

Public Document Pack



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Date: 29 October 2024

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART 1

3. UPDATE ON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

To receive an update on the Local Plan Review in advance of Reg 19 consultation.
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Supplementary Agenda Published 25 October 2024

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Planning & Development Committee Briefing Note 29 October 2024

Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update: Regulation 18 Consultation Feedback and Regulation 19 Consultation

Lead Officers:

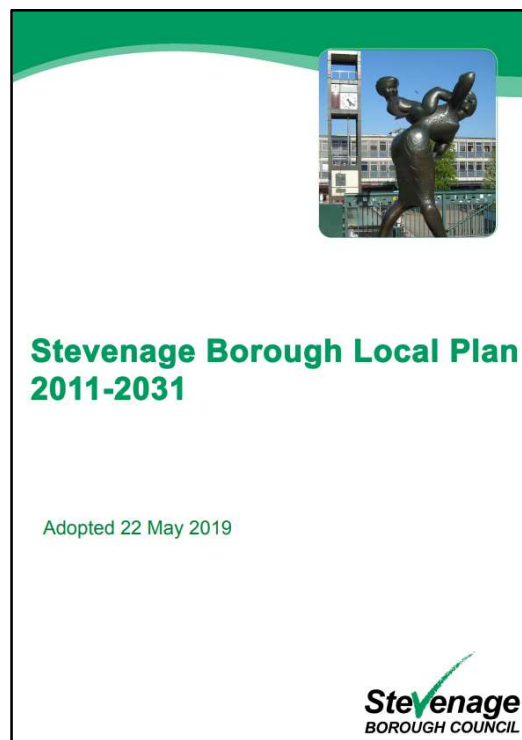
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Stevenage Borough Local Plan



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. The Plan superseded the District Plan Second Review (adopted 2004) as the statutory Local Plan for the Borough and is used to determine applications for planning permission.

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 Plan was adopted following a lengthy Holding Direction process, following Examination in Public of the Plan by the Secretary of State which concluded in October 2017.

The Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG, changed to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities or DLUHC and now since changed back to MHCLG) issued a temporary Holding Direction to prevent the Council from adopting the Plan, so that he could consider representations from the local MP largely relating to town centre regeneration and green belt issues.

The Holding Direction was lifted on 25 March 2019 by the Secretary of State, providing a resolution to the issue. The letter from the Secretary of State withdrew the direction on the understanding that the Council commit to the following actions:

- Update the Local Development Scheme (to be adopted before or at the same time as the Local Plan is adopted) to include the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Stevenage ‘Station Gateway’ area (Site TC4 in the Local Plan).

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan was subsequently adopted on 22 May 2019, subject to a 6-week legal challenge period.

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.

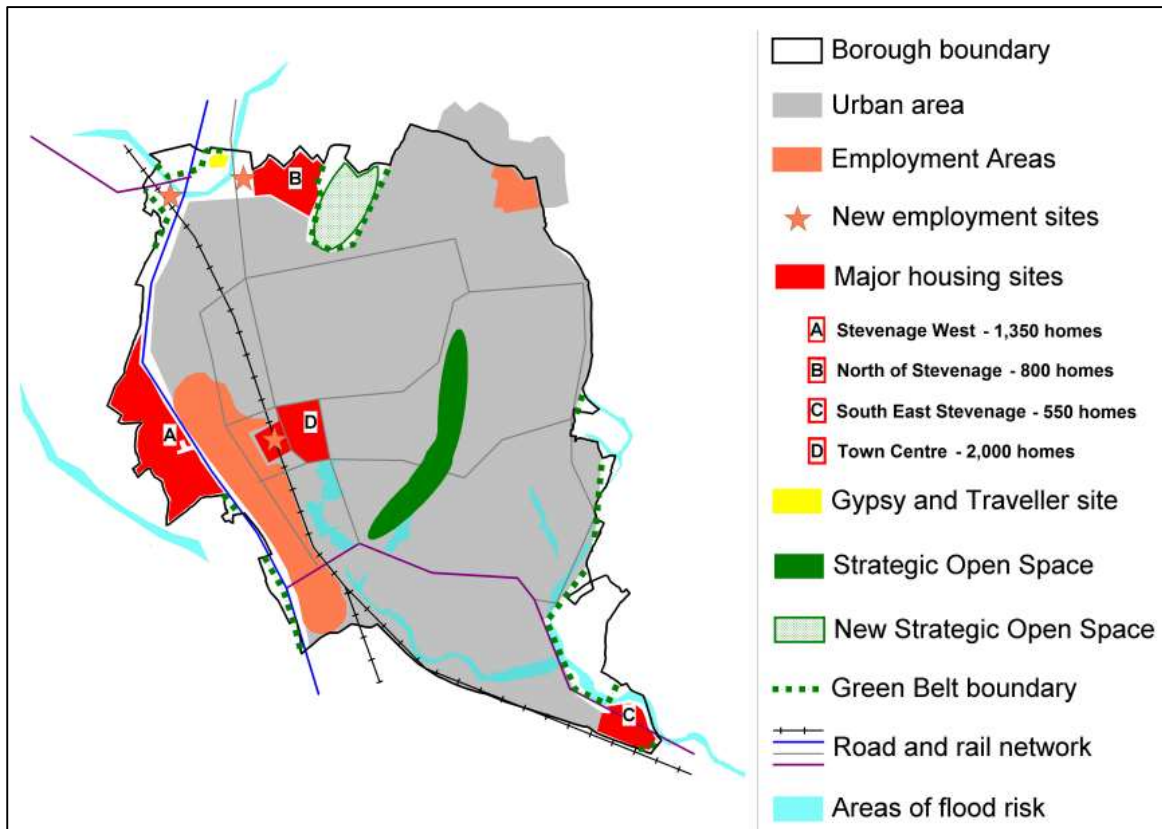
The 2019 Local Plan contains 13 Strategic Policies, covering the areas of sustainable development, economy, a vital Town Centre, infrastructure and transport, high quality homes, good design, healthy communities, Green Belt, climate change, flooding and pollution, and the natural and historic environment. Policies are as follows:

SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage
SP3: A strong, competitive economy
SP4: A vital Town Centre
SP5: Infrastructure
SP6: Sustainable transport
SP7: High quality homes
SP8: Good design
SP9: Healthy communities
SP10: Green Belt
SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution
SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment
SP13: The historic environment

The “Detailed Policies” section of the 2019 Local Plan then contains 10 chapters, broadly expanding on the themes within the 13 strategic policies in Part 2 of the Local Plan and a total of 73 policies on a wide range of planning policy topics, relevant to Stevenage.

The Local Plan Policies Map complements the detailed policies in the Local Plan and is the spatial representation of our spatial development strategy.

This is supplemented by the Local Plan Key Diagram, which summarises our strategic approach to planning the town to 2031:



Developments since Local Plan Adoption in May 2019

An Officer Report to Cabinet in June 2024 outlined a series of developments and key drivers of change since Local Plan Adoption in 2019; influencing the Planning Policy team's approach to taking forward the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update. These can be summarised as:

- National level changes – Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) in October 2023; National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) revisions in December 2023; wide range of proposed changes to the plan-making system; Use Classes Order changes in September 2020; wide range of other emerging national level policies and guidance, including National Design Code, Government's Environmental Improvement Plan, Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework and further guidance on energy production, distribution and use.
- Regional and sub-regional developments – series of Hertfordshire County Council strategies, emerging North East Central Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan to 2050, Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), Hertfordshire Minerals & Waste Plan, ongoing education planning.
- Local changes and developments – a series of developments in development practice, policy application, general changes including Climate Change, housing, economy, employment, Town Centre Regeneration, viability of Local Plan sites, sustainable travel, health and wellbeing, progress with Local Plan Strategic Site Allocations, Supplementary Planning Documents, recent work and forthcoming evidence updates.
- Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP) – decision to combine the work already undertaken on the AAP with the emerging Local Plan Review and incorporate into one combined process up to Examination in Public and anticipated adoption of a revised Local Plan (including an updated Policy TC4 and / or new section on Opportunity Areas / Station Gateway Area).

Options for a Local Plan Review

The Officer Report to Cabinet in June 2024 detailed the progression from a series of options to undertake a Local Plan Review, from “do nothing” up to a full review of the Local Plan.

Normal practice for the review of a Local Plan is to commence a review and update of a Local Plan, 5 years post adoption.

It was agreed, following legal advice, that there should be a two-stage process to reviewing the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, given the position the local authority finds itself regarding the age of the current Local Plan being 5 years since adoption:

Stage 1: Local Plan – Partial Review and Update

Stage 2: Local Plan – Full Review

Officers have progressed with undertaking a partial review and update of the Local Plan, which has incorporated the evidence gathered from the two rounds of consultation on the AAP. This has allowed the evidence base already gathered through the two rounds of consultation on the AAP (in 2021 and 2023), to form an updated and much clearer policy direction for Policy TC4 of the Local Plan as well as potential other policies of the plan, in accordance with wider strategic updates and objectives. This includes the continued requirement to tackle the Climate Change agenda and promoting sustainable and active travel across the Borough.

Local Plan – Partial Review and Update (Regulation 18)

The Local Plan – Partial Review and Update was prepared for a first round public consultation (under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012), which was held from 5 July to 15 August 2024.

The key changes made to the adopted Local Plan can be summarised as follows:

- **Climate Change policies placed at the top of our Strategic Planning Policies.**
- Deletion of existing *Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development* and replacement with new *Policy SP1: Climate change* to reflect the changed priority for the Local Plan to address climate change issues and challenges.
- New chapter of detailed Climate Change policies.
- Deletion of existing *Policy FP1: Climate Change* and replacement with new *Policy FP1: Sustainable Drainage* to reflect change in Plan structure.
- Deletion of existing *Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1* and *Policy FP3: Flood risk in Flood Zones 2 and 3* and replacement with new comprehensive *Policy FP2: Flood risk management*.
- Revision of existing *Policy NH5: Trees and woodland*.
- New *Policy NH5b: Tree-lined streets* to reflect national planning policy emphasis on new streets being lined with trees.
- Borough-wide Climate change retrofit contribution.
- Amended Policy for TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area – changing allocation from zero carbon / low carbon employment office space and public realm improvements and to reflect the two rounds of public consultation held on the Area Action Plan.
- New *Policy HO14: Houses in multiple occupation*.
- Some other minor changes including change of textual references to Use Class Orders since 2020 and updates based on practice with application of planning policies in determining planning applications since 2019.
- Policies Map amendments including possible amendments to the boundaries of the Town Centre and High Street Shopping Areas; possible amendments to the boundaries of district, local and neighbourhood centres; Correction of various errors in the existing Policies Map, such as the southern boundary of the Old Town High Street Conservation Area and the Town Centre Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages; possible improvements to Station Gateway boundary for Policy TC4; producing higher quality maps compared to the current Policies Map. Work on this is ongoing as part of steps to make the Local Plan live and digitally accessible in the future.

Regulation 18 Consultation Summary

In June 2024, Cabinet approved the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update for the first round of public consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Public consultation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan – Partial Review and Update was held between 5 July 2024 and 15 August 2024, a total of 6 weeks.

The main headlines from the Regulation 18 consultation are as follows:

- Over 2,500 visitors to the consultation interface website;
- 211 individual respondents to the consultation, including the Youth Survey;
- 327 comments in total.

Formal responses were received from external bodies and individuals and included:

- Stevenage Borough Council (Housing)
- Hertfordshire County Council (Growth & Infrastructure Unit, Minerals & Waste, Public Health, Highways, Lead Local Flood Authority)
- Muse
- Anglian Water
- Three Rivers
- Thames Water
- Transport for London
- North Herts and Stevenage Friends of the Earth
- Sport England
- Turley on behalf Vastint UK Services Ltd.
- NHS Property Services
- NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board
- National Gas Transmission
- Muse
- British Horse Society Herts Access Committee
- Historic England
- Home Builders Federation
- Forestry Commission
- Environment Agency
- Stevenage Cycling UK
- Churchill Living and MacCarthy Stone
- Central Bedfordshire Council

The main themes arising from consultation comments are summarised as follows:

Theme	Comments
Climate Change	<p>Positive thoughts on Climate Change – Many support reducing carbon emissions at all stages of the development process, as many hold sustainability as a core value within their work.</p> <p>There are many reservations regarding viability and whether the use of the building regulations is enough in policy. The Written Ministerial Statement in December 2023 cemented that Local Plans could not go above targets – this was challenged in July 2024. So careful consideration needs to be placed on Policy CC1 if it is to work.</p> <p>Many feel it is not clear what emission reduction targets are being used and it is important that this is investigated further to ensure that requirements are feasible whilst not significantly undermining the deliverability of development in the town, and in accordance with the NPPF. Construction costs and other challenges have made the delivery of development challenging and consultees wish for string evidence to ensure it doesn't impact development.</p> <p>More need to exploit the Green Economy.</p> <p>Stronger emphasis on transport and the use of Active Travel to tackle climate change as well as stronger wording for retrofitting may need to be considered within the policy wording.</p>
Trees	<p>General support but attention to light pollution and potential hazards of leaf drop for cyclists / biodiversity etc.</p> <p>The introduction of tree lined streets in new developments was welcomed, due to increasing biodiversity and good design and mitigating climate change.</p>
Station Gateway	<p>Generally positive for uses and change in the opportunity area. Comments broadly support the changes to the overarching spatial strategy for the Local Plan which shows an update to the use classes and development focussed within the Station Gateway Opportunity Area. This is once again in line with the updated climate change policy.</p>
Design	<p>Comments generally focused on Design in general. This included improvements to Policy SP8 to accommodate healthy and safe communities. Design of the cycleways was mentioned and how they are used for active travel and to help mitigate climate change.</p>
HMOs	<p>Not generally against HMOs due to the positive need for affordable housing, but the consultees expressed concern around parking in already pressurised neighbourhoods. Some comments expressed the need for better cycle parking for HMOs to encourage better forms of travel and alleviate parking problems in some neighbourhoods.</p>
Flooding and drainage	<p>There is support for the changes to Policy FP1 aimed at ensuring utilisation of sustainable drainage systems wherever possible, including the incorporation of green infrastructure such as ponds and green roofs/walls where appropriate.</p> <p>Consultees have also welcomed the emphasis in Policy FP2: Flood risk management on the re-naturalisation of watercourses, which can benefit local biodiversity as well as enhancing flood defences.</p> <p>However, there have been comments surrounding paved areas incorporating better SuDS design and consideration around the classification of pollution to include odour pollution which can be viewed alongside light and noise pollution.</p>

Theme	Comments
Youth Survey	The theme around tackling climate change was considered a top 3 important challenge for most of the respondents (out of 8 options). Generally positive for Climate Change but there was a desire for a stronger local economy with affordable housing and more leisure facilities.

While the total volume of representations may appear relatively low for a Local Plan consultation, it should be acknowledged that this is only a partial review of the existing, adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan and that the Regulation 18 stage formed the initial stage of consultation, with further rounds of consultation ahead.

The Cabinet Report in June 2024 initially outlined a proposed Regulation 18 consultation period from 17 June 2024 to 28 July 2024. However, soon after Cabinet approval, the General Election was called for 4 July 2024. As such, the consultation had to be delayed until at least 5 July 2024 and thus ran into the busy Summer holiday period.

The Regulation 18 consultation could not be delayed further until September, as this would have resulted in the risk that the Regulation 19 Local Plan – Partial Review and Update would not be consulted on until after the revised NPPF was published. The potential impact on material weight of the Local Plan was another risk in this regard as discussed below.

In accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF (December 2023) with regards to the determination of planning applications, it states:

Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);

b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

Based on the above, policies of emerging Plans gain weight as they progress through the process of consultation, examination and whether they attract objections. Therefore, the weight that can be applied to the policies contained in the Stevenage Local Plan – Partial Review and Update are set out as follows:

- Low Weight – Regulation 18 pre-consultation.
- Moderate Weight – Regulation 18 post-consultation.
- **Substantial weight – Regulation 19.**
- Full weight – Adoption.

Recent National Planning Policy Changes

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last updated on 20 December 2023. Suggestions by Government for plan-making in the future for Stevenage Borough Council to consider, included:

- Plan-makers will have until 30 June 2025 to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for independent examination under the existing legal framework. The Government is also proposing that, to be examined under existing legislation, all independent examinations of local plans, minerals and waste plans and spatial development strategies must be concluded, with plans adopted by 31 December 2026.
- Authorities that do not meet the 30 June 2025 submission deadline for 'old-style' plans will need to prepare plans under the new plan-making system.
- Authorities will be required to start work on new plans by, at the latest, five years after adoption of their previous plan, and to adopt that new plan within 30 months. Plans that will become more than five years old during the first 30 months of the new system will continue to be considered 'up-to-date' for decision-making purposes for 30 months after the new system starts.
- Authorities will no longer be able to prepare supplementary planning documents (SPDs) in the revised planning system. Instead, they will be able to prepare Supplementary Plans, which will be afforded the same weight as a local plan or minerals and waste plan. The government proposes that, when the new system comes into force, existing SPDs will remain in force for a time-bound period; until the local planning authority is required to adopt a new style plan. Current SPDs will automatically cease to have effect at the point at which authorities are required to have a new-style plan in place.

On 30 July 2024, the new Government published its anticipated consultation which sets out their approach to revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in order to achieve sustainable growth in England's planning system. Major amendments are as follows:

- Plan-makers will have until 31 December 2026 ~~30 June 2025~~ to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for independent examination under the existing legal framework.
- Transitional arrangements regarding Local Plans mean that as long as a Local Plan is at Regulation 19 stage one month after publication of the new NPPF (likely early 2025), then the plan making process to adoption can continue under the old system.

The reason for the proposed changes to the NPPF as well as reform the planning system is because Government have made clear that sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of the country as well as the living standards of working people. The approach to deliver this growth will focus on three pillars: stability, investment and reform.

It is considered by Government that the December 2023 changes to the NPPF were disruptive to the sector and has been detrimental to housing supply. The reforms outlined in the consultation with the respect to the NPPF will take on a more growth-focused approach. The proposed changes to the framework with an ambition to have universal and ambitious local plan coverage are vital in order to achieve economic growth and to be 1.5 million new homes.

The Council responded to the Government consultation on 24 September 2024. The Council's response included:

- Agreed that the soundness tests should reflect the differing scales and scope of development, especially with regard to strategic scale plans and proposals. Economic cycles and uncertainty, viability and the issue of infrastructure funding gaps mean that a strong degree of flexibility is required in any revised soundness tests for Local Plans, to

account for the fact that delivery timescales are frequently subject to change from those provided for in plans and strategies.

- The Council supports the proposed transitional arrangements as it allows the Council to get an up to date, full weighted Local Plan in place before the new system takes effect from December 2026. The Council does have a slight reservation over the need to be at Regulation 19 no longer than one month after publication of the revised NPPF, as there is a potential risk of the NPPF being published earlier than anticipated and the Council's Regulation 19 consultation being launched longer than one month after NPPF publication. The Council seeks further guidance as to if there could be any further buffer in this situation.
- The Council strongly agrees with the statement that the intention is to provide absolute clarity to local planning authorities preparing local plans, making clear which version of the NPPF should be used for their preparation and examination, and to set out the overall direction of travel for further reform of the system so authorities can start to plan for this.

Changes from Regulation 18 to Regulation 19 versions of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update

A series of comments and suggestions from the Regulation 18 public consultation were incorporated into the final draft Regulation 19 version to be presented to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

The key amendments to the draft Local Plan Review – Partial Review and Update, from the Regulation 18 to the Regulation 19 version, can be summarised below:

- *Policy SP1: Climate Change* – emphasis on the need to prioritise sustainable travel added; requirement to install network infrastructure removed; policy now commits the Council to working with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary Climate Change opportunities.
- *Policy SP2: Sustainable Development in Stevenage* – emphasis on the intention to meet the needs of an ageing population.
- *Policy SP5: Infrastructure* – the term “sheltered housing” replaced with “adaptable and specialist housing”.
- *Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport* – comprehensive rewording to strongly emphasise sustainable transport.
- *Policy SP8: Good Design* – added a requirement to ensure that development is safe and reduces crime.
- *Policy CC1: Energy Efficiency* – carbon targets for minor developments removed; carbon targets for large-scale major developments now exclude sites in the Town Centre; cash offsetting removed; monitoring limited to one occasion, immediately following occupation.
- *Policy CC2: Heating and Cooling* – hierarchy replaced with list of considerations; only requirement is now to avoid energy-dependent cooling (unless essential); only major developments need to demonstrate how heating and cooling will be provided within an Energy Statement.
- *Policy CC6: Green Roofs and Walls* – green roofs now encouraged rather than required; a reference has been added to “blue-green” roofs.

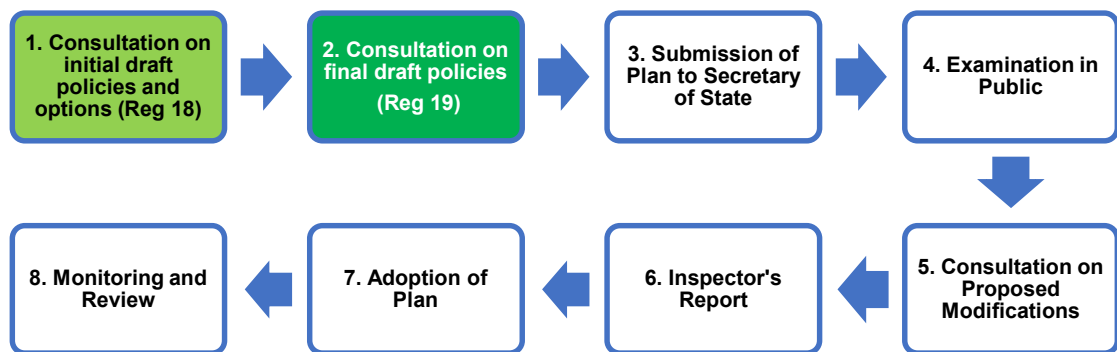
- *Policy CC7: Green Economy* – Regulation 18 draft policy CC7: Digital Connectivity has been deleted; Regulation 18 draft policy CC8: Green Economy has moved up to take its place and is now CC7.
- *Policy EC1: Allocated Sites for Employment Development* – allocation for EC1/2 (South of Bessemer Drive, Gunnels Wood) has been changed from office and research and development use, to light industry, general industry and storage / distribution use.
- *Policy IT1: Strategic Development Access Points* – a line has been inserted to ensure that the design of new junctions considers the needs of all road users.
- *Policy HO10: Sheltered and Supported Housing* – it has been made clear that there is broad support for sheltered and supported housing schemes, regardless of scale.
- *Policy GD2: Design Certification* – a line has been inserted to encourage “Secured by Design” accreditation.
- *Policy FP2: Flood Risk Management* – various minor amendments to reflect the comments from the Environment Agency.
- *Policy NH5b: Tree Lined Streets* – new subtext to emphasise the importance of species and techniques for street trees; new subtext to clarify that active transport remains the priority for streets
- Monitoring provisions have been added for the new Climate Change policies.
- Minor changes to subtext across new and previously revised policies.

The Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update is supported by an updated evidence base, which includes:

- a whole-plan viability study, to ensure that development proposals within the Borough remain financially viable with the proposed planning policy changes;
- a climate change technical paper, to ensure that we are justified in our approach to revising policies in the current Local Plan and in creating the new Climate Change chapter;
- a housing technical paper, to ensure that we retain sufficient land to meet housing need and deliver choice in terms of housing tenures, types and sizes, including affordable housing;
- an employment technical paper, to ensure that we retain sufficient land to accommodate changes in office, industrial and warehouse demand;
- a retail study, to ensure that our retail policies remain effective in delivering a vibrant town centre and protecting the lower order centres.

It is important to remember that the Local Plan Review, at this stage, consists of a Partial Review and Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, adopted 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 Full Review of the Plan, from 2025 onwards.

Regulation 19 Consultation



Following Regulation 18 consultation from July to August 2024, we are approaching the second stage of development of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update. This forms the “consultation on final draft policies” stage under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Following the Regulation 19 round of consultation, the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update will then be submitted to the Secretary of State (MHCLG), ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector.

A final consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector to the Plan is then held prior to the Inspector’s Report, which would confirm whether the Plan can proceed to formal adoption. Monitoring and review of the Plan would then be required for a period of time after the Plan has been adopted.

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.

Consultation on the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update is proposed to be held between 20 November 2024 and 14 January 2025, meeting the requirements stipulated for DPD consultations in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

This means that consultation will run for at least 10 weeks. There is scope to extend the consultation period if required.

Consultation methods will include:

- Notification, via e-mail and post where necessary, to all statutory consultees and those on our consultation database.
- A series of dedicated meetings with a range of key stakeholders, as required.
- Publicity via the Stevenage Borough Council website and social media platforms.
- A link to the Council’s consultation interface, where the public will be able to download the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, Local Development Scheme, Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment document, and be able to submit their observations and representations.
- The consultation interface could include a series of “consultation questions”, designed to cover the different aspects of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update and to generate comments on certain sections of the document.

- A press release and articles in the Comet newspaper relating to the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update public consultation.
- Notification of the consultation in neighbourhood newsletters, and similar local journals or circulars as appropriate.
- Distribution of material publicising the public consultation. This includes distribution at Stevenage Central Library, Daneshill House Reception and other locations if necessary.
- Frequently asked questions or “FAQs” within a consultation information booklet.

This list is certainly not exhaustive; officers are open to further methods of consultation, if preferred and suggested.

Officers will take all comments and views into account, in a conscientious manner. This will help to inform and shape the future position being reported to Cabinet.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment are tools used at the plan-making stage to assess the likely effects of the plan when judged against reasonable alternatives. A sustainability appraisal should be prepared for any of the documents that can form part of a local plan, including core strategies, site allocation documents and area action plans.

For the public consultation on the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, held from July to August 2024, Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening (SEA) Screening Report, including Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping, was necessary. This is because we are making amendments to the current adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan that will have significant environmental impacts.

The SEA Screening Report was consulted upon alongside the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update. This included contacting the statutory consultees to a SEA (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) who responded that Sustainability Appraisal for the Regulation 19 Local Plan – Partial Review and Update would be necessary, due to the potential significant environmental impacts as well as potential social and economic impacts.

As part of preparation of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, a Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment was prepared. This assessed all Local Plan policies that had been amended since adoption in 2019, as well as any new policies proposed.

The Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment, generally concluded that there were no major negative environmental, social or economic impacts arising from the new and revised policies; and in fact, a number of positive impacts would arise from application of the new and revised policies.

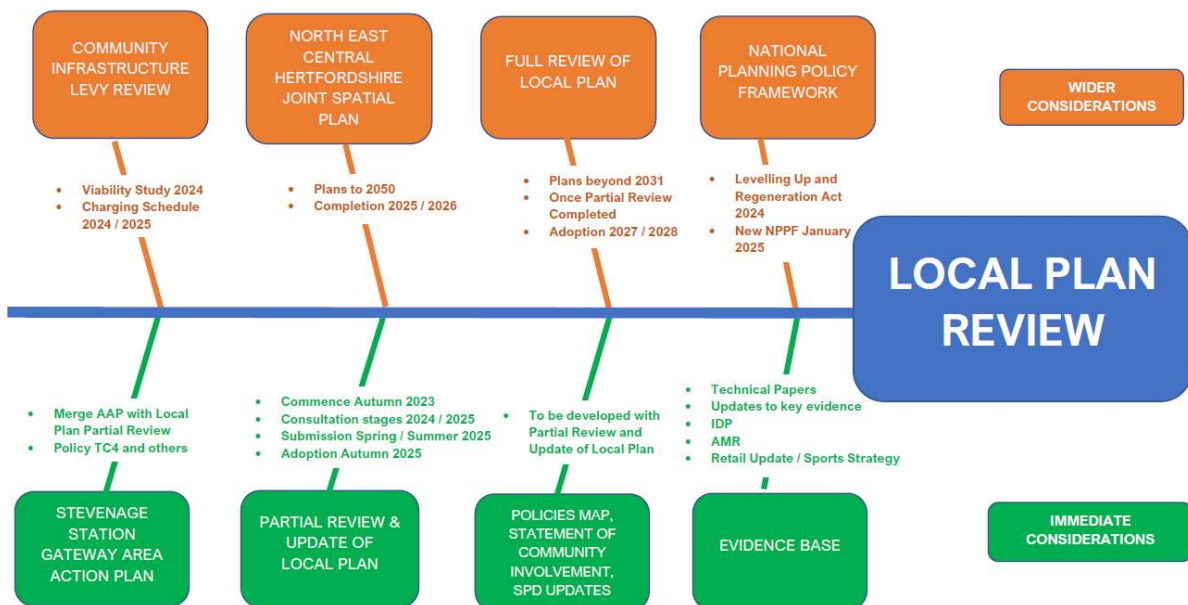
Local Development Scheme

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) was last approved by the Council's Cabinet (as Executive) in June 2024; it sets out a clear and timetabled programme for the production of the local development plan. The LDS sets out timescales to completion for the following Development Plan Documents:

- Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update (including Policies Map)
- Stevenage Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule
- Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- Parking SPD
- The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (*revoked October 2024)
- Developer Contributions SPD
- Design Guidance SPD
- Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Full Review (following Partial Review and Update)

The Ishikawa diagram below explains the two broad stages to the review of the Local Plan. Essentially this is in two stages:

- Local Plan – Partial Review and Update (green section)
- Local Plan – Full Review (orange section)



A further revised draft LDS has since been updated and prepared, to reflect the latest timescales relating to the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update and can be summarised overleaf.

Local Development Document	Timescale for Review	Comments
North East Central Hertfordshire Joint Spatial Plan (JSP)	Likely completion 2025/26.	Will form the basis for a wider Local Plan Review from Autumn 2025.
Local Plan	<p>Commence review September / October 2023</p> <p>First Consultation June – July 2024</p> <p>Second Consultation November 2024 – January 2025</p> <p>Submission to Secretary of State April / May 2025, subject to change</p>	Based on the option to undertake a Partial Review of the Local Plan which will also incorporate the Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	<p>Commenced review Early 2024</p> <p>Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule Consultation October – November 2024</p> <p>Draft Charging Schedule January – February 2025</p> <p>Adoption and Implementation by December 2025</p>	
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	Adopted August 2024	Will keep under regular review.

Parking SPD	Consultation October – November 2024 Adoption February 2025	Possible change of status to Supplementary Plans or wider incorporation into Local Plan Policies; to be determined after Partial Review and Update.
The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD	Revoked October 2024	
Developer Contributions SPD	Consultation October – November 2024 Adoption February 2025	Possible change of status to Supplementary Plans or wider incorporation into Local Plan Policies; to be determined after Partial Review and Update.
Design Guidance SPD	Consultation October – November 2024 Adoption February 2025	Possible change of status to Supplementary Plans or wider incorporation into Local Plan Policies; to be determined after Partial Review and Update.
Other SPDs	As required	As identified and required but no more anticipated at the present time.

At this stage, the Cabinet are recommended to approve the draft Local Plan – Partial Review and Update and if so, the draft timescales that would operate for the associated new proposed Local Development Scheme.

Cabinet: 13 November 2024

At the Cabinet meeting on 13 November 2024, it is recommended that Cabinet:

- Note the content of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update Regulation 18 Consultation Statement (the Consultation Statement).
- Approve the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update for Regulation 19 public consultation in November 2024, for not less than 10 weeks.
- Note that should there only be minor comments arising from the Regulation 19 consultation, that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to progress to Submission of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public.
- Approve a revised Local Development Scheme.
- Note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee and the Environment & Economy Select Committee will be sought and considered on the content of the Cabinet Report.
- Note that delegated authority will be given to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to make changes to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, prior to going out to public consultation.
- Note that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, ahead of and during public consultation on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update.

Any comments and suggestions made at Planning & Development Committee Members and Environment & Economy Select Committee Members on 29 October 2024 will inform any final decision made by Cabinet.

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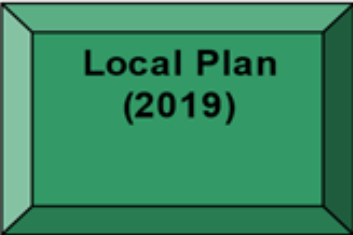
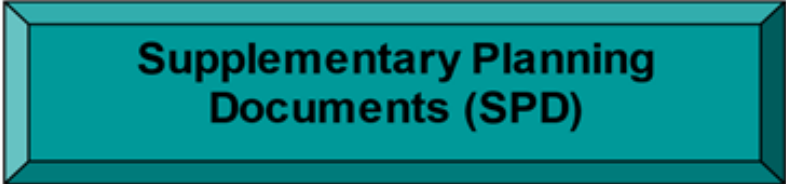
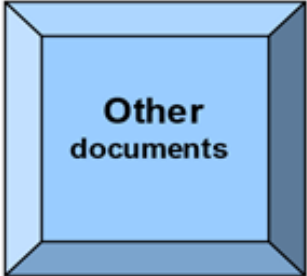
Stevenage Local Plan Review

Planning & Development Committee

Tuesday 29 October 2024

Planning Policy Team

Tiers of Planning

 <p>National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance</p>	<p>National planning policy The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published on 27 March 2012 and was most recently updated in Dec 2023. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) was published on 6 March 2014 and is updated by Central Government. These documents consolidated previous government advice into a single, shorter document. Both the NPPF and NPPG should be used to decide applications where the local plan is absent, silent, indeterminate or where relevant policies are out of date.</p>
 <p>Local Plan (2019)</p>	<p>Statutory Development Plan (Local Plan) These are adopted plans prepared under the Planning Acts. Our Emerging Local Plan has been through public examination and has now been adopted. This document is referred to as the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 -2013 adopted 22 May 2019. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</p>
 <p>Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)</p>	<p>Supplementary Planning Documents Supplementary Planning Documents support policies in the Local Plan. They are recognised in legislation. They have been subject to public consultation and approved by Executive. Supplementary Planning Documents are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.</p>
 <p>Other documents</p>	<p>Other material considerations This includes draft plans prepared under a statutory scheme. They have reached an advanced stage of preparation but have not been examined or adopted. Other documents may be relevant in individual cases.</p>

Stevenage Borough Local Plan



Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031

Adopted 22 May 2019

Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

- Adopted May 2019
- Spatial vision for Stevenage to 2031
- Detailed land use policies
- Adopted following lengthy Hold Direction by Secretary of State
- Among conditions of Holding Direction = prepare Area Action Plan for Station area

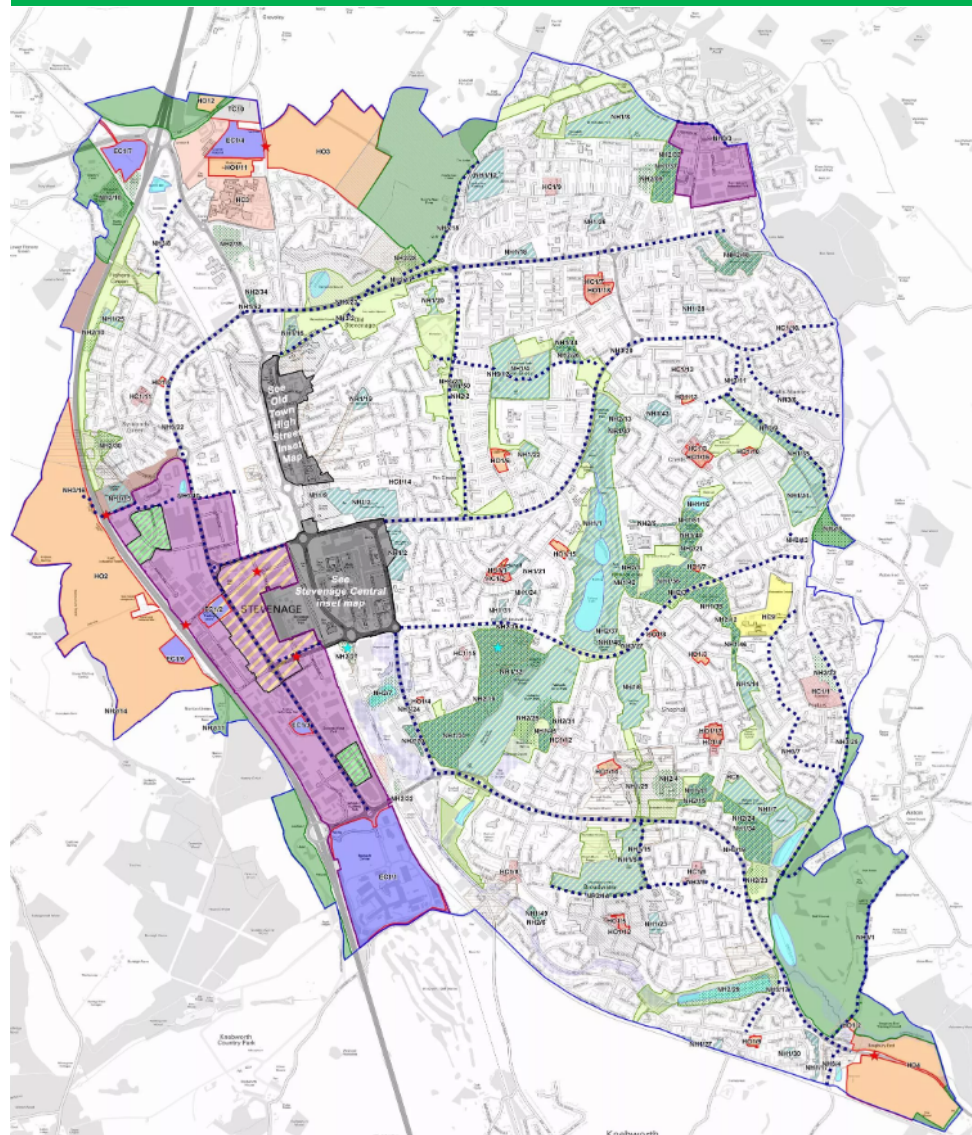
Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage
SP3: A strong, competitive economy
SP4: A vital Town Centre
SP5: Infrastructure
SP6: Sustainable transport
SP7: High quality homes
SP8: Good design
SP9: Healthy communities
SP10: Green Belt
SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution
SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment
SP13: The historic environment

- **Plan structured into 3 main sections:**
- Part I: Introduction & Context
- Part II: Strategic Policies = 13 Strategic Policies
- Part III: Detailed Policies & Delivery = 10 Chapters, 73 Detailed Policies


Policies Map





Chapter 6: A strong, competitive economy

-  EC1: Allocated sites for employment development
-  EC2: Gunned Wood Employment Area
-  EC2: Gunned Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone
-  EC3: Gunned Wood Industrial Zones
-  EC6: Pin Green Employment Area






Chapter 7: A vital town centre

-  TC11: Convenience retail





Chapter 8: Infrastructure and transport

-  IT1: Strategic development access points
-  IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors





Chapter 9: High quality homes

-  HO1: Housing allocations
-  HO2: Stevenage West
-  HO3: North of Stevenage
-  HO4: South east of Stevenage
-  HO12: Gypsy and traveller provision


Other relevant designations

-  Conservation Areas
-  Flood risk areas (Strategic Flood Risk Assessment)
-  Langley sidings rail depot (Minerals Local Plan)
-  Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Chapter 11: Healthy communities

-  HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres
-  HC3: Health campus
-  HC5: New health, social and community facilities
-  HC9: Former Barnwell East secondary school site

Chapter 12: The Green Belt

-  GB1: Green Belt

Chapter 13: Climate change, flooding and pollution

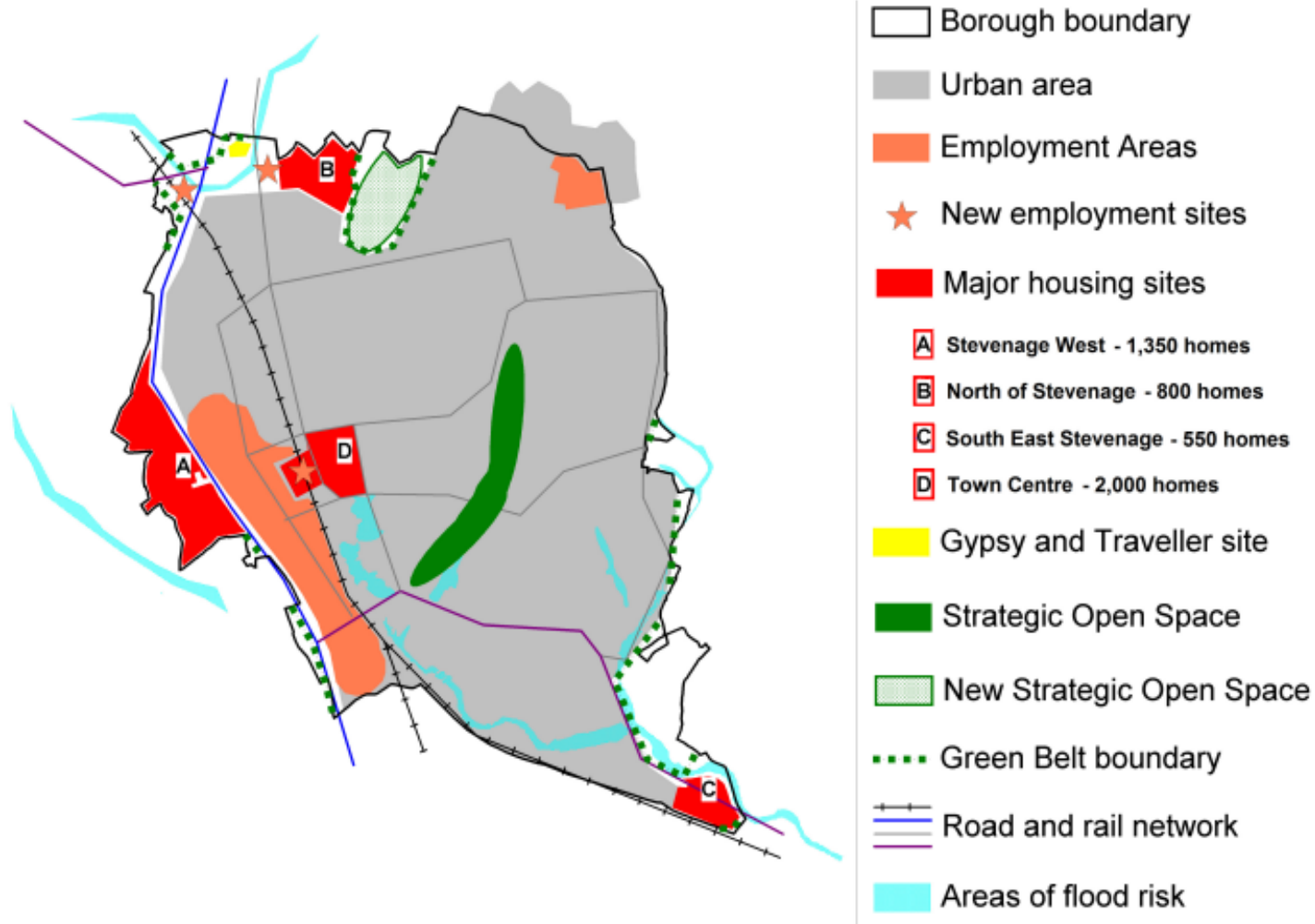
-  FP2: Flood Storage Reservoirs

Chapter 14: The natural and historic environments

-  NH1: Principal Open Spaces
-  NH2: Wildlife sites
-  NH3: Green corridors
-  NH4: Green links
-  NH9: Archaeological Alert Areas

Note: These boundaries are not set by the local plan. The boundaries are as existing at the time of publication but may be subject to separate review outside of the local plan process

Key Diagram



Picture 1 Key diagram

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

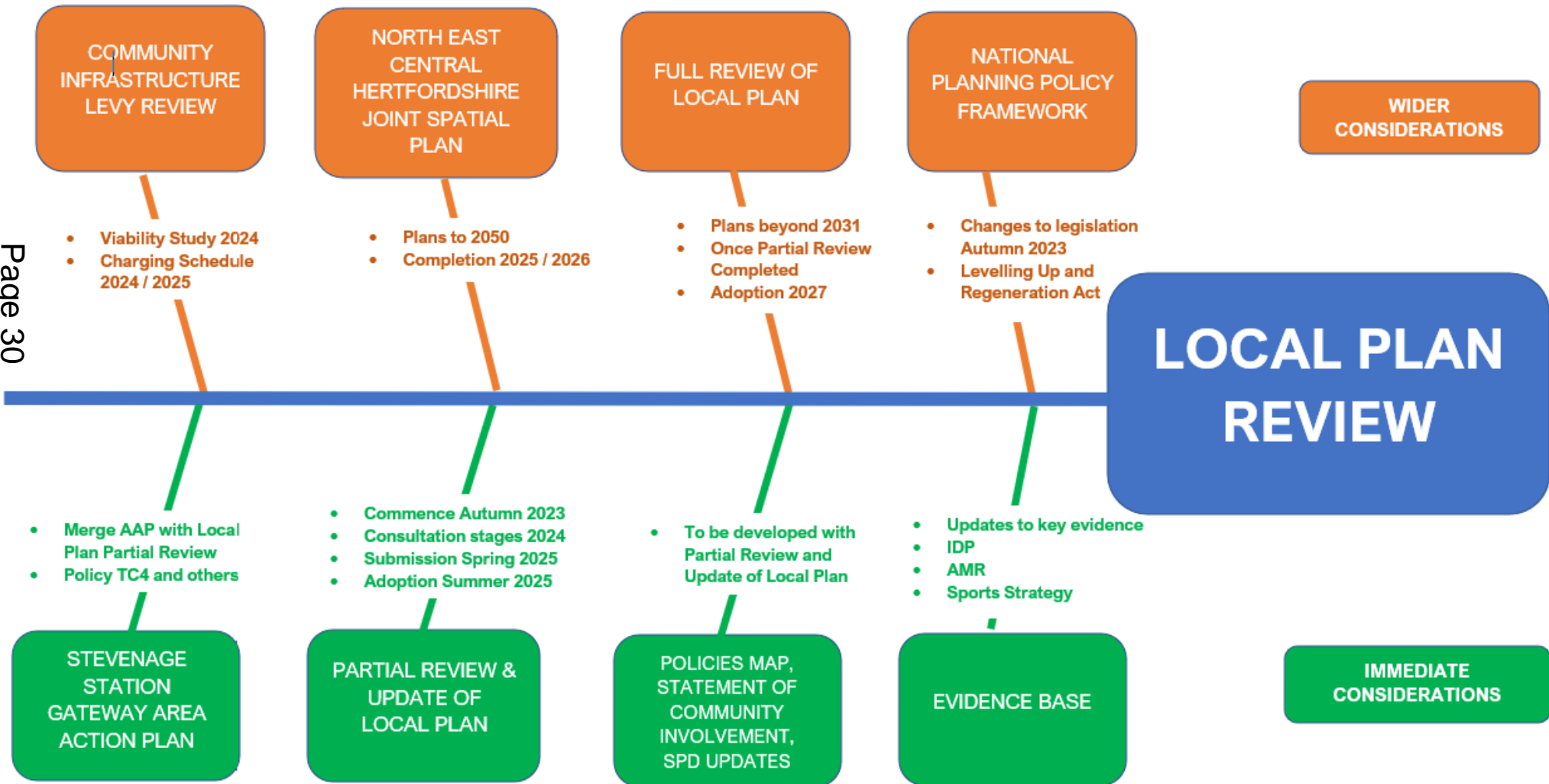
Drivers for Change

- National: Levelling Up & Regeneration Act (LURA), National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Use Classes Order changes, changes to legislation, national policies and guidance
- Regional / Sub-Regional: HCC strategies, HCCSP, North East Central Herts JSP, wider work with partners across Hertfordshire / East of England
- Local: series of changes in development practice, policy application and other changes
- Station Gateway AAP: 2 consultations (2021 & 2023), options to proceed into Local Plan Review

Local Plan Review Options

- Officers scoping Local Plan Review since early 2023
- **Professional legal advice** sought in February 2023
- Series of options, ranging from “Do Nothing” to “Full Review of Local Plan”
- ***2-stage process agreed:***
 - (1) Partial Review and Update, incorporating AAP consultation***
 - (2) Full Review to follow***
- Approach agreed by Executive in July 2023

Local Plan Review: 2 Stages



Local Plan – Partial Review and Update

Climate Change policies will be placed at the top of our Strategic Planning Policies

New Policy SP1:
Climate Change

New Climate Change
Chapter

Revised Policy NH5:
Trees and Woodland

New Policy for Tree
Lined Streets

Borough-wide Climate
Change Retrofit
Contribution

Amendments to
Sustainable Drainage &
Flood Risk

Amended Policy TC4:
Station Gateway

New Policy HO14:
HMOs

Potential other new
policies

Amended Policies
Map

Use Class Order Changes

Experience of planning
applications since 2019

Updated Evidence Base

TCPA Healthy Homes Principles



Healthy Homes Principles



Fire safety

All homes must be safe in relation to the risk of fire



Liveable space

All homes must have, as a minimum, the liveable space required to meet the needs of people over their whole lifetime, including adequate internal and external storage space



Access to natural light

All homes must have access to natural light in all main living areas and bedrooms



Inclusive, accessible and adaptable

All homes and their surroundings must be designed to be inclusive, accessible, and adaptable to suit the need of all



Access to amenities, nature and transport

All homes should be built within places that prioritise and provide access to sustainable transport and walkable services, including green infrastructure and play space



Climate resilient

All homes must demonstrate how they will be resilient to a changing climate over their full life time



Reduction in carbon emissions

All homes must secure radical reductions in carbon emissions in line with the provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008



Safety from crime

All homes must be built to design out crime and be secure



Limit light and noise pollution

All homes must be free from unacceptable and intrusive noise and light pollution



Thermal comfort

All homes must be designed to provide year-round thermal comfort for inhabitants



Prevent air pollution

All homes must minimise and not contribute to unsafe or illegal levels of indoor or ambient air pollution



Affordable and secure homes

Local authorities must plan for secure and affordable housing needs to help meet the long-term health, safety and wellbeing of residents, with affordability based on income levels

To find out more about the Campaign for Healthy Homes please visit:

www.tcpa.org.uk/collection/campaign-for-healthy-homes/

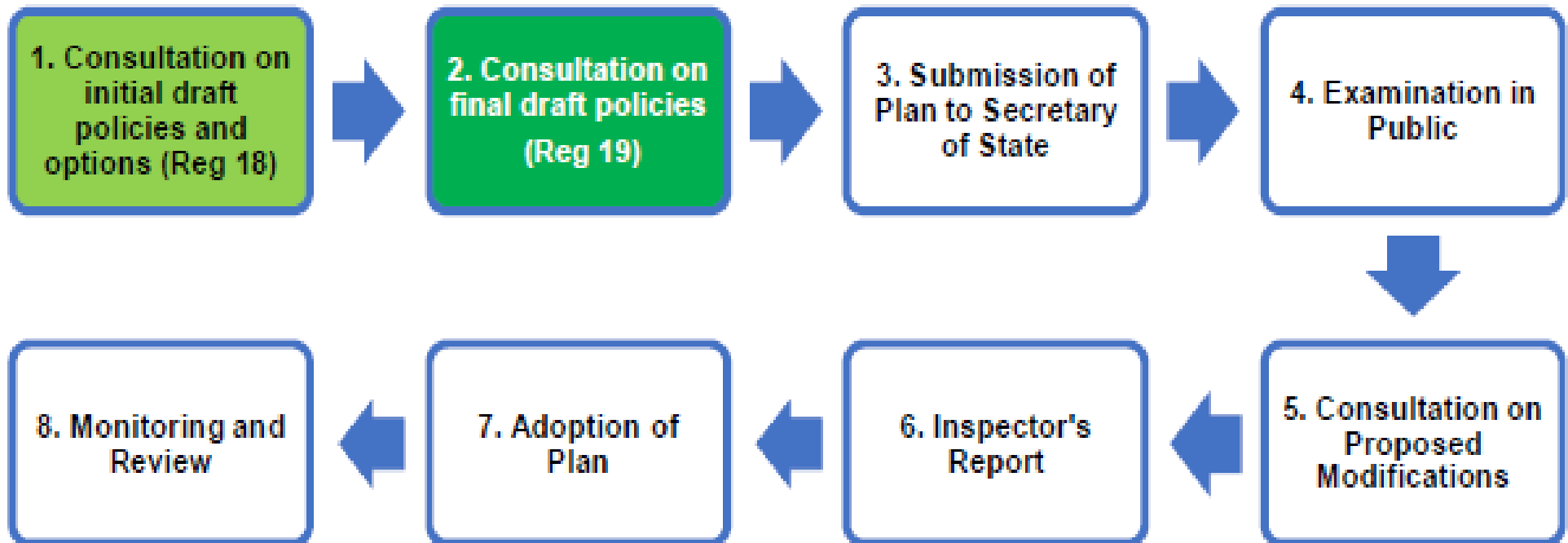
Local Plan – Partial Review and Update

- Deletion of **Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development** and replaced with new **Policy SP1: Climate change** to reflect the changed priority for the Local Plan to address climate change issues and challenges.
- Amendment to **Policy SP11: Climate Change, flooding and pollution** to consider flooding and pollution only and replaced with **Policy SP11: Flooding and pollution.**
- New chapter of detailed Climate Change policies:
 - **Policy CC1: Energy efficiency** which will set CO² emissions targets and contributions to a Carbon Offset Fund where these cannot be met on-site;
 - **Policy CC2: Heating and cooling** to prevent overheating and limit the use of energy-dependent cooling systems.
 - **Policy CC3: Water efficiency** to set water use targets for new development,
 - **Policy CC4: Energy infrastructure** to encourage new ultra-low and zero carbon energy infrastructure.
 - **Policy CC5: Carbon sinks** to protect existing carbon sinks and encourage net gains in carbon sequestration;
 - **Policy CC6: Green roofs and walls** to encourage new green roofs and green walls;
 - **Policy CC7: Digital connectivity** to encourage the installation of high-speed digital infrastructure; and
 - **Policy CC8: The green economy** to support the principles of a circular economy and encourage the creation of local green jobs.

Local Plan – Partial Review and Update

- Deletion of **Policy FP1: Climate Change** and replacement with new **Policy FP1: Sustainable drainage** to reflect change in Plan structure and to ensure that:
 - Major and minor developments utilise sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) wherever possible;
 - Surface water run-off is not increased;
 - Developments incorporate green, surface level features (e.g. ponds and swales) wherever possible; and
 - Underground attenuation features and impervious surfaces are only used where unavoidable.
- Deletion of **Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1** and **Policy FP3: Flood risk in Zones 2 and 3** and replacement with new comprehensive **Policy FP2: Flood risk management** to emphasise:
 - The protection and re-naturalisation of watercourses;
 - The protection and potential future enhancement of flood defences; and
 - The presence of other potential sources of flooding e.g. surface water and ground water.
- Revision of **Policy NH5: Trees and woodlands** to provide:
 - a strong presumption against the loss of deterioration of trees and woodland;
 - a new tree replacement standard to apply to all losses of individual trees regardless of their health, ranging from 1 to 21 trees for each tree felled;
 - woodland replacement in accordance with statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG);
 - long-term management of any replacement woodland; and
 - financial contributions where tree or woodland replacement cannot be provided on-site
- New **Policy NH5b: Tree lined streets** to reflect national planning policy on new streets being tree lined with trees.

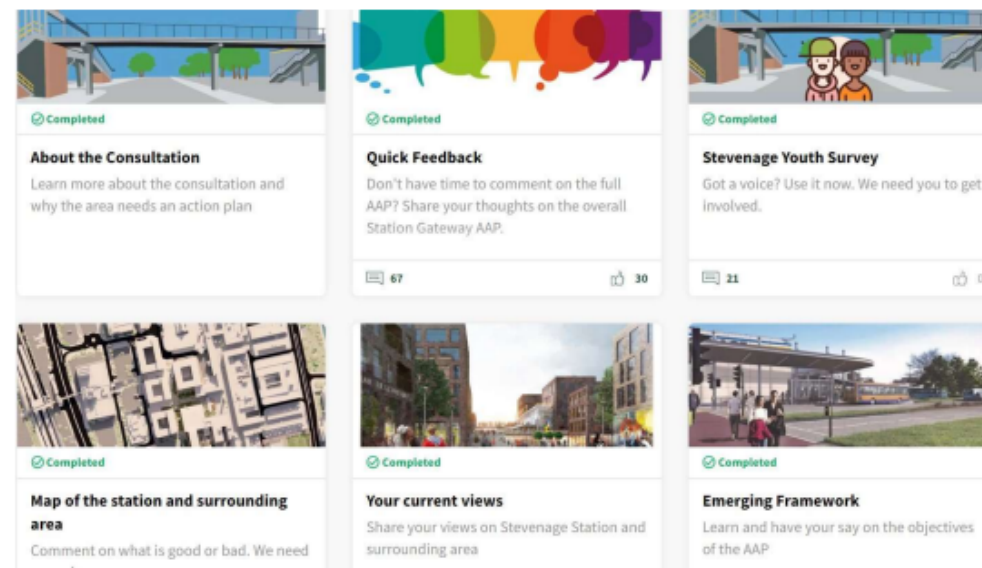
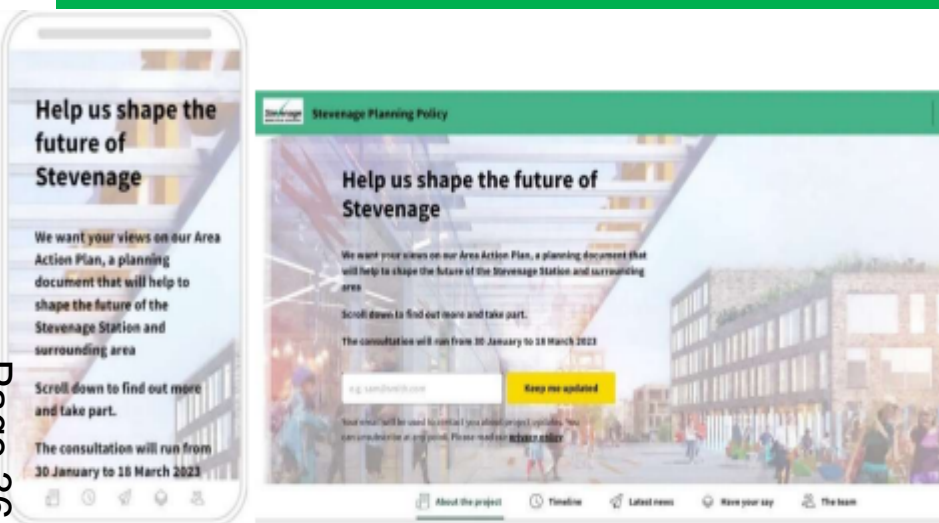
Local Plan Review Stages



Public Consultation: Regulation 18

Page 36

- 5 July to 15 August
- Hosted via Commonplace platform
- Series of consultation methods to gain strong feedback
- Memoranda of Understanding with key stakeholders



Local Plan Review: Regulation 19

- Regulation 18 consultation main comments on Climate Change, Trees, Station Gateway, Design, HMOs, Flooding and Drainage
- Following Regulation 18 consultation, a series of amendments proposed to Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, including:
 - **SP1 Climate Change**: *incorporating sustainable travel*
 - **SP8 Good Design**: *enhanced to ensure safety / reduce crime*
 - **CC1 Energy Efficiency**: *carbon targets for minor developments removed*
 - **CC2 Heating & Cooling**: *hierarchy replaced with list of considerations*
 - **EC1 Employment & Development**: *change of employment use for EC1/2 site from office / R&D to light industrial*
 - **HO10 Sheltered & Supported Housing**: *broader support for schemes, regardless of scale*
 - **GD2 Design Certification**: *encourage Secured by Design accreditation*
 - **NH5b Tree Lined Streets**: *emphasise importance of species and techniques for street trees*

Local Plan Review: Regulation 19

- Consultation is planned for at least 10 weeks
- **20 November 2024 – 14 January 2025**
- Same Commonplace platform as Regulation 18 consultation
- Wider engagement with the community and key stakeholders

Latest Changes to NPPF

- Plan-makers will have until 31 December 2026 ~~30 June 2025~~ to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for independent examination under the existing legal framework.
- Transitional arrangements regarding Local Plans mean that as long as a Local Plan is at Regulation 19 stage one month after publication of the new NPPF (likely early 2025), then the plan making process to adoption can continue under the old system.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

**Proposed reforms to the National
Planning Policy Framework and other
changes to the planning system**

Updated 24 September 2024

Material Weight of Local Plan

- Policies of emerging Plans gain weight as they progress through consultation stages
- Weight applied to policies in Local Plan – Partial Review and Update as follows:

Low Weight – Regulation 18 pre-consultation.

Moderate Weight – Regulation 18 post-consultation.

Substantial weight – Regulation 19.

Full weight – Adoption.

- **Wording in Committee Reports will be updated to reflect the fact we will be at Regulation 19 stage, from the Planning & Development Committee on 3 December 2024.**

Cabinet (13 November 2024)

7 recommendations for Cabinet:

- Note the content of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update Regulation 18 Consultation Statement (the Consultation Statement).
- Approve the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update for Regulation 19 public consultation in November 2024, for not less than 10 weeks.
- Note that should there only be minor comments arising from the Regulation 19 consultation, that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to progress to Submission of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public.
- Approve a revised Local Development Scheme.
- Note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee and the Environment & Economy Select Committee will be sought and considered on the content of the Cabinet Report.
- Note that delegated authority will be given to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to make changes to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, prior to going out to public consultation.
- Note that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, ahead of and during public consultation on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update.

Following Cabinet Approval...

- **November 2024 – January 2025:** Regulation 19 Public Consultation
- **Spring 2025:** Submission to Secretary of State
- **Summer / Autumn 2025:** Examination in Public & Adoption
- **Autumn 2025:** Commence Full Review of Local Plan



THANK YOU

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