Local Plan

What is a Partial Update and Regulation 19 consultation?

November 2024

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What is the purpose of this booklet?

The booklet gives a simple overview of what Stevenage Borough Council is doing as part of its review of the Local Plan. It is for everyone with an interest in how development is approved in the borough.

The Local Plan is designed to set out the spatial vision for the town with rules for how development is carried out. The booklet explains why we are reviewing the Local Plan and what specific changes we are making. Anyone in Stevenage's community, such as residents, workers, businesses, community organisations or visitors can use the booklet to understand the role of Local Plan and the changes we are proposing.

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What is the Local Plan?

The preparation of Local Plans is subject to an extensive legal framework, as set out in relevant acts and regulations and interpreted through case law. This is supplemented by national planning policies and guidance which set out the clear principles and expectations of the planning system.

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan was adopted on 22 May 2019. The Plan sets out a spatial vision for the town to 2031 and contains detailed land use policies for the Borough. It looks to guide development and covers areas like housing, the built and natural environment, infrastructure, businesses, open spaces and more.

The Local Plan is a key part of what is known as the Council's 'Development Plan'. The 'Development Plan' is a hierarchy of planning documents which inform the assessment of planning applications.

The plan contains three main sections:

- Part I: Introduction and context – This section explains how the planning system works and why the Local Plan is important. It provides background information about Stevenage and the wider area. It sets a vision for the future of the town.

- Part II: Strategic policies – These provide guidance on the main issues that the plan addresses. It sets out our overall approach to topics such as housing and employment. It sets the key targets that the plan will meet. These are the policies that any neighbourhood plans will need to follow.

- Part III: Detailed policies and delivery – These are the detailed requirements that we will apply to individual planning applications to make sure that our vision and strategic policies can be achieved.

What topics do the policies cover?

The 2019 Local Plan contains areas on sustainable development, the economy, a vital Town Centre, infrastructure and transport, high quality homes, good design, healthy communities, Green Belt, climate change, flooding, pollution, and the natural and historic environment.

How did we get here?

May 2019	Adopted the Local Plan.
July to August 2024	We conducted a 'Regulation 18 consultation'. This is where we asked for early input on the direction of changes we had considered for the review and partial update. We wanted to know what people thought about the key policy changes we had identified and help revise these accordingly.
August to November 2024	We considered the responses carefully from the consultation and gathered more evidence to help set up the basic principles of the policies. We also engaged informally with stakeholders and the community to understand their thoughts on how to shape the policies.
November 2024	We finalised our draft policies following feedback from the consultation and evidence gathered. We reported these changes to Cabinet on the 13 November 2024. These were approved for the next stage of the Local Plan.
November 2024 to February 2025	The next stage is another consultation called a **'Regulation 19 consultation'**. The consultation will run for 12 weeks, and we want to hear if you think the new or revised policies are strong, work well and lawful. There is more guidance below on how to respond to a Regulation 19 consultation.

What policy areas does the Partial Update focus on?

It is important to remember that the Local Plan Review, at this stage, consists of a Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (May 2019). As such, the scope of the review to policies and supporting text is limited to necessary changes only, related to key drivers of change since the Plan was adopted in 2019. Other wider changes will be considered for the next stage of the Local Plan Review, a new Local Plan, from 2025 onwards.

Main areas to review and update:

- Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Climate Change
- Trees
- Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area
- Flooding and drainage
- Design and minor amendments

Climate Change

Climate Change policies will be placed at the top of our Strategic Planning Policies. We are seeking to get the right balance of new low carbon homes and investment in retrofitting existing homes, alongside new jobs, infrastructure while protecting our green and cultural assets, echoing the TCPA Garden City principles that the original new town was founded on.

Within a new chapter on climate change and updated strategic policy, we are seeking to enhance our Local Plan with new policies and these are:

- **new Policy CC1: Energy Efficiency,**
- **new Policy CC2: Overheating and cooling,**
- **new Policy CC3: Water Efficiency,**
- **new Policy CC4: Energy infrastructure**
- **new Policy CC5: Carbon sinks,**
- **new Policy CC6: Green roofs and walls**
- **and**
- **new Policy CC7: Green economy.**

Trees

As well as climate change policies, it is also important to consider the natural environment and we are reviewing our policies around trees. These are:

Revised Tree Policy NH5: Trees and woodland and **new Policy NH5b: Tree-lined streets**.

These would look to reducing the loss of trees with replacement standards, as well include a new policy which would reflect national planning policy on tree lined streets.

Flooding and drainage

Our current policies will be reviewed to take account of national standards on sustainable drainage and risks from flooding.

The changes consist of the deletion of existing Policy FP1: Climate Change and replacement with **new Policy FP1: Sustainable Drainage** to reflect change in Plan structure and to ensure clear standards are set for sustainable drainage systems. There is also the deletion of existing Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1 and Policy FP3: Flood risk in Flood Zones 2 and 3 and replaced with a new comprehensive **Policy FP2: Flood risk management** to emphasise protection and enhancement of flood risk.

Design

Creation of new **Policy GD2: Design certification**. This policy has been added to reflect changes in national guidance and standards in design.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Creation of a **new Policy HO14: Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)**. This is to clarify that proposals for new Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) must have regard to relevant SPDs e.g. the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD 2020.

Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area

The Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area is also known as **Policy TC4**. After reviewing Stevenage's Local Plan during the Hold Direction, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) asked Stevenage Borough Council to prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Stevenage Station Gateway Area to support Policy TC4. This is a limited area within the wider Stevenage.

In the time that has passed since the adoption of the Local Plan in May 2019, two productive stages of public consultation have been held on the Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan. This has formed a comprehensive and robust evidence base that supports Policy TC4 of the Local Plan.

Officers have considered the options to progress the AAP and have decided to combine the work already undertaken, with the emerging Local Plan Review and incorporate into one combined process up to Examination in Public.

It is important to note that the policy wording in TC4, as a result of the two rounds of public consultation, will not change significantly. It is proposed to be strengthened to highlight the potential the Station Gateway area has in creating an exemplar low carbon development, as well as flexibility in land uses while providing a vibrant environment and active public realm opportunities.

There is a strong degree of fluidity within the policy TC4, to allow the area to be triggered by major infrastructure and development in the medium to long term. The policy does not suggest immediate changes in this area of opportunity for Stevenage.

Minor amendments

Policies and supporting text will need to be revised to reflect the amended Use Classes Order legislation which came in to force in 2020. Evidence base studies will also inform any amendments to retail shopping areas in the borough.

Few other minor changes include updates to any textual errors within the subtext and a review of the Proposals map to ensure it is up to date.

How to respond to the consultation?

As your planning authority, we will undertake public consultation exercises. Some will be at the formal stages of local plan making and because these are legal stages, please make sure you respond within the official deadlines.

Responding means you will have the option to be on the consultation list and be sent further notifications.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 stipulate that for a development plan, public consultation must be held for a minimum of 6 weeks.

The stages of the Local Plan consultation are shown below:

Stage 1	At the first stage of consultation on a Local Plan, also legally known as a **Regulation 18 consultation**, we will explore the issues which need to be addressed through the planning system and how the issues might be resolved. Due to this being a partial update of the Local Plan, we are reviewing essential changes, but were happy to hear thoughts on the whole plan. After the deadline, the team carefully processed the comments and edited the policies accordingly to prepare a draft plan for stage 2.
Stage 2	At the pre-submission stage, also known as a **Regulation 19 consultation**, this consultation is a formal process that takes place before a draft plan is submitted to the Inspectorate for examination. You will be able to see the proposed policies and the supporting explanatory text. This will be your opportunity to comment if the polices are “sound”.
Stage 3	At the examination stage, the local plan is substantially complete. You may be asked for further information and the Council may make recommendations for some changes to policies. The planning inspector will review the whole process.

Your response

All your responses will be on the public files, so don't say something you wouldn't want to be read by everyone.

You will have the opportunity to make your response online. This has the advantage of being able to see what others are saying and being able to make a supplementary response. You can also contact the Planning Policy team separately using the contact information at the end of this document if you are unsure of anything.

The link to our consultation website is https://stevenagelocalplanreg19.commonplace.is/

What can I comment on?

When participating in the Regulation 19 consultation, it presents the opportunity to comment on the content of the local plan, within three specific remits, that include:

- **Legal compliance**: does the Local Plan meet the legal requirements and procedural requirements for preparing Local Plans?
- **Soundness**: Is the plan sound? Has the Local Plan been positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy? and
- **Duty to Cooperate**: Has the plan complied with the Duty to Cooperate - has the Council in preparing the Local Plan engaged and worked effectively with neighbouring authorities and statutory bodies?

You can also suggest modifications to the plan, such as revised wording for policies or text. If you object to the plan, you should provide reasons and / or evidence to justify your objection.

What is soundness?

Paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 sets out that Local Plans are 'sound' if they are:

a) Positively prepared - providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
b) Justified - an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
c) Effective - deliverable over the Plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground;
d) Consistent with national policy - enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

What is legal compliance?

In order to be legally compliant, the Local Plan must:

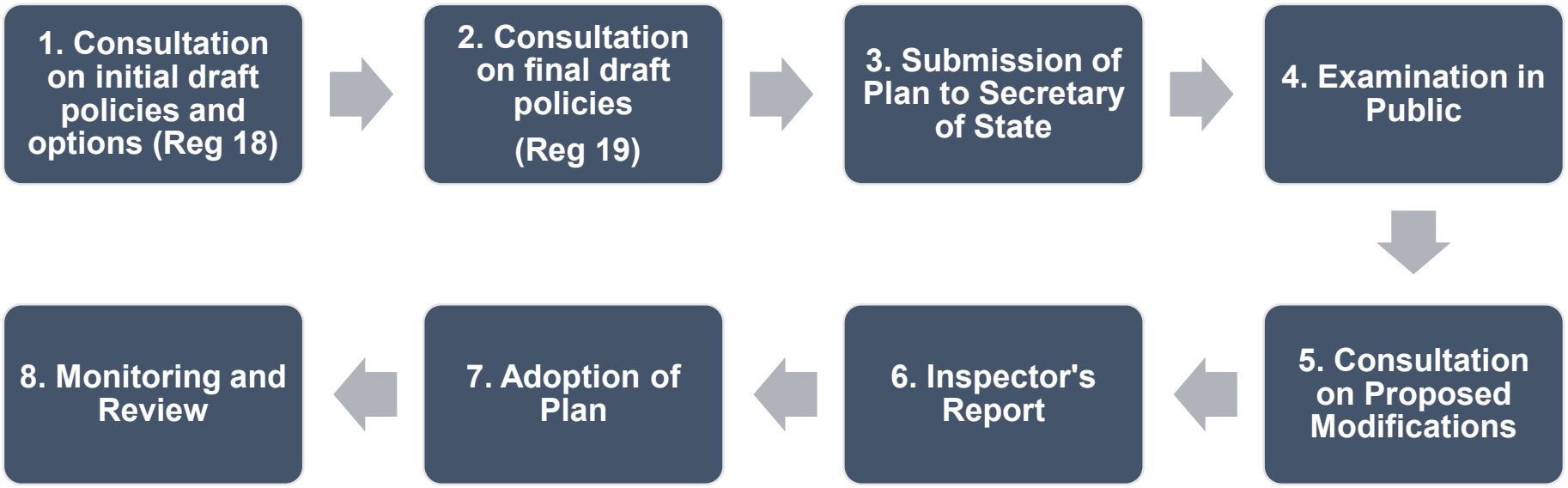
- Be prepared in accordance with the Council's Local Development Scheme and its Statement of Community Involvement; The documents show the work programme prepared by the council, setting out the timetable for the planning documents it proposes to produce and how the Council will conduct consultations;
- Be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitat Regulations Assessment;
- Include policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change;
- Be prepared in accordance with the Equality Act 2010;
- Comply with all other relevant legal requirements including: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Town and Country Planning (Local planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.

What is meeting the Duty to Cooperate?

The requirements of the Duty to Cooperate are set out in Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 and Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The legislation requires all Local planning authorities to demonstrate that they have had active and on-going cooperation with key bodies, such as neighbouring authorities and other statutory bodies on strategic matters, including infrastructure, housing and employment needs and flooding. Comments relating to the duty to cooperate must be specific in terms of how and why they believe the plan has, or has not met its duty, and support this with evidence and justification.

Next steps

Once the first consultation finishes (Regulation 18), the council will review each comment and consider whether tweaks need to be made to the draft policy. Once the comments have been considered, changes implemented, the council will conduct another consultation (Regulation 19), to show the amendments and allow for any more comments. The steps of the Local Plan process are shown below:



Have your say

Have your say here:

https://stevenagelocalplanreg19.commonplace.is/

Need more help?

Contact us on:

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