

## **Blackburn with Darwen Consultation Draft Local Plan – FAQs**

### **What is a Local Plan?**

A Local Plan is a statutory land-use planning document that sets out how the Borough should be developed in the future, in line with the requirements of national policy and legislation.

The Local Plan must set the overall requirement for housing and other development over the plan period and must identify enough land for development to meet this requirement. It also acts as a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.

### **What will the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan do?**

The Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan will, when adopted:

- Provide the strategy for the use of land and buildings up to 2037;
- Set out where future homes, employment areas and services such as shops and community facilities should be located;
- Set out how the historic and natural environments should be conserved and enhanced; and
- Guide decisions on planning applications.

Once formally adopted, the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan will replace the policies in the current Local Plan Parts 1 (Core Strategy) and 2 (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies) and will form the development plan for the Borough.

### **What would happen if we didn't produce one?**

Without an up-to-date Local Plan, Blackburn with Darwen could be subject to speculative development proposals. These proposals may result in unsustainable, unplanned, piecemeal development across the Borough without the required supporting infrastructure.

There's also a risk that if we fail to produce an up-to-date Local Plan, Central Government may intervene and take over the writing of the Local Plan. This would mean we'd have no control over what development is imposed on Blackburn with Darwen.

### **I submitted comments during the Issues and Options consultation. What was the outcome of that consultation, how have my comments been taken into account?**

Public consultation on a 'Local Plan - Issues and Options Consultation' paper took place in February 2019. This document set out the key matters the Council considered needed to be addressed as part of the Draft Local Plan.

A Consultation Report has been prepared which summarises all representations received at Issues and Options stage and the Council's response/action taken. The Issues and Options consultation document and accompanying Consultation Report can be accessed on the Local Plan webpage [blackburn.gov.uk/localplan](http://blackburn.gov.uk/localplan).

Comments made during this consultation have helped to shape the policies and proposals set out in the Draft Local Plan.

## **What is being consulted on now?**

Since consultation took place on the Issues and Options paper, the Council has prepared a significant package of evidence base material to assist in developing its new Local Plan.

This suite of technical reports and studies in addition to the responses received from the Issues and Options consultation have helped to inform the preparation of this Consultation Draft Local Plan.

A six-week public consultation on the Draft Local Plan will take place commencing on **Friday 8th January 2021 and concluding on Friday 19th February 2021**. This is the time to have your say on the emerging plans.

## **Where can I view the documents undergoing consultation?**

The consultation documents can be viewed online at [blackburn.gov.uk/localplan](http://blackburn.gov.uk/localplan).

Exhibition boards summarising the content of the Draft Local Plan can also be viewed at Blackburn and Darwen Market Halls, but should only be accessed in compliance with current coronavirus restrictions. Copies of the exhibition boards are also available to view at [Blackburn.gov.uk/localplan](http://Blackburn.gov.uk/localplan).

## **Are there going to be any public events as part of the public consultation?**

The coronavirus pandemic means that we won't be holding any public exhibitions or meetings during this consultation.

However, there are a number of ways to access the consultation material and further information on the Plan, as set out above. This provides all the information that would have been available at public meetings and face-to-face exhibitions with officers.

## **How do I make comments on the Consultation Draft Local Plan?**

The Council would like to hear from you whether you agree or disagree with the proposals in the plan. If you disagree please provide your reasons why (and any evidence where relevant) and suggest alternatives wherever possible.

There are three main ways that you can comment on the Draft Local Plan and supporting documents:

- **Complete the online survey** at [blackburn.gov.uk/localplan](https://blackburn.gov.uk/localplan)
- **Send your comments by post to:** Local Plan Consultations, Growth Team, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Third Floor, One Cathedral Square, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 1FB
- **Send your comments by email to:** [forwardplanning@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:forwardplanning@blackburn.gov.uk)

### **Will my opinion matter?**

Yes! The local knowledge of residents and expertise of local businesses and organisations will help to make the Plan better. Whether you object to or support an element of the Plan, or wish to suggest some modifications, we are keen to have your feedback.

### **What will happen to my comments or representations, once I have made them?**

Following the consultation, we will carefully read and consider all the comments submitted to us and provide a response to each representation made. This will be included within a Consultation Report which will be published on our Local Plan website.

Any changes that need to be made to the Local Plan as a result of comments will be made before publishing a "Publication" version of the Local Plan in 2021 for consultation. You will have further opportunity to comment on the Plan at this stage.

### **What are the 'Big 6' ideas included in the Local Plan?**

The 'Big Six' ideas which the Draft Local Plan will help us to accomplish are noted below. Further information on each of the 'Big Six' ideas is contained within the Plan and are also illustrated throughout the exhibition board material available on the Local Plan webpage:

- **Blackburn Growth Axis:** a growth framework which links strategic sites across the Borough from the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone, through Blackburn town centre, linking with the Haslingden Road corridor and up to the M65 at Junction 5; and linking the town centre with the Furthergate corridor and up to M65 at Junction 6;
- **Darwen Town Investment Plan:** delivering a potential series of major growth improvements for Darwen;
- **North East Blackburn Strategic Housing Site:** a new neighbourhood on the edge of the town;
- **South East Blackburn Strategic Employment Site:** to attract jobs and investment at a key motorway location;
- **Blackburn Town Centre Major Development Site:** a unique opportunity to boost the vitality of Blackburn town centre; and
- **Infrastructure Delivery Plan:** an important series of interventions to improve infrastructure for all, such as roads, schools and health facilities.

## **Why does the Consultation Draft Local Plan not contain any development management policies?**

The Government is currently proposing to bring in radical reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the entire planning process.

These reforms are set out in detail in the Government's consultation White Paper: [Planning for the future](#). The implications of the proposed reforms on Local Plan making are significant.

Due to the current draft status of the reforms and any further guidance still pending, the Consultation Draft Local Plan acts as a 'hybrid' document embedding some of the key ideas set out in the 'Planning for the future' White Paper. Most importantly the Council is:

- Setting out its interpretation of proposed growth areas, renewal areas, and protected areas as a framework for future development. This is in line with the zonal approach advocated in the Planning White Paper; and
- Shortening the Local Plan by omitting detailed Development Management (DM) policies which are proposed to be set nationally under the new system.

## **The Local Plan makes reference to 'Growth', 'Renewal' and 'Protection' areas. What do these mean?**

The Planning White Paper proposes that all areas of land should be put into one of three categories: 'Growth Areas'; 'Renewal Areas'; and 'Protected Areas'.

'Growth Areas' are those deemed suitable for 'substantial' development, 'Renewal Areas' are those deemed suitable for development and 'Protected Areas' are those that, due to particular environmental and/or cultural reasons, justify more stringent development controls to ensure sustainability.

These areas are all identified on the Local Plan Policies Map which can be viewed on the Local Plan webpage.

## **There is a lot of talk of 'growth'. Why does Blackburn with Darwen need to grow? Can't it stay as it is?**

Central Government has made it clear through National Planning Policy that they are committed to securing economic growth, and the planning system is central to delivering this growth. Therefore, we must set out strategic priorities that will deliver sustainable development, making provisions for housing, jobs, retail, leisure and other commercial development, supported by the required infrastructure.

However, the Council recognises it is not all about growth and new development, and that protecting the most valuable features of the environment is equally as important.

The 'Balanced Growth Strategy' set out in the Draft Local Plan aims to balance the Council's strong ambitions for growth and regeneration whilst also achieving challenging carbon neutral goals and environmental net gains.

## **What is Blackburn with Darwen's housing target?**

The Council's Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) estimates a minimum need for between 358 and 411 net new dwellings per annum to support the economic growth scenario for the Borough.

This housing requirement corresponds with planned jobs growth in the Borough and will help to reduce trends of people who work in the Borough not living here. This should ensure that a suitable working age population remains resident in the Borough.

## **How is the need for affordable housing being addressed?**

Under national policy, the Council can require affordable housing to be provided by developers as part of their proposals, subject to viability and evidence of local housing need.

On developments of 10 or more dwellings, the Draft Local Plan requires at least 20% of homes delivered to be affordable. The Council's preference is for this to be delivered on site to encourage mixed communities, however it is recognised that in limited circumstances off site provision via commuted sums may be more appropriate.

## **Why do we need to remove land from the Green Belt to meet our economic development needs?**

The Borough does not have adequate employment land, both in terms of quantity and quality, to meet its identified requirements over the plan period to 2037.

Development of the Junction 5 M65 strategic employment site will meet a pressing need for additional employment land along the M65 corridor, capable of accommodating a range of modern, high-quality premises to meet both qualitative and quantitative demands.

A Planning Justification Statement has been prepared which identifies the exceptional circumstances which exist to justify the review of the Green Belt boundary and the release of land at J5 for allocation as a Strategic Employment Site. This is available to view and comment on as part of the Draft Local Plan consultation.

A number of alternative site options were assessed but it was concluded these were not reasonable alternatives capable of addressing the identified need for additional employment land.

## **Will Green Belt have to be released to meet our housing targets?**

No. The Draft Local Plan does not propose to allocate any land for housing in designated Countryside Areas or in the Green Belt.

## **Why can't we build on brownfield sites instead of greenfield ones?**

There are a number of brownfield sites identified for development in the Draft Local Plan. However, there are not enough of these to meet all of the Borough's development needs which means that allocations on greenfield sites are also proposed.

## **How have you chosen growth area sites for new development?**

These sites have been selected following completion of the Local Plan Site Assessment Methodology and consideration of the sites' contribution to the overall development strategy set out in the accompanying interim Sustainability Appraisal report.

## **How will infrastructure cope with more growth?**

The growth in new homes and jobs set out in this Draft Local Plan will of course have impacts on infrastructure: be it roads, schools or health facilities.

The Council has prepared a draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which sits alongside the draft Plan and sets out how infrastructure provision has been considered throughout its preparation. Preparation of the IDP has involved collaborative work between the Council and a range of key partners involved in delivering infrastructure which will continue throughout the preparation of the Local Plan.

The IDP includes a number of infrastructure projects that will be delivered to support the growth identified in the Draft Local Plan – school extensions, improvements to motorway junctions and the local highway network, upgrades to community facilities, a new Household Waste Recycling Centre and sustainable travel improvements.

## **What about protecting our area, and the Climate Emergency?**

New development has a key role to play not only in securing economic growth for the borough, but also in securing protection and improvements to our environment (addressing the climate emergency and the Borough's ambitions for carbon neutral status) and also improving the health and well-being of the population.

A number of policies are set out in the plan to support a 'Balanced Growth' strategy for the Borough that will help to ensure sustainable development takes place over the plan period. For example some specific measures such as highlighting Suitable Areas for Wind Energy development, and identifying Environmental Improvement Areas (for habitat improvements, carbon management or flood risk mitigation) are included.

## **What happens next?**

The Council will consider all responses received during this consultation, and will continue working on its new Local Plan through 2021.

In response to consultation feedback, and potential Government planning reforms, the final plan may evolve from its present format. We aim to submit the Local Plan to the Government by the end of 2021, and hope to adopt it during 2022.

## **How can I find out more?**

All material relating to the consultation can be found on the Local Plan webpage at [blackburn.gov.uk/local plan](https://blackburn.gov.uk/local-plan).

If you have any queries on the Draft Local Plan consultation, including if you require assistance completing a response, please get in touch with us at [forwardplanning@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:forwardplanning@blackburn.gov.uk).