

A new Local Plan for the borough

Setting out the future for residents and businesses



www.havant.gov.uk/localplan

Havant
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Foreword



Councillor Clare Satchwell
*Cabinet Lead for Planning,
Hayling Seafront Strategy and
Coastal Management*

Getting the right Local Plan for the borough is critical to its future prosperity. It will ensure relevant, quality housing that meets the needs of our residents is provided.

It will provide critical infrastructure to meet the existing and future demands of society. It will ensure businesses have the best possible opportunity to thrive and prosper, and it will lead to critical ecological gains in line with the new Environment Act.

As you may be aware, Havant Borough Council has previously undertaken work to develop a Local Plan, engaging with the public many times, and even going so far as to begin the formal examination process with central government. Following consideration, - and for a number of reasons - the government inspectors suggested that the plan before them be withdrawn and a new plan created. Critically, they identified a shortfall in the supply of housing, particularly in the short term.

This document outlines where we've come from, how we have considered external advice, and where we ultimately want to be. It will also highlight some of the processes and outcomes that will arise as we achieve our aims. The ramifications are profound if we don't ensure the best possible Local Plan for our borough, so I urge you to be part of this process. Please engage in our future dialogues and make this a Local Plan fed, nurtured and improved through your engagement.

A recap

Government requires all local authorities to provide an up-to-date Local Plan – a vision and framework for the future development of the area that sets out the local needs and opportunities for the borough. This is driven by a clear and stark need for new housing and every part of the country – and every community in the borough - will need to play its part. The council has embraced national targets to deliver housing and began work on the last Local Plan for the borough in 2016. This was developed through several consultations before being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in 2021.

Following the hearing sessions, the Planning Inspectorate had some concerns regarding selected elements of the proposed Local Plan. They advised it would be best to withdraw the plan and submit a new plan to take onboard their concerns.

Submitting a new Local Plan offers many advantages; it allows the plan to reflect the council's refreshed regeneration strategy (not in place when the last plan was first developed), new legislation and the latest research and data in our changed, post-pandemic world. However, in the interim, the borough will face increasing pressure from development.

The new Local Plan will be developed using a range of original and existing research, carefully reflecting feedback from inspectors on the previous plan.

The development of such a complex document will take time and will impact on decisions will still need to be made on planning applications until the new Local Plan is formally approved by the Secretary of State.

In their final letter, the inspectors questioned the need for additional engagement on the new plan. The council is still considering this and a formal timetable for the plan's production will be published shortly.



Housing sites and tilted balance



Critical to any successful Local Plan is the identification of sufficient sites to meet local housing need. These figures are dictated by government – and this was a key concern raised by the inspectors in the examination of the last Local Plan. During 2022, the council will actively make a call for sites to create the most up-to-date and definitive list of suitable development sites.

Government also requires the council to identify a five-year supply of housing land available to meet need in the short term. This not only applies to our work to develop the new Local Plan but also in making decisions on planning applications in the meantime.

When the last Local Plan was started, the government expected 450 homes a year to be built in the borough. This has consistently increased with the current target being 507 homes a year. In contrast, only 293 homes were built during 2020/21.

In recent years housing delivery has been compounded by a European Court of Justice ruling which created the need for all new housing developments in the borough to be nutrient neutral. An award-winning solution was developed by the council, but in the short-term this issue has created a significant shortfall in housing delivery.

In the absence of a completed Local Plan and a five-year housing land supply, a concept in government policy known as “tilted balance” is currently applied to all forthcoming housing developments. The tilted balance means granting planning permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. As a result, the provision of new housing is a fundamental benefit of new development, which generally has to be given substantial weight in deciding planning applications.

The council has produced a Housing Delivery Position Statement (HDPS) which outlines how decisions will be taken, considering the tilted balance in the borough.

Decision making principles

The HDPS has six decision making principles which the council will use to inform planning decisions. In summary, these are:

Principle 1: All housing developments must constitute sustainable development and acknowledge the key regulations on the environment.

Principle 2: Those areas which were identified for housing in the previous Local Plan will continue to be supported in principle, as long they meet identified quality standards (see Principle 5).

Principle 3: All development sites on Hayling Island and in Langstone must address the transport issues raised by the inspectors, including during the peak tourist season and at weekends.

Principle 4: Development on sites not identified in the previous Local Plan will be supported, but only if they appropriately address site constraints and mitigate any adverse impacts.

Principle 5: Residential development will need to be of a high quality, provide suitable infrastructure including safe and active travel, and ensure they protect and enhance the natural and built environment. Some of these underlying principles are explored in this document.

Principle 6: The Southleigh site - a strategic site offering capable of delivering up to 2,100 homes - must be delivered in accordance with a masterplan, and not in a piecemeal manner to ensure that infrastructure is delivered in a coordinated way. Furthermore, any development of the site must not prejudice the delivery of new or improved infrastructure providing connectivity to the A27.

Full details - including developer contributions and community benefits based on the size of the development - are covered in the HDPS.



Permitting the right homes in the right places



Planning applications for new housing can be emotive and thought provoking. Whilst a Local Plan can provide certainty for residents and local communities in the borough, it will be some time before this can be put in place. Due to government requirements, there cannot be a 'pause' in planning applications for housing while a new Local Plan is being prepared. In the meantime, the application of the tilted balance will increase the number of housing developments in the borough.

Having the HDPS in place means:

- Decisions are being taken in an open and transparent way
- The government's stated requirement for short-term housing delivery is clearly followed
- Where concerns were raised by the inspectors of the last Local Plan, these are taken into account when deciding applications
- Infrastructure requirements are clearly set out
- Environmental protections are made clear
- The council can seek the right development quality, such as electric vehicle charging points and low carbon design standards
- The right kind of size and mix of housing can be sought

Without the HDPS, the short-term requirements for new housing do not disappear. However, with the HDPS in place, development quality can be raised and the right kind of homes provided.

The new Local Plan cannot ignore the clear need for homes in the borough, and it may need the support of neighbouring authorities to meet its targets. Concurrently, it will also be necessary to ensure all options are explored in identifying local sites which can meet local housing need.

The tilted balance in practice

Havant Borough Council Lower Road, Bedhampton



- The council twice refused planning permission for 50 homes, but the housebuilder appealed to the Planning Inspectorate.
- The council refused the applications due to the harm caused to nearby heritage assets, particularly the Old Bedhampton Conservation Area.
- The inspector agreed that there would be harm to the heritage assets.
- The supply of homes was given substantial weight in the inspector's assessment, and on balance outweighed the harm caused to the conservation area.
- The developer was successful in its appeal.

Fareham Borough Council Romsey Avenue, Fareham



- Fareham Borough Council refused a planning application for 225 homes on a greenfield site on 11 grounds, which included housing in the countryside, and a negative impact both on protected species and highway safety.
- At appeal, the inspector found that there was a considerable shortfall of housing and that this should be afforded significant weight. Additionally, the inspector found that a bird refuge could be provided for the protected species and that there would not be an adverse impact on highway safety.
- The appeal was allowed, with the council ordered to pay costs to the developer in relation to unreasonable behaviour on highway safety grounds.

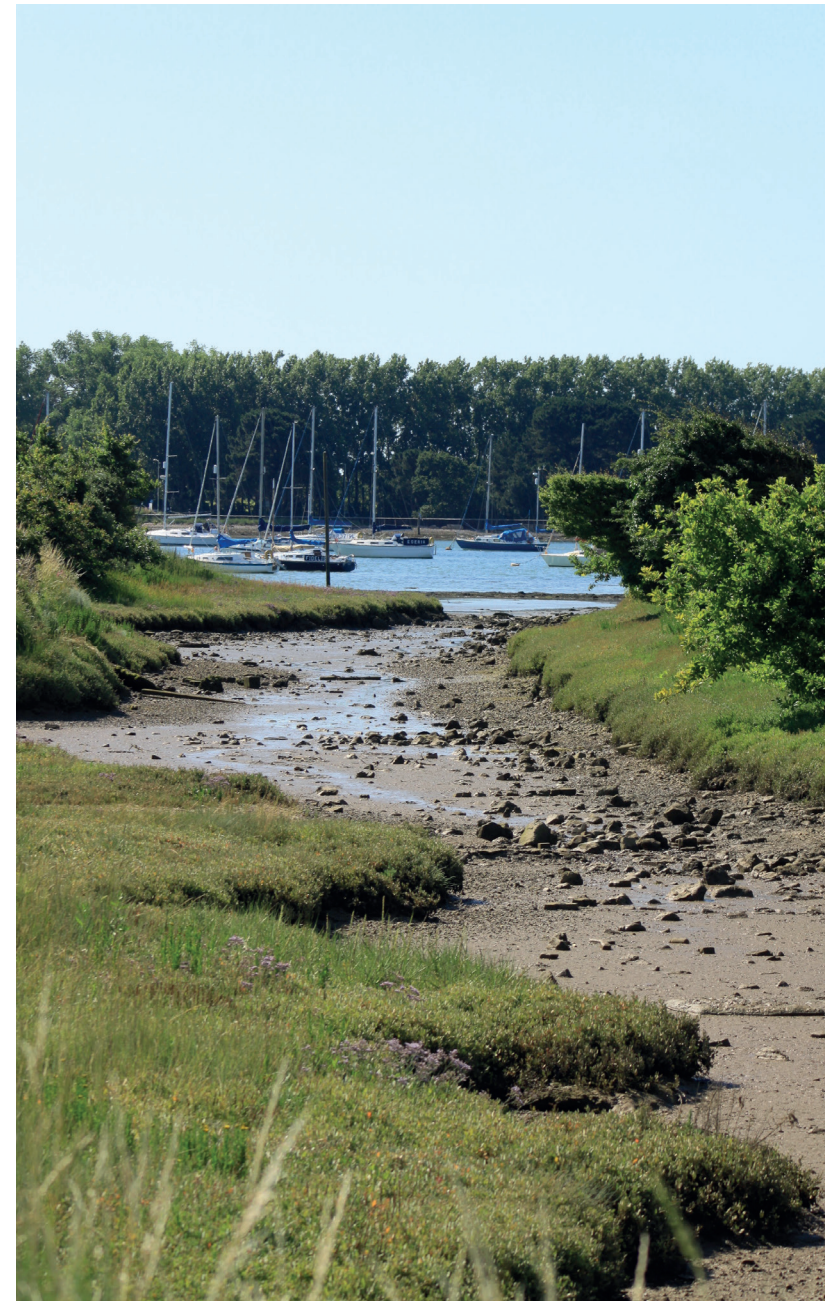
Considering the environment

Appreciating the rich and diverse natural environment of the borough, the council is committed to ensuring that development will lead to a net biodiversity gain in due course, in line with the recently passed Environment Act.

As part of the decision-making principles in the HDPS, due consideration will be placed on not only protecting but also actively enhancing the local environment.

All developments will need to consider the following:

- The retention and meaningful integration of protected trees and hedgerows in the new development
- Any nature designations on the site or its surroundings are not adversely affected, and enhanced where possible
- Protected species are duly protected on the site and the surrounding area
- Wildlife corridors and other forms of green linkage are built into the development, making best use of existing natural features
- Each new home achieves a minimum of 19% reduction in CO² emissions in comparison to Building Regulation targets
- Provision of natural and sustainable drainage solutions suitable to the scale of the development



And finally...



The new Local Plan will deliver long-term benefits defined by the latest research and community engagement, and the post-pandemic, more environmentally focussed world we live in today. Providing long-term social and economic benefits to the borough, the development of a new Local Plan will help move development decisions from being led by the tilted balance mechanism, and towards an accurate, relevant and informed plan bespoke to our local needs.