

16 December 2019



Media Release

For Immediate Release

Public to be asked for their views on updated Local Plan

An important consultation which will shape and guide future housebuilding in Swindon over the next 20 years will open tomorrow (17 Dec).

Local people will be asked for their views on the Draft Local Plan Review, which sets out where 20,450 homes could be built in the Borough up to 2036.

The six-week consultation, which was approved by the Council's Cabinet earlier this month, follows a similar exercise last summer where people were asked for their views on the preferred and 'emerging' options for the Local Plan. At that time more than a thousand comments were received from around 400 individuals and organisations.

A large proportion of the 20,450 homes required over the next 20 years are already in the pipeline within large-scale new communities allocated for development in the current Local Plan, including the New Eastern Villages, Wichelstowe and Kingsdown. More than £100m has also been secured from the Government to invest in major road improvements before the houses have been built.

In order to reach the required housing target and, following the consultation earlier this year, a number of urban housing sites have been added to the draft Local Plan including land at the former Stratton Education Centre, Moredon Recreation Ground, the former Windmill Hill School and at North Star House.

In addition, a number of sites have been identified for future housing growth outside of the Swindon Urban Area in Highworth, Wroughton and other Swindon villages.

By identifying a range of sites in a large number of locations, the draft strategy supports a wider range of builders and diversifies the development of sites in the Borough. It is likely to encourage an increase in housebuilding in the short-term supporting the Council's ability to maintain a five-year housing supply.

The large number of sites in the strategy reduces the risk of making existing congestion and air quality worse, while also reduces the need for significant new infrastructure.

The proposed employment land identified in the draft Local Plan includes 1.52 hectares at the historic former GWR Carriage Works in the Town Centre, land north of Barnfield Close and 1.7 hectares at the former Groundwell Park and Ride.

In light of comments from last summer's consultation, an existing policy with clear links

to how the Plan is meeting the climate change challenge will be reinstated. The safeguarded route for the canal through the Town Centre has been retained and an enhanced heritage policy to reflect the newly-created Heritage Action Zone in the Railway Village has been added.

Councillor Gary Sumner, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, said: "The importance of having an up-to-date Local Plan cannot be underestimated as it helps us to plan Swindon's growth in a targeted way.

"A large proportion of the homes we have to build as part of the targets set by government have already been identified in major developments such as the New Eastern Villages and Wichelstowe.

"This new draft Local Plan would see houses built across the Borough on smaller sites within existing communities, reducing the need for major new infrastructure and encouraging developers to start building in the short term. This will help us to maintain our five-year land supply and help us ward off unwanted development.

"I would like to thank everyone who took part in our consultation earlier on this year because their feedback was really important in helping us shape this draft Local Plan. But the process is still not finished and it is equally important that we hear the views of local people on this latest stage of the process before we submit the final Local Plan for examination next year."

Members of the public have until 31 January 2020 to give their views on the draft Local Plan.

A copy of the draft Local Plan can be found at: www.swindon.gov.uk/localplan and people can submit their comments via: <https://swindon-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/> or by e-mail to forwardplanning@swindon.gov.uk

ENDS