

Report title	Draft Black Country Plan – Additional Housing Sites in Walsall	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Stephen Simkins Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration	
Originating service	Planning	
Accountable employee	Michele Ross	Lead Planning Manager (Sub-Regional Strategy)
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Report has been considered by	Regeneration Leadership Team	7 June 2022
	Strategic Executive Board	14 June 2022

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Draft Black Country Plan – Additional Housing Sites in Walsall (Appendix 1) and Sustainability Appraisal Report (Appendix 2), for consultation during summer 2022.
2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration, to approve any necessary minor amendments to the Draft Black Country Plan – Additional Housing Sites in Walsall and Sustainability Appraisal Report prior to commencement of the consultation process.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To gain approval for consultation on Draft Black Country Plan - Additional Housing Sites in Walsall, as an extension to the Draft Black Country Plan (Regulation 18) consultation which took place in summer 2021.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS), which was adopted in 2011, is the key strategic planning and regeneration document covering the Black Country authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The BCCS covers the period to 2026 and contains a commitment to a review in 2016. Work on the review began with the production of key evidence in 2016, followed by consultation on an Issues and Options Report in summer 2017. On 17 October 2018, Cabinet received a report summarising key issues raised during the consultation and agreed to widen the scope of the review to include detailed site allocations and to change the name of the document to the Black Country Plan (BCP). This Plan will identify where new employment and housing development will be located and where investment for new infrastructure such as transport, schools and health facilities will be made and will set out policies to guide development.
- 2.2 On 7 July 2021, Cabinet approved consultation on the Draft Black Country Plan (Regulation 18) during summer 2021. The Draft Plan included proposed site allocations for housing and employment development.

3.0 Regulation 18 Consultation on Additional Housing Sites in Walsall

- 3.1 Following a review of the consultation responses and completion of new evidence, three additional sites in Walsall are now considered potentially suitable for housing. These sites need to be subject to formal public consultation (an additional Regulation 18 consultation) before the Black Country Plan can move to the next stage of consultation (Regulation 19). One of these sites (WAH257) was subject to site assessment at Draft Black Country Plan stage and considered not suitable for development – new evidence has changed the site assessment for this site. The remaining two sites are new sites which were not previously subject to site assessment. There are five further new sites in Walsall which have been subject to site assessment and considered not suitable for housing.
- 3.2 The additional sites are listed below:

Site Reference	Site Name	Housing Capacity
WAH257	Land West of Chester Road North of Little Hardwick Road, Streetly	655 homes
WAH258	Land east of Skip Lane and North of Woodfield Close	135 homes
WAH259	Pacific Nurseries (extension to area already proposed in Draft Plan)	30 homes

The sites have a significant housing capacity of 820 homes, which will make a welcome contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Black Country over the Plan period up to 2039. The sites are located some distance from the Walsall boundary with Wolverhampton and will have no immediate planning implications for Wolverhampton.

- 3.3 Further details, including a map showing the location of the sites, are provided in the Draft Black Country Plan – Additional Housing Sites in Walsall (Regulation 18) consultation document attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The Sustainability Appraisal prepared for the new sites (both suitable and not suitable for development) is attached as Appendix 2. Further evidence, including site assessment reports, will be published alongside these documents when public consultation commences in July.
- 3.4 The consultation will take place for eight weeks and will be limited to seeking views on the additional sites only, with consultation activities focused on affected communities and stakeholders in Walsall. Responses to the consultation will be analysed and, together with responses to the 2021 Regulation 18 consultation, will feed into preparation of the Publication (Regulation 19) Black Country Plan.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Black Country Plan (BCP) timetable has been adjusted to allow for the additional stage of Regulation 18 consultation, and to allow delegated approval to be sought for Submission of the BCP in spring 2023. The new timetable, which is reflected in the amended Wolverhampton Local Development Scheme 2022-25, is as follows:

Consultation on Draft Plan (Regulation 18ii)

– Additional Housing Sites in Walsall	July – Sept 2022
Consultation on Publication Plan (Regulation 19)	Nov – Dec 2022
Submission of Plan to Secretary of State	March – May 2023
Examination in Public	Date of Submission - Feb 2024
Adoption	March 2024

5.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 5.1 City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to the Black Country Plan preparation process. The alternative option would be to make no change to the existing Wolverhampton Local Plan. This would mean that the City would not have an up-to-date Local Plan in place for a number of years.
- 5.2 Failure to have a Local Plan that is based on sound evidence could result in the City having insufficient land to meet the need for housing, employment and other land uses that are necessary to support the economic and environmental well-being of the area. It could also result in development taking place in the wrong locations, leading to an

inefficient use of resources, traffic congestion and other harm. Having an up-to-date Local Plan in place is also essential to defend the Council's position at planning appeals. Lack of an up-to-date Plan risks intervention from central government and may compromise our ability to make decisions locally.

6.0 Reasons for decisions

6.1 It is important that Wolverhampton is covered by an up-to-date Local Plan and Local Development Scheme, in order to meet statutory requirements and to support regeneration and investment in the City and protect areas of value from development. Cabinet approval is required for each consultation stage of the Black Country Plan preparation process.

7.0 Financial implications

7.1 The costs of preparing the Black Country Plan are shared on an equal basis between the four Black Country Local Authorities with Sandwell taking the lead role in procurement. Costs incurred by Wolverhampton during 2021-2022 totalled £77,672, which was met from Planning revenue budgets for 2021-2022 and planning grant. Based on current estimated costs for 2022-2024, these could be met through Planning revenue budgets including approved budgets for 2022-2023 and future budgets subject to budgetary approval processes. An indicative breakdown is provided in the table below:

	2022-2023 £000	2023-2024 £000	Total £000
Black Country cost	460	200	660
Of which Wolverhampton cost	115	50	165

7.2 The numbers in the table above are estimated and are subject to change. The recurrent budget for this area is circa £70,000, however, where the forecast suggests costs will be in excess of this budget, planning grant is available to fund the additional costs.
[VS/07062022/M]

8.0 Legal implications

8.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of this report and its appendices. The Black Country Plan will form part of the adopted Local Plan for the City.
[TC/09062022/F]

9.0 Equalities implications

9.1 Preparation of the Draft Black Country Plan includes the carrying out of an integrated Sustainability Appraisal at each formal stage, and at later stages an Equality Impact Assessment. The Black Country Plan seeks to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of the communities in the City. This will include meeting the needs of

children and young people by seeking to provide sufficient facilities for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations.

- 9.2 The Issues and Options consultation involved engagement with a wide range of organisations and individuals and information from this will be used to inform the Equality Analysis. On-going equality analysis will be undertaken and completed in a phased manner as the development of the Review progresses, with a particular focus on housing and employment issues to ensure that the needs of the people and the City are addressed.

10.0 All other implications

- 10.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is being carried out throughout the plan preparation process. SA is a process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed policies and proposals to ensure sustainability issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage. The overall aim of the SA process is to inform and influence the development of the Plan and maximise its sustainability value.
- 10.2 The review is being produced by a team of officers working across the four Black Country Councils. Within Wolverhampton, around two full time equivalent posts are currently dedicated to the review, with further support from colleagues in City Development and City Environment and Housing. Delivery of the timetable will to a large extent be dependent upon the retention of key staff and maintenance of staffing resource up to adoption.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 Black Country Core Strategy 2006-26, adopted February 2011
- 11.2 Cabinet – 27 June 2017 '[Black Country Core Strategy Review – Issues and Options Report](#)'
- 11.3 Cabinet – 17 October 2018 '[Progress on Black Country Core Strategy Review](#)'
- 11.4 Cabinet – 7 July 2021 '[Black Country Plan Draft for Consultation](#)'
- 11.5 Wolverhampton Local Development Scheme 2022-25 ([Local Development Scheme | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#))

12.0 Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Black Country Plan – Additional Housing Sites in Walsall
- 12.2 Appendix 2 – Sustainability Appraisal of Additional Housing Sites in Walsall