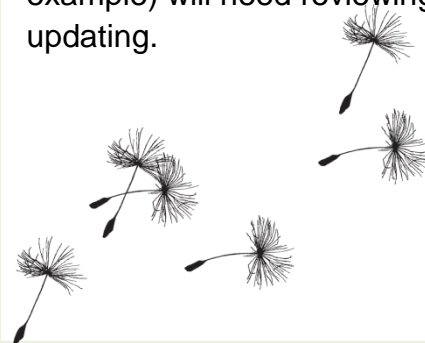
Our current policy sets out a hierarchy for our centres across the district, with the main centre being Cannock, with the next tier being Rugeley and Hednesford, followed by the district centre at Hawks Green and then a series of local Centres at Norton Canes, Heath Hayes, Chadsmoor, Bridgtown, Fernwood Drive and Brereton. The policy sets levels of growth which are appropriate for the town centres and sets out how they will be regenerated for example through Area Action Plans (the one for Rugeley has been adopted and the Cannock Area Action plan is being developed).

We think we need to update the policy to take account of recent local changes, for example the planning permission for Mill Green Designer Outlet Village in Cannock. We also need to consider how the role of town centres is changing driven by a number of issues including technological change (e.g. online shopping / click and collect) and consumer habits such as the use of town centres as places to socialise, and how our policies can be more flexibly worded to allow us to adapt to such fast paced change but still providing a clear structure for deciding on planning applications.



## Biodiversity & Geodiversity

Our existing policy focuses on conservation and protection of our biodiversity and geodiversity assets including Hednesford Hills. While we think the wording of the policy should require little change, the detailed evidence which sits behind this (such as the condition of designated sites for example) will need reviewing and updating.



## **Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

Parts of Cannock Chase are protected by European law because they contain unique heathland habitat. This habitat could be damaged by increased numbers of visitors arising from development in the vicinity of the Chase so our policy sets out how we will ensure no harm arises from new developments, requiring housing developers to pay towards a suite of projects such as footpath and signage improvements for example. These measures have been designed to address growth levels in our current Local Plan so we will need to update our policy and mitigation measures as we develop the new plan.

## **Landscape Character & Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

Our existing policy seeks to protect the District's landscape character and encourages restoration and enhancement and the creation of green infrastructure links in conjunction with new development. The policy supports small scale development in the AONB where this is in line with the AONB management plan but does not support major development unless there is an

overriding case which is sustainable and can be demonstrated to be in the public interest. The policy states that appropriate development in the Green Belt (the term 'appropriate' is defined in national policy) must be sensitive to the landscape character. The policy also sets out that land at Rawnsley Road could be considered as Local Green Space.

We think much of the policy will still stand although it will need to be updated in the light of more recent published local evidence on landscape character and the AONB and detailed site assessment work. We also think we will need to look in more detail at Green Belt policy: as set out earlier we don't yet know whether we may need to release any Green Belt to accommodate development, but if we do so we will need to consider compensatory improvements to offset any impacts which could include improvements to environmental quality and accessibility to other Green Belt land.



## Historic Environment

Our current policy seeks to protect and enhance the district's historic environment, encouraging regeneration, supporting development proposals which are sensitive to the local context and which promote sustainable access to – and enjoyment of – heritage assets e.g. via walking or cycling routes and the canal network for instance. We think this will largely remain unchanged although potentially could be elaborated on and adjusted in the light of any altering approach to town centres (covered previously).



## Climate Change & Sustainable Resource Use

Our existing policy identifies key local issues related to climate change, pollution, flood risk, minerals and waste and sets out policy requirements to ensure developments are addressing these. The policy provides links to the County Council's plans for minerals, waste and flood risk management. It encourages renewable and low carbon energy schemes. Overall, we think that the headline issues remain unchanged, but we will need to update the policy to take account of the changing context locally (e.g. the Rugeley flood alleviation scheme is now complete) but also to take account of national changes such as increased emphasis upon air quality.



## Other Issues

We have covered as many issues we can think of, but there may be other matters you think we should be addressing so please let us know if so, ideally with any supporting references or sources of evidence and information which can help us.

# How to give us your views

We will be consulting from **Monday 2nd July 2018 to Tuesday 28th August 2018.**

We will be holding a series of drop in events around the District. We will publicise these on our website and social media pages, via the local press, and via leaflets and posters which we will leave at a range of venues in the District. We will also write to / email everyone who is registered on the Planning Policy consultation database.

## Documents can be viewed at the following locations during normal office hours:

- Cannock Chase District Council, Civic Centre, Beecroft Road, Cannock WS11 1BG
- Cannock Library, Manor Avenue, Cannock WS11 1AA
- Rugeley Library, Anson Street, Rugeley WS15 2BB
- Hednesford Library, Market Street, Hednesford WS12 1AD
- Norton Canes Library, Burntwood Road, Norton Canes WS11 9RF
- Brereton Library, Talbot Road, Brereton WS15 1AU
- Heath Hayes Library, Hednesford Road, Heath Hayes WS12 3EA

All information is also on our website at [www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

## How to Respond

Responses can either be submitted online via the web link above (social media pages will also link to this) or via hard copy forms which will be available at the venues listed above and at the drop in sessions. All information will be used in accordance with our Fair Processing procedures which can be seen via the above link and a summary of which will be reproduced on the response forms.

# Next Steps



Once the consultation has ended we will look at all of the responses to see what issues people think our new plan should be covering. We will then consider what options we have for dealing with these, which will be the next stage of consultation. Our project timetable is set out below.

Preperation Stage	Description	Target Date
Commencement of work including evidence base updating	Evidence needs to inform the plan, so we gather this at the early stages and update where needed	February 2018
Regulation 18 Scoping and Issues Consultation	<b>This is the stage we are currently consulting on.</b> We are looking at the issues and scope which the the plan needs to cover.	July 2018
Regulation 18 Issues & Options Consultation	At this stage we consider the feedback from the Issues and Scope consultation, look at any further issues and then suggest options for dealing with these. Options (for example) could include how we distribute growth across the district, where that growth should go (site options) and options for policies which will be used in determining planning applications.	February 2019
Preferred Option Consultation	This is a non statutory stage where we refine the plan into a draft version, based on the feedback of the previous consultation and using the evidence available. This will contain draft policies and site allocations, for example.	October 2019
Pre-Submission (Regulation 19 Consultation)	Once we have considered the feedback from the previous consultation, this is the final draft which we have to publish for comment before submitting the plan to the Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate) for independent examination. Feedback at this stage will need to be focused very specifically on whether the plan is 'sound', which is currently defined as: <b>Positively prepared</b> – does the plan allocate enough land to meet all needs for the various uses where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with placing development in the right locations? <b>Justified</b> – is the plan the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives? <b>Effective</b> – can the proposals in the plan be delivered over its period? <b>Consistent with national policy</b> – is the plan in accordance with national policies?	July 2020
Submission	This is the stage where the plan is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.	December 2020
Examination in Public	A planning inspector is assigned to examine the plan to see whether it can be found 'sound' (see above) and whether it is then capable of adoption by the Council.	March 2021
Adoption	Once the plan has been confirmed as being sound then the Council can adopt it and it will set policy for making decsions on planning matters in the district.	September 2021