

Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY2 6ND

Date: 26 October 2022

Dear Planning Inspectors

Joint Black Country Local Plan Update

This letter is to bring you up-to-date with recent developments with the progress of the joint Black Country Local Plan. This was an issue discussed at the Stage 1 Hearing Sessions into the Shropshire Local Plan, in particular in relation to Matter 2 on the legal Duty to Cooperate, and it is therefore considered important you are aware of these latest developments.

In summary, following recent discussions between the four local authorities covered by the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA): Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, it has been decided that plan preparation work on the Joint Black Country Local Plan will cease immediately. Instead, each Council will develop its own Local Plan to a timescale to be agreed by each authority.

The following press releases provide more information on this recent news:

Press Release from Dudley MBC, 6th October 2022 (Appendix 1 of this correspondence): [Dudley will “go it alone” on housing and employment plan | Dudley Council](#)

Press Release from Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall Councils, 13th October 2022 (Appendix 2 of this correspondence): [Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall councils to develop own local plans | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet are due to discuss a proposed new Local Development Scheme (LDS) at their meeting on 26th October. This information can be found here [Wolverhampton Local Development Scheme.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#). It is anticipated the other three Councils will discuss their respective revised LDS in the coming weeks.



We are aware you are currently preparing Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) into the upcoming virtual hearing session scheduled for 17th January 2023 in order to discuss the recent evidence provided by the Council (GC14 and GC15a-i). It is acknowledged this recent news regarding the Black Country Plan may be relevant to these discussions.

Therefore should you have any questions it is suggested these could be included in the upcoming MIQs and discussed further at the 17th January hearing session. Alternatively, should you have any questions outside the MIQs process we would of course be happy to respond.

Kind regards,

Eddie West
Planning Policy and Strategy Manager



Appendix 1: Press Release from Dudley MBC, 6th October 2022



Dudley will “go it alone” on housing and employment plan

Posted on: 06/10/2022

#Black Country Plan

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Council bosses in Dudley have pulled out of a regional plan to identify housing and employment land in a bid to “listen to local people” on the use of green belt.

Dudley Council leader, Councillor Patrick Harley, says the council will draw up its own plan after cutting ties with the Black Country Plan.

Earlier this year, almost 20,800 people across the Black Country responded to consultation on the plan in the form of individuals, organisations and group responses and a further 18,000 people signed petitions. The vast majority were from Dudley.

Following the enormous feedback Dudley leaders have since said they would pull two sites from the plan – land south of Holbeach Lane, Kingswinford, and land in Swindon Road, Wall Heath.

But after the Black Country authorities failed to come to agreement on how the plan would progress, Councillor Patrick Harley said he could not allow the “overwhelming” feedback from the public to be ignored and therefore would be recommending to Dudley Council’s cabinet that the authority should withdraw and draw up its own plan.

Councillor Patrick Harley, leader of Dudley Council, said:

“ At every stage of this plan we have made it clear that it must be led by the people who live here. I simply cannot stand by and allow decisions to be made which are contrary to the overwhelming feedback we have already received. This is clearly a very emotive subject and people feel very strongly about it. I must reflect that in the decisions I make for the people of this borough. We will therefore look to go it alone and look at what is needed to support a Dudley specific plan and setting out the timescales for that. A lot of the work we have carried out to date is still very relevant so it is not a matter of starting from scratch. There’s a huge amount of feedback already from residents in Dudley borough and it is important we use that moving forward. But rest assured we will listen to local people and put them first at every stage of this plan. ”

Further details and timings will be announced at a later date.

About the Author

Press Office



pressoffice@dudley.gov.uk



01384815219

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Appendix 2: Press Release from Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall
Councils, 13th October 2022



Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall councils to develop own local plans

HOME / NEWS / WOLVERHAMPTON, SANDWELL AND WALSALL COUNCILS TO DEVELOP OWN LOCAL PLANS

In response to unilateral action taken by Dudley Council to withdraw from a regional plan to shape the development needs of the Black Country, the 3 remaining councils have decided to develop their own local plans.

The Government's target is for 76,000 new homes to be built in the Black Country by 2039. The 4 councils that make up the region: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, have been working together on a coordinated plan for the future development needs of the whole area.

Earlier this year more than 20,000 people from across the 4 boroughs responded to a joint consultation process.

Last week Dudley Council, without any prior notice, decided to stop collaborating with their neighbouring authorities and to pull out of the plan, going against the agreed approach and years of faithful collaboration between the four councils.

In response Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton councils have no option but to now develop their own local plans. Despite this, all 3 councils intend to continue to work together on areas of common interest.

City of Wolverhampton Council Leader, Councillor Ian Brookfield, said: "Dudley Council's decision to walk away from the Black Country Plan will lead to delays and extra cost, which is disappointing after the 4 authorities collaborated over a number of years to progress the plan so far. We will now work with people we can trust to meet our legal requirement to prepare a Local Plan for Wolverhampton that delivers the necessary housing and employment land in a sustainable way - and provides certainty for our communities, businesses and stakeholders."

Leader of Sandwell Council, Councillor Kerrie Carmichael, said: "We're disappointed that the joint approach we have all been working towards for many years has fallen through. The Government has set challenging targets for new housing in Sandwell so it's important we progress planning for Sandwell's future housing and employment needs whilst continuing to listen to the feedback and information that we receive from residents, businesses, investors and other stakeholders. We've now decided that the best way to work towards achieving these aims is to develop our own Local Plan for Sandwell."

Leader of Walsall Council, Councillor Mike Bird said: "The 4 councils of the Black Country have been working hard to find a way forward for our future development needs. A great deal of time and money has been invested into developing a single Black Country Plan. It is a great shame that Dudley Council has decided to pull the plug. We will now concentrate on developing a local plan for Walsall."

Proposals to develop local plans for Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton are to be discussed by each council at future cabinet meetings.

Released: Thursday 13th October, 2022



Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall councils to develop own local plans

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