

Briefing note - Lewes District Local Plan 2020

Overview

The government has said that Lewes District Council must find space for approximately 780 homes per year over the next 20 years.

We must now prepare a local plan which sets planning policies for the area of the district outside of the South Downs National Park and shows how we will meet a new housing figure set by the government.

Lewes district is at the first stage of this process having just invited landowners to put forward their suggestions for where we should consider new development in our district. Locations put forward in this 'call for sites' (see below) will need to be assessed to see if they are suitable for consideration in the local plan.

An independent planning inspector must look at all local plan documents that local authorities in England prepare. This examination is the final stage of the process for producing a local plan and we expect this to take place in 2023. The process should have fully involved everyone who has an interest in the document and they should have had the chance to comment.

Local plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with section 20 of the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(as amended\)](#) and the [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

Once adopted, local plans provide the framework for development across the district and will be used to determine planning applications.

The new local plan is timetabled for adoption by the end of 2023.

Call for Sites

- At the start of the local plan process, all options need to be considered. Failure to consider all options at the start of the process may mean that the final version of the plan fails its examination by a government inspector and cannot be adopted.
- In the early stages of local plan production, it is common practice to run a 'call for sites' process. A call for sites was undertaken during autumn 2020.

- The inspector will expect that we have 'left no stone unturned' in the search of development sites.
- A call for sites is an open process.
- **Landowners put forward their suggestions – this does not mean they will automatically make it into the plan.**
- Each suggestion goes through a full, rigorous and objective assessment to determine whether, in principle, it could be capable of delivering development. Full consultation on the local plan and the sites being included will take place as part of the local plan process.
- To give consistency in this assessment, a methodology containing a suite of assessment criteria will be used. This methodology is consulted on and will be published on the council's website.
- Those sites that do not meet the assessment criteria will not enter the next stage in the preparation of the local plan.
- It is important that the assessment is robust and justified, as many of the rejected and omitted sites will be scrutinised by the government inspector at examination.

Town and Parish involvement

- We will keep town and parish councils informed at every stage of the local plan process.
- On the 12 February, town and parish councils will receive a list of sites that we have received from the 'call for sites' process, along with a map of the parish identifying where the sites are located.
- This list will be parish specific.
- This list will contain sites that are newly submitted to us in the 2020 'call for sites', as well as sites submitted to previous 'calls for sites', which will be re-assessed using the updated methodology.
- The sites will be listed and mapped as they have been submitted. An assessment using the updated methodology will not have been undertaken at this point.
- We are calling on town and parish councils to share their local knowledge so that officers have the factual information they need to assess each site.

- Town and parish councils will continue to be engaged and fully consulted throughout the local plan process. The full public consultation will start toward the end of 2021.

Housing Requirement Figure

- The housing figure for the new local plan is derived nationally (calculated by a 'Standard Method').
- Using this standard method, the government has more than doubled our housing figure.
- The housing target was previously 275 homes per year for the area of the district outside of the national park. Under the standard method, this has increased to 782 homes per year for the district from May 2021.
- It is important to note that we do not agree with the housing figure as the standard method does not take in account the ability of an area to deliver that number of homes. In addition, there is no route to 'appeal' the local housing need figure before a local plan examination.
- On conclusion of the local plan process, which is towards the end of 2023, we will have to be able to demonstrate that having followed due process, consulted extensively, and explored all potential options and left no stone unturned.
- When the local plan is found to be 'sound' following its examination before a government inspector, then and only then will a lower figure housing figure be accepted.
- Finally, if the local plan at examination is found to unsound for whatever reason, then the local plan making process would re-start to mitigate or overcome the issues of unsoundness.