Sunderland Local Plan

Scoping Consultation

September 2026



Sunderland City Council

Contents

1. Introduction 2

2. Changes to the national planning system..... 5

3. What are the key considerations for our Local Plan content? 8

4. How do I get involved in the Local Plan process? 29

5. How to respond to this consultation 31

6. What are the next steps?..... 31

1.Introduction

This document represents the initial stage of consultation for developing the Council's new Local Plan. The current Local Plan[1] was adopted in January 2020, and the Council are required to produce a new Local Plan to align with updated Government requirements. The Council's new Local Plan will be prepared under the new system of plan making, in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

This stage of the process follows the Council's publication of its 'Notice of Intention to Commence preparation of the Sunderland Local Plan' and the publication of the Local Plan timetable, both of which were published on 30th June 2026.

What is the consultation about?

This Scoping Consultation aims to provide meaningful early engagement in the process of preparing the new Local Plan, through seeking views from local communities and interested stakeholders as to what the plan should contain and how future engagement should be carried out.

The Council are seeking views on the key issues that shape the City, and particularly whether the vision and strategic priorities of the current adopted Core Strategy and Development Plan are still relevant. Views and thoughts on the challenges the Council face in developing the new Local Plan are also welcomed, such as planning to build new homes, providing the infrastructure needed to support growth, protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment, supporting economic growth and jobs, and ensuring well-designed communities are created. Your views will help to inform the content of the new Local Plan.

The consultation period will run for 4 weeks from 1 September 2026 until 29 September 2026. Details of how to respond are included within this document and on the new Local Plan's dedicated website:

www.sunderland.gov.uk/sunderlandlocalplan

Why are we preparing a new Local Plan?

The current Local Plan for Sunderland was prepared in two parts:-

Part 1: Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP), adopted in 2020 and reviewed in 2024.

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[1] The current Local Plan consists of the Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP), The International Advanced Manufacturing Park Area Action Plan (IAMP AAP) and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

Part 2: International Advanced Manufacturing Park Area Action Plan (IAMP AAP), adopted in 2017 and reviewed in 2022.

A number of saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (1998) and the Unitary Development Plan: Alteration No.2 (2007) also remain in place, as they have not yet been superseded by adopted policies.

In March 2026, the Government introduced a new plan-making system which requires the Council to give notice of its intention to commence preparation of a new style local plan by 31 December 2026. However, the Council was successful in securing New System Plan Funding, which requires the Council to bring a plan forward early in the new plan-making system. This required the Council to publish its notice of intention to commence local plan preparation by 30th June 2026 (which the Council have done[2]) and publish their Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31st October 2026.

The Government encourages local planning authorities to prepare a single Local Plan where possible. This will result in policies being contained within one Local Plan for the city, which is different to the current Local Plan, which is contained within a number of different documents.

Preparing a new Local Plan will also provide the opportunity to take account of the numerous changes that have taken place since the CSDP was adopted in 2020. For example, changes in national planning policy and guidance include a significant increase in housing need for Sunderland due to a change in the way that Government guidance requires us to calculate this. Further details on the changes to national policy are set out in Section 2. Since 2020 there have also been changes to the way people work, shopping habits, the use of open spaces and the economy, amongst other factors which we will need to take into consideration.

What is the process for preparing a Local Plan?

The new plan-making system requires the Council to prepare a Local Plan within 30 months. The first stage is for the Council to give notice of its 'intention to commence' plan-making and publish a timetable indicating when it intends to undertake the key stages of plan preparation. The Council published its notice of intent and timetable on 30th June 2026.

At this stage, the Council is getting everything ready to start the preparation of the new Local Plan. As part of this process, the Council is required to undertake an early round of engagement with local communities and other interested stakeholders on the scope of the Local Plan. This is the scoping consultation.

After the scoping consultation, the Council will publish its Gateway 1 self-assessment. This will set out the Local Plan timetable, the project management and governance arrangements for preparation of the Local Plan, the proposed approach to consultation

[2] https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/sunderlandlocalplan

and engagement in preparing the Local Plan, and the anticipated content of the Local Plan.

The publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment is when the clock starts on the 30-month timescale to prepare the new Local Plan. This is timetabled for 30th October 2026.

Once the Gateway 1 self-assessment summary has been published, the Council will make the summary of the scoping consultation responses available. This will set out who was consulted, how they were consulted, include a summary of the main issues raised and how the Council will have regard to the representations received.

There will be two further rounds of public consultation during the preparation of the Local Plan, which will provide more detail on the proposals as these are developed.

Full details are set out in the Council's Local Plan Timetable which can be viewed on the Local Plan webpage:

www.sunderland.gov.uk/sunderlandlocalplan

During the preparation of the Local Plan, we will also update our evidence base to inform the content of the plan. Work has already commenced on preparation of the evidence base. Further details are provided in this paper on the evidence documents which are being prepared. We would welcome any thoughts you may have on whether you think that the evidence base is appropriate or if there is anything you feel is missing.

2. Changes to the national planning system

The Government has made recent changes to the planning system which will have a direct impact on how we plan for Sunderland's future growth. These are summarised below.

Changes to increase the housing supply

The Government has stated that councils should plan to meet all their local housing needs and a new standard method has been introduced for calculating the minimum number of houses that the Council needs to plan for. The new method is based upon a proportional increase of 0.8% per year to the existing housing stock, with an uplift where homes are less affordable. This means most councils, including Sunderland, now have higher housing targets to plan for.

Sunderland's new Local Plan will be required to plan for 1,072 homes each year, which is a 44% increase on the 745 homes each year that is currently required through our adopted CSDP.

Greater commitment to prioritising development on Brownfield land

There is a renewed commitment to prioritising the use of Brownfield land (sites that have been previously developed) for new development. The Council have always prioritised the development of Brownfield land where possible and will continue to do so.

Changes to Green Belt policy

The Government now clearly states that if an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means, authorities should review Green Belt boundaries and propose alterations to ensure that their development needs are met in full, unless doing so would seriously harm the Green Belt as a whole.

A new category of land called 'Grey Belt' has also been introduced. This includes land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land or land that doesn't strongly meet one of the following key purposes of Green Belt: stopping urban sprawl; keeping separation between towns; or protecting the setting and special character of historic towns. Grey Belt should be considered first if there is a need to release Green Belt land, with more scope also in place to redevelop previously developed land in the Green Belt.

Promoting economic growth

There is a requirement for Local Plans to meet the needs of a modern economy, including identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics.

Vision-led transport planning

There is a move towards vision-led planning for transport, with greater emphasis and priority on active travel (such as walking and cycling) and public transport.

A new requirement for the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy

The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) are required to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), which is a new long-term, strategic plan guiding regional growth, infrastructure, housing, and environmental protection.

The Council will play an active role in the development of the SDS alongside the North East MSA and, once adopted, it will become part of the statutory development plan carrying the same legal weight as Local Plans. There is a requirement for Local Plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the North East SDS. However, the Government has confirmed that emerging SDSs should not delay councils preparing their Local Plans.

Changes to the use of Supplementary Planning Documents

The current Local Plan is supported by a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which provide additional policy guidance on a number of specific planning related topics. SPDs will be replaced by Supplementary Plans (SPs) in the new plan-making system, however the scope of SPs is expected to be more limited than current SPDs with the intention for them to deal with specific topics or sites, such as design codes or site-specific masterplans. The Supplementary Plan system is a mechanism to enable councils to react and respond positively to unanticipated changes in their area and they will be subject to consultation and an independent examination process. They will be treated as being part of the Local Plan once introduced, rather than providing additional guidance to an existing policy as SPDs currently do. There is a need to consider whether there is detail contained within existing SPDs which can be embedded in the updated Local Plan in due course, and also whether there is a need for any Supplementary Plans once the updated Local Plan has been adopted.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Proposed plans, policies and strategies are required to undergo a structured, strategic assessment to identify their potential environmental impacts before approval. This is

typically undertaken through a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Within the new planning system, there is an intention to replace SEA and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs). However, as these changes have not yet been formally introduced through regulations, the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) remain in force.

The requirement for a wider Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which considers social, economic and environmental considerations is no longer required.

3. What are the key considerations for our Local Plan content?

The first step to consider in preparing a new Local Plan is what the vision and objectives / strategic priorities should be for Sunderland. What kind of place do we want Sunderland to be by 2046 and what do we need to do to achieve that?

Reviewing progress made towards achieving the existing vision and objectives is considered to be a good starting point. We will also consider new challenges and opportunities as we prepare the new Local Plan and we will review relevant evidence base documents.

This will help us start to understand what the key considerations should be for the new Local Plan going forward and will be supplemented by feedback through consultation at key stages during that process.

Existing Local Plan Vision and Objectives/Strategic Priorities

The information below is included in the current adopted Core Strategy & Development Plan.

Vision

By 2033, Sunderland will be a place that:

- has a population in the order of 290,000 people;
- increased the working age population;
- is healthy, safe and prosperous, where people have the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations;
- is more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable;
- has improved its social infrastructure, with additional healthcare, education and community facilities;
- has easy access to useable open space, leisure and recreation;
- has vibrant, well supported, town, district and local centres that are places to meet as well as shop;
- offers a mix of good quality housing, both market and affordable of the types, sizes and tenures that meet the needs and demands of existing and future communities;
- offers residents the opportunity to live in sustainable communities accommodating all ages and abilities;
- has an Urban Core that is revitalised and has become a destination of choice, a place for people to live, work and spend their leisure time;
- is open to business and is responsive to the changing needs and demands of our growing economy;

- is vibrant and growing with excellent access to a range of job opportunities for all ages, abilities and skills;
- is entrepreneurial, a University City at the heart of a low carbon regional economy;
- which creates new and diverse job opportunities particularly in advanced manufacturing;
- values the University of Sunderland and Sunderland College who play a vital role in attracting the best minds and ensuring a skilled workforce that choose to live here;
- has a high quality natural, built and historic environment;
- has a network of green infrastructure, supporting and protecting our biodiversity and wildlife, whilst also improving access to greenspace for all;
- is resilient to climate change, has maximised the opportunities for renewable energy, embraced sustainable design principles and has reduced the impacts of flooding on homes and businesses; and
- has excellent transport links and sustainable access for visitors, business and residents.

The Strategic Priorities set out in turn below are in place to meet the Vision of the adopted CSDP. For each Strategic Priority, this document provides a short summary of progress in relation to the priority since the CSDP was adopted, gives an overview of related challenges and opportunities, and summarises the evidence base which will inform development of the new Local Plan.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1

To deliver sustainable economic growth and to meet objectively assessed needs for employment and housing, in particular through providing opportunities for young economically active age groups and graduates.

Progress – Strategic Priority 1

With regards to housing, since the start of the plan period in 2015 until the end of March 2026, a total of 9,365 net additional dwellings have been built. This is 1,170 dwellings above the housing requirement during that period which required delivery of 8,195 dwellings. This demonstrates significant progress in meeting the city's objectively assessed housing need (13,410 net additional dwellings over the plan period 2015-2033).

In relation to meeting employment needs, 35 hectares of employment has been delivered on designated employment land (Primary and Key Employment Areas) since the beginning of the plan period. Whilst this is slightly below the targeted hectarage for this point in the plan period (total for plan period 95ha), a good supply of employment land remains to meet future needs.

A further 153,342 square metres of employment floorspace has been delivered on the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP). The remainder of the allocated land at IAMP has the benefit of planning consent.

Challenges and opportunities – Housing and employment needs

One of the key challenges facing the city is the increased housing requirement as a result of the Government's changes to how this is calculated. The new Local Plan must identify land to accommodate this increased housing requirement. The priority for development will continue to be utilising previously developed land first where possible, however it is recognised that there is a limited supply of previously developed land within the city and there are often significant viability challenges bringing these sites forward for development. It is therefore likely that the Council will need to consider allocating some greenfield sites for development, including potentially Green Belt land.

In addition to this, the increased housing requirement is likely to put more pressure on services and infrastructure, which will need to be addressed and planned for accordingly.

Ensuring sufficient supply of employment land is crucial to support Sunderland's economic success. The supply of employment land within the city has generally been quite tight when compared with identified needs. This has been further exacerbated with proposals for non-employment uses through the planning application process.

Careful consideration will therefore need to be given to ensuring an appropriate supply of employment land to meet identified needs. This will include giving consideration to how the employment land allocated at the IAMP is incorporated into the land supply in the Local Plan and whether this continues to be restricted to the Principal Uses (automotive and advanced manufacturing).

Evidence Base – Housing and employment needs

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 1 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)
  Provides a detailed assessment of all available housing and employment land across the city and indicates timescales for when a site could be delivered.
- Employment Land Review (ELR)

Considers how much employment land is needed for the city over the plan period and looks at the existing supply and whether it is still needed or fit for purpose.

- Brownfield Land Register

  A register detailing what Brownfield sites are available and suitable for housing development throughout the city.

- Call for sites

  An exercise where the local Planning authority invites landowners, developers, public bodies and agents to submit sites that they would like to be considered for future development. The sites are then assessed to determine their deliverability. Sunderland undertook a call for sites exercise in 2025 and has continued to accept submissions since then. It is proposed that this will close on 29 September 2026 at the end of this consultation period.

Strategic Priority 2

To identify land we need for development in the right locations so we can protect our most vulnerable assets and while ensuring we meet our sustainable growth ambitions.

Progress - Strategic Priority 2

Sunderland has seen a high number of new homes built over the plan period. These new homes have been built throughout the city and include sites that were allocated through the CSDP, as well as sites identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and on windfall sites (sites that weren't allocated for housing in the CSDP but have received planning permission). The largest housing site in the city is the South Sunderland Growth Area allocation, creating a new sustainable neighbourhood, which will provide around 3,000 new homes when it is fully built out. Approximately 2,200 new homes have been delivered to date within the South Sunderland Growth Area.

The Urban Core has changed dramatically since the CSDP was adopted, with the regeneration of Riverside Sunderland providing new office blocks, a new City Hall, the Eye Hospital and housing opportunities on both the north and south side of the river, linked by the new Keel Crossing.

The IAMP has helped to deliver a sizable quantum of new development. A total of 153,342 square metres of floorspace has been delivered, which supports the growth of the employment within the city.

The Council has continued to protect designated retail centres where possible, and there have been limited instances where new out-of-town retail has been permitted.

However, there is an acknowledgement that shopping patterns have changed and there is a need for our centres to diversify.

Challenges and opportunities – Identifying areas for development

One of the challenges for the new Local Plan is balancing growth pressures with environmental constraints**.**

Sunderland has European designated nature sites on the coast, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife/Geological Sites and Local Nature Reserves. We also have important designated heritage assets such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens. We need to ensure we deliver the city's housing and employment needs without creating any unacceptable impacts for these important areas.

The priority is to deliver growth within the urban area, however, it is recognised that there are unlikely to be sufficient sites available within the existing urban area to meet all our identified development needs. A key challenge will be deciding where to develop next.

Opportunities do exist within the Urban Core. An example is further development of the riverside corridor linked to the Riverside Sunderland Creative Mayoral Development Zone, with focus on unlocking new investment in housing, and urban development including creative sector growth. Creating opportunities to diversify the City Centre to incorporate more residential development can also be considered.

Building more homes on housing sites (increasing densities) is a way to increase housing numbers without requiring additional land. However, increasing densities normally means building apartments or town houses. Careful consideration will therefore need to be given to whether these types of housing are needed in the city to meet the future needs of our residents based on evidence gathered through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. There are also significant build costs associated with building taller buildings (particularly those over 18m which are subject to more stringent regulation and requirements), so we need to consider whether such proposals would be viable.

We will also need to consider whether we have enough employment land to meet future needs. If more land is needed, we will need to identify appropriate locations for this. This may be a challenge though as through the initial call for sites exercise, undertaken in 2025, very few sites were promoted for employment use.

With regard to employment land, we will also need to incorporate the policies from the IAMP into the new Local Plan, so will need to consider whether the extent of land allocated here remains appropriate and whether there is still a need to identify principal employment uses for the IAMP site.

Evidence Base - Identifying areas for development

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 2 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)
  Provides a detailed assessment of all available housing and employment land across the city and indicates timescales for when a site can be delivered.
- Employment Land Review (ELR)
  Considers how much employment land is needed for the city over the plan period and looks at the existing supply and whether it is still needed or fit for purpose.
- Brownfield Land Register
  A register detailing what Brownfield sites are available and suitable for housing development throughout the city.
- Green Belt Review
  Provides an assessment of land designated as Green Belt to determine whether it should continue to have Green Belt status or whether some areas could be released for development if additional development land is required.
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
  Assesses flood risk across the whole of the city to ensure that development is directed to locations with the lowest risk of flooding.
- Viability Assessment
  Tests whether the policies and allocations in the Local Plan can realistically be delivered without making development economically unviable.
- Settlement boundaries review
  Provides an indication as to whether existing development limits should be amended to reflect growth opportunities or environmental constraints.

Strategic Priority 3

To promote healthy lifestyles and ensuring the development of safe and inclusive communities, with facilities to meet daily needs that encourage social interaction and improve health & wellbeing for all.

Progress – Strategic Priority 3

Since the adoption of the CSDP the Council has been successful in delivering inclusive communities though the implementation of Housing Growth Areas and the continued evolution of the South Sunderland Growth Area, which has seen the introduction of a new sustainable community incorporating a number of community facilities and new greenspaces. In addition, Riverside Sunderland continues to evolve, including delivery

of a new urban park along the River Wear, and other new urban communities continue to take shape.

Notwithstanding the successes since the adoption of the plan, too many people in Sunderland live in poor health with large inequalities across the city. Men in the most deprived areas live on average 12.9 years less than men in the least deprived areas, while the gap for women is 9.4 years. People in poorer communities are also more likely to live with ill health for longer.

More children and adults in Sunderland are living with overweight including obesity than the England average, and these rates have increased since the adoption of the CSDP. Physical activity levels remain lower than the national average, while life expectancy is also lower. These patterns reflect wider health inequalities across the city, with the 2025 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranking Sunderland as the 6th most deprived local authority in England for health and disability.

Challenges and opportunities - Promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles and communities

Our health is shaped by the world around us. Planning can play a key role in supporting healthy places, healthy communities and healthy people. This includes ensuring people have access to quality green space, local services, community facilities and active travel networks close to where they live, work and spend their time. These are some of the key building blocks of health.

Poor health is influenced by a range of interconnected factors, including poverty, poor-quality housing, limited access to good work, social isolation and the quality of local environments.

Rising living costs can increase food insecurity and fuel poverty, with significant impacts on health and wellbeing. These factors contribute to unfair and avoidable differences in health outcomes across communities within Sunderland.

The CSDP includes a policy on managing hot food takeaways, which is in place to prevent new hot food takeaways within 400m of entry points to schools and in wards where the prevalence of children living with obesity is more than 21% for year 6 pupils or 10% for reception pupils. While this policy has been used when assessing hot food takeaway applications, it presents an ongoing challenge because almost all wards in the city now have obesity rates above these thresholds. Higher rates of children living with obesity are strongly associated with deprivation and wider inequalities, highlighting the importance of creating neighbourhoods that support access to healthy, affordable food and opportunities for everyday physical activity.

To help improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities, the Council can support the creation of healthy neighbourhoods that provide the building blocks of health, including good quality housing, access to green space, opportunities for everyday physical activity, local services, community facilities and sustainable transport options. By

creating places that make healthy choices easier and support people's daily needs, the planning system can help reduce inequalities across the city and enable more people to live healthy, independent lives.

Evidence Base - Promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles and communities

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 3 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)
  Provides a detailed assessment of all available housing and employment land across the city and indicates timescales for when a site can be delivered.
- Open space assessment
  Provides detail on the quantity, quality, accessibility and future need for open spaces throughout the city.
- Playing Pitch Plan
  Provides detail on the current and future need for outdoor sports facilities with the city.
- Hot Food Takeaways
  Provides evidence in relation to health and managing hot food takeaways

Strategic Priority 4

To provide a range and choice of accommodation, house types and tenures to meet the diverse needs of current and future residents.

Progress - Strategic Priority 4

The CSDP has assisted in the delivery of 9,365 homes since the start of the plan period in 2015. This has resulted in a mix of high-quality houses. This includes larger detached dwellings, which were previously lacking in the city, and has also contributed to an increase in the city's affordable housing stock and in the availability of different tenures in the affordable market.

Throughout the city, there has also been an increase in housing specifically for those with specialist housing needs. The Urban Core has seen an increase in purpose-built student accommodation blocks, along with conversions of existing buildings to student accommodation.

There are approximately 750 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within the city and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been in place since 2021 to help manage over-concentrations of HMOs across the city where planning permission is required.

Over recent years, the city has seen an increase in existing properties being used as short-term lets.

Work has commenced on one of the allocated travelling showpeople sites, which when complete will provide 6 plots for Sunderland's travelling showpeople community.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 4

There are many challenges associated with ensuring there are sufficient homes, in terms of quantity and range of types, to meet the needs of current and future residents. This involves affordability pressures as well as an ageing population which requires an increase of specialist housing and for homes to be more adaptable. There is also a need to make sure sufficient sites are identified to meet the needs of our travelling communities.

However, there are many opportunities which the Council can utilise including regeneration-led growth, utilising Brownfield sites and bringing vacant homes back into use wherever possible. Delivering mixed-tenure neighbourhoods can broaden housing choice and meet changing demographic needs.

Planning can assist in meeting the needs of the city's population by enhancing the accessibility standards of new homes to meet M4(2): Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings and M4(3): Wheelchair User Dwellings. The current policy within the CSDP requires 10% of dwellings on developments of 10 dwellings or more to meet the M4(2) standard. Consideration will be given to increasing this requirement based on the latest available evidence and also to setting requirements for M4(3) dwellings. This will help plan for the needs of the city's ageing population and those with mobility issues to support independent living. In setting such enhanced standards, it is important that viability is taken into consideration.

New technology also provides opportunities for different types of housing for older people and for providing specialist housing more generally.

In terms of HMOs the challenge for the new Local Plan is how to we continue to manage the number and quality of HMOs. Although the current thresholds are set out in an SPD, as a result of changes brought about through the Government's new plan making system, the SPD will no longer have effect once the new Local Plan is adopted. As such, consideration needs to be given as to whether we incorporate these or similar thresholds into a policy to be developed within the new Local Plan based on the most up-to-date evidence available.

In addition, the Government has previously consulted on proposals to introduce a new use class for short-term lets which would allow local planning authorities to introduce planning policies to control the creation of new proposals. If the proposed changes are introduced by Government, consideration could be given to the merits of introducing a policy for short-term lets within the new Local Plan based on the most up-to-date

evidence available.

Evidence Base – Housing types and tenures

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 4 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
  Identifies the current and future housing needs of the city in relation to housing types, tenures, specialist housing needs, affordable housing needs, older persons' housing needs and other identified needs within the city.
- Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation assessment
  Identifies the current and future accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople within the Council's area, to determine what needs to be planned for.
- Supported Housing Needs Assessment
  Sets out the current and future supported housing needs across Sunderland, assesses the adequacy of existing provision, identifies unmet need and gaps in provision, and establishes priorities for future development.

Strategic Priority 5

To provide a wide portfolio of employment sites to support the development of key employment sectors and expand the opportunities for new office development.

Progress - Strategic Priority 5

The economy has continued to adapt and change since the start of the plan period, within a challenging economic environment. The Sunderland economy has continued to grow and has seen approximately 35 hectares of employment land developed on Primary and Key Employment Areas since the beginning of the plan period. In addition, 153,342 square metres of employment floorspace has been delivered at the IAMP. Flagship economic developments include the continued delivery of automotive and advanced manufacturing at the IAMP, such as the delivery of the AESC UK Gigafactory, and the delivery of significant Grade A office development at Riverside Sunderland.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 5

The Council is aware that there are several challenges in ensuring a sufficient supply of employment land. Business requirements are changing and the Council must ensure the demand for strategic employment land is balanced against competing pressures for housing, infrastructure, and other forms of development. There is increasing pressure

on existing employment sites for alternative uses, such as leisure uses, and it is important to ensure that a sufficient supply of employment land is maintained to meet needs over the full plan period. Growth sectors require workforce development and employers need access to a qualified labour force to support workforce recruitment, upskilling and growth.

Economic growth opportunities exist with the IAMP, which represents one of the UK's most significant advanced manufacturing locations recognised for its regional and national importance. Riverside Sunderland will also provide a large quantum of modern office space, which will support thousands of jobs whilst bringing footfall back into the Urban Core. Sunderland can utilise its strategic connectivity (transport and digital) to support growth in various sectors. Developing and deepening partnerships with universities, colleges and industry can help develop a skilled workforce aligned with growth sectors.

It will also be important to plan to meet the needs of a modern economy in accordance with national policy.

Evidence Base – Provision of employment sites

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 5 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Employment Land Review (ELR)
  Considers how much employment land is needed for the city over the plan period and looks at the existing supply and whether it is still needed or fit for purpose.
- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)
  Provides a detailed assessment of all available housing and employment land across the city and indicates timescales for when a site can be delivered.

Strategic Priority 6

To support and improve the vitality and economic performance of the Urban Core and designated centres.

Progress - Strategic Priority 6

The Urban Core has continued to see inward investment through various flagship projects. This has included the continued delivery of Riverside Sunderland through projects such as City Hall, Maker and Faber, Keel Crossing, Sheepfolds Stables and HICSA (Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy).

Moreover, other projects such as Culture House, the Fire Sation, the Sunderland Eye Hospital and investment to High Street West (Holiday Inn) have continued to diversify the offer in the City Centre.

Other designated centres such as Washington and Houghton (Town Centres) and the smaller District and Local Centres have also seen new retail developments open over recent years, increasing the offer to residents and visitors and helping to improve their vitality and viability.

Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that the growth of online retail and out-of-centre retail parks places an increasing pressure on our designated centres. Some of our centres have seen an increase in the number of vacant units in recent years, whilst other centres still have low vacancy rates and have appeared more resilient.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 6

As online retailing has continued to grow, demand for traditional retail floorspace has been reduced. Designated centres will need to adapt to changing consumer preferences whilst facing competition from out-of-centre destinations and neighbouring regional centres. Some of Sunderland's designated centres suffer with high vacancy rates, which can undermine the attractiveness and vitality of centres. There are also concerns that cost pressures, inflation and changing market conditions can affect business survival.

Designated centres may be able to evolve from being primarily retail focussed destinations into mixed-use locations, which offer a wider diversity of uses such as housing, offices, leisure, food and drink, community services and cultural activities alongside traditional retail units. In addition, as new residential and office development is provided within and around the Urban Core, this can support local businesses by increasing the resident population and spending base. Alongside this, Sunderland has an ambition that it is delivering against to be a leading smart city, which can improve the attractiveness and efficiency of centres through digital infrastructure, connectivity and innovative public services.

As part of the preparation of the new Local Plan consideration will be given to whether the boundaries of existing designated centres and the hierarchy of centres identified within the CSDP remain appropriate.

Evidence Base – Improving the vitality of centres

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 6 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Town Centre Study

Provides a detailed assessment of the retail landscape across the city, including the health of all of the designated centres (city, town, district and local).

Strategic Priority 7

To protect, sustain and enhance the quality of our built and historic environment and the delivery of distinctive and attractive places.

Progress - Strategic Priority 7

The Council has continued to protect its valued heritage. There are over 700 listed buildings across Sunderland and, although many of them are well maintained, there are currently ten assets which are on the national Heritage at Risk Register. However, on a positive note, five heritage assets have been removed from the at Heritage at Risk Register list in recent years through conservation-led enhancement. There is continued need to protect and enhance our heritage assets through effective planning policies.

There are currently 14 Conservation Areas within the city and Conservation Area Management Strategies are in place for 12 of these. The remaining two Conservation Areas currently have a management strategy being prepared.

Challenges and opportunities – Strategic Priority 7

The challenge regarding the built and historic environment is ensuring growth is balanced with heritage conservation. Some heritage assets suffer from vacancy, underinvestment and physical deterioration. Heritage assets can be costly to repair, maintain and adapt for modern uses. Poorly designed development can dilute local distinctiveness and create places that lack identity.

In certain areas, there has already been success in heritage-led regeneration through initiatives such as Sunniside and the Minster Quarter. Sunderland's significant historic asset base provides an opportunity for place-making and tourism. The re-use of some heritage assets can bring vacant properties back into productive use whilst safeguarding their historic value. The built environment can support tourism growth and enhance Sunderland's cultural and visitor economy offer. New developments can create attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods with strong local character, quality public realm and distinctive architecture.

Evidence Base – Enhancing the built and historic environment

The following evidence base documents are relevant to strategic priority 7 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Existing and Draft Conservation Area Management Studies
  Documents that set out how a conservation area should be preserved and enhanced.
- Heritage Impact Assessments
  Evaluate how a proposed development, plan or change could affect the significance of heritage assets and their settings. These will be required where it is identified that proposed allocations (areas proposed as locations for development within the new Local Plan as it is developed), may affect heritage assets.

Strategic Priority 8

To protect and enhance the city's biodiversity, geological resource, countryside and landscapes whilst ensuring that all homes have good access to a range of interlinked green infrastructure.

Progress - Strategic Priority 8

The natural environment is one of the city's greatest assets and includes a network of designated wildlife and geological sites as well as priority species and habitats. During the current plan period, the number of designated Local Wildlife Sites has increased from 63 to 80 following approval of additional sites by the Council's Cabinet, which gives an indication of the biodiversity value of the city.

The Council has continued to support and safeguard its natural assets through the effective application of designations within the existing CSDP. This approach has helped to steer growth towards less sensitive locations and ensure that any impacts on designated sites are appropriately mitigated. In addition, emerging regulatory requirements, such as Biodiversity Net Gain, will ensure that new development delivers measurable enhancements to ecological systems.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 8

Sunderland has a requirement to accommodate housing, employment and infrastructure growth whilst avoiding significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, landscapes and countryside character. New development can result in habitat loss, fragmentation and increased recreational pressure on sensitive sites if not carefully managed. The city is home to locally, nationally and internationally important sites and protecting and enhancing these is a continual challenge. Some communities may have less access to high-quality open space and green infrastructure than others, and

ensuring all residents can easily access connected green spaces remains a key challenge.

Biodiversity Net Gain requirements can create opportunities for habitat creation, restoration and enhancement to ensure development has a net positive impact. Providing better access to parks, green spaces, countryside and the coast can increase physical activity and help reduce health inequalities. Green infrastructure plays a role in managing flood risk, improving air quality and increasing resilience to climate change.

The South of Tyne and Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which identifies opportunities for nature restoration and enhancement, has been prepared for publication. There will be a need to have regard to the LNRS during the preparation of the Local Plan.

After securing funding through the Nature Towns and Cities programme, the Council is working with local communities as part of the Connecting Through Nature project to help nature thrive across Sunderland while supporting residents to care for the places around them

Evidence Base – Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 8 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Open Space Assessment
  Provides detail on the quantity, quality, accessibility and future need for open spaces throughout the city.
- Green Belt Review
  Provides an assessment of land designated as Green Belt to determine whether it should continue to have Green Belt status or whether some areas could be released for development if additional development land is required.
- Settlement boundaries review
  Provides an indication as to whether existing development limits should be amended to reflect growth opportunities or environmental constraints.
- South of Tyne and Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy
  A strategy which identifies opportunities for habitat and species enhancement across Sunderland, Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Wildlife Corridor Review
  A report which considers the existing wildlife corridors throughout the city, and how effective they are and what benefits and challenges they present.
- Habitat Regulations Assessment

An assessment to assess the impact of the policies and allocations of the Local Plan upon European designated sites. Where potential impacts are identified a Mitigation Strategy will be prepared to identify appropriate mitigation measures.

Strategic Priority 9

To adapt to and minimise the impact of climate change by reducing carbon emissions, maximising the use of low carbon energy solutions and seeking to reduce the risk/impact of flooding.

Progress - Strategic Priority 9

The existing CSDP has sought to reduce carbon emissions though the promotion of sustainable development. Renewable energy has continued to be adopted across the city.

At the end of 2024, across the city Sunderland had 10,920 sites with photovoltaics. In addition, renewable energy capacity across Sunderland at this time was 58.2 MW, which is made up of 41.5 MW photovoltaics, 14.8 MW onshore wind and 2 MW landfill gas.

The number of properties that are at risk of potential flooding has remained fairly static over the plan period, with the number of properties within flood risk zone 3 increasing slightly. This is as a result of changes to the flood zone mapping which is updated regularly by the Environment Agency to reflect the latest data, rather than development proposals being approved within flood zone 3.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 9

National policy requires the Council to take full account of all climate impacts and help to shape places in ways that contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improves resilience, encourages the reuse of existing resources and conversions of existing buildings and supports renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

It will therefore be important to have due consideration to these national policy requirements and any associated evidence requirements when developing the new Local Plan.

Careful consideration will also need to be given to flood risk when identifying new sites for development in order to direct development towards areas which have a lower risk of flooding.

Evidence Base – Impacts of climate change

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 9 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
  Assesses flood risk across the whole of the city to ensure that development is directed to locations with the lowest risk of flooding.

Strategic Priority 10

To manage waste as a resource and minimise the amount produced and sent to landfill.

Progress - Strategic Priority 10

There are a number of waste management facilities throughout the city, which assist in reducing the amount of waste into landfill. The Council has continued to manage waste through effective planning policies.

The Council are part of the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership which has implemented a twenty-year Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy to manage waste effectively (2007-2027). The partnership aims to reduce landfill waste and increase recycling efforts across Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Work has commenced on preparing a North East Waste Study, which will explore the waste needs of each local authority including Sunderland. Once our future needs are known, the emerging Local Plan will be able to provide effective planning policies as the basis of successful waste management.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 10

Population growth, economic activity and consumption patterns can increase the amount of waste that is produced. Some materials require specialist treatment and disposal and this might not be accessible to all. There is also significant investment required in order to develop modern waste management facilities, recycling infrastructure and treatment technologies.

There are opportunities to divert residual waste from landfill and use it to generate energy through Energy-from-Waste facilities. Utilisation of household waste and recycling centres provide opportunities to increase recycling, reuse and material recovery.

As waste flows are a cross-boundary issue, Sunderland continues to work closely with neighbouring authorities on the management of this.

Evidence Base – Managing waste

The following evidence base documents are relevant to strategic priority 10 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new local plan.

- North East Waste Study
  Provides details of the North East's (including Sunderland's) waste needs in relation to capacity and land availability.

Strategic Priority 11

To promote sustainable and active travel and seek to improve transport infrastructure to ensure efficient, sustainable access.

Progress - Strategic Priority 11

The Council and its partners have continued to support active travel and improve transport infrastructure across the city and since the start of the plan period there has been extensive improvements to the road and cycle network. These include the delivery of the Ryhope to Doxford link road, connecting the new housing at South Sunderland to the A19 more efficiently, and the opening of the Northern Spire Bridge across the Wear, linked with the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor Phase 3, which now provides a more direct link between the City Centre and the A19.

An extension to the Tyne and Wear Metro line, the Washington Loop, will provide a new route to Washington along the northern part of the former Leamside Line. The Washington Loop has funding secured and is expected to start operating in 2033. A feasibility study into the new metro route is underway, alongside design work for the stations, bridges and other infrastructure.

The opening of Keel Crossing in 2025 has provided an excellent pedestrian and cycle link across the river, connecting the City Centre and the Sheepfolds area and linking to routes further afield.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 11

Across the city car dependency is still very high, and encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport more requires changes in travel habits and ensuring these forms of travel are accessible. Significant investment is required to deliver and maintain cycling routes, pedestrian infrastructure, public transport improvements and

associated facilities. There are also connectivity gaps in the city, and improving links between communities and facilities remains a key challenge.

The Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) provides a comprehensive framework to guide planned walking and cycling infrastructure across the city. The LCWIP is used to support funding applications, as well as broader planning and design decisions regarding transport. Washington has a more detailed LCWIP in place which sets out opportunities to enhance infrastructure and develop a better-connected active mode network across Washington. A detailed LCWIP for the Coalfield area is currently being prepared.

Planned and completed schemes relating to the active travel network are designed to create safer, more direct active travel connections. Improved transport connections can help residents access employment opportunities, support business investment and enhance the attractiveness of strategic employment sites. The new planned extension to the metro, the Washington Loop, which utilises part of the former Leamside Line, will provide an opportunity for improved metro/rail access for those residents living and working in Washington and parts of the Coalfield area.

Evidence Base – Sustainable and active travel

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 11 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Transport Assessment
  A comprehensive study that evaluates the transport and highways impact of the Local Plan's proposed site allocations and identifies any measures needed to mitigate the impacts.
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)
  Strategic plans which identify and prioritise improvements to walking, wheeling and cycling networks throughout the city. The Council has a city-wide plan as well as localised plans for Washington and the Coalfield.

Strategic Priority 12

To manage the city's mineral resources ensuring the maintenance of appropriate reserves to meet needs.

Progress - Strategic Priority 12

Over the plan period there has been limited development in relation to minerals infrastructure. However, the city has continued to safeguard its mineral resources and ensure reserves are maintained. Eppleton Quarry in Hetton Le Hole, is one of only two

active mineral extraction sites in Tyne and Wear. Permian magnesian limestone and basal Permian sand are currently extracted and the quarry makes an important contribution as a key provider for construction and other purposes supporting the local economy.

Challenges and opportunities - Strategic Priority 12

Sufficient mineral reserves must be available to meet future demand from housing, infrastructure and economic growth projects. T he challenge is ensuring this is possible with the increased housing requirements that the Local Plan needs to make provision for. There is also a challenge to securing mineral supplies whilst protecting environmental quality and sensitive areas.

Mineral safeguarding areas have been identified throughout the city within the CSDP to help ensure these resources remain available for future generations where appropriate. Former mineral sites can be restored, which can result in long-term environmental benefits after extraction has ceased. The Council will continue to work with partners across the North East to ensure there is sufficient mineral resources to meet the needs of the City and wider region.

Evidence Base – Managing mineral resources

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 12 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Local Aggregate Assessment
  Provides information on the level of mineral resources available when compared against future demand in Tyne and Wear.

Strategic Priority 13

To ensure that the city has the infrastructure in place to support its future growth and prosperity.

Progress - Strategic Priority 13

The city has continued to improve its infrastructure over recent years. The Council has supported economic infrastructure at the Port of Sunderland, invested in digital systems and delivered new housing and community facilities, all contributing to a more connected, sustainable, and economically competitive city. Riverside Sunderland has played a key role with significant investment in infrastructure to transform former industrial land and improve connections across the city, providing the new Keel

Crossing, housing sites, and employment space. Sunderland's new eye hospital has also recently opened on part of the former Vaux site at Riverside Sunderland within the Urban Core.

South Sunderland Growth Area has not only provided new homes for the city but has created new communities, with new roads, open spaces, cycle and pedestrian networks and new facilities. A new school is also planned for this area, with extensions to existing schools built throughout the city to accommodate additional capacity requirements as a result of new development.

Challenges and opportunities – Strategic Priority 13

Major infrastructure projects often require significant public and private sector investment. New housing development increases demand for schools, healthcare facilities, utilities, open space and transport infrastructure. Some existing infrastructure may also require upgrading or renewing to meet modern standards and future demand.

Securing funding to deliver necessary infrastructure continues to be a challenge. Developer contributions will continue to be secured from development wherever possible to contribute towards improvements, but it is recognised that site viability is challenging.

Major new developments and regeneration schemes provide opportunities to deliver integrated infrastructure alongside new homes, offices, cultural assets and public spaces. High quality digital infrastructure can support business growth, innovation, education and access to services. Well planned infrastructure has the potential to unlock development sites, improve productivity and attract new residential development, businesses and employers.

Evidence Base – Infrastructure

The following evidence base documents are relevant to Strategic Priority 13 and will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
  A document which identifies the infrastructure needed to support the growth and development identified within the Local Plan, setting out how, when and by whom it will be delivered.
- Transport Assessment
  A comprehensives study that evaluates the transport and highway impact of a Local Plans proposed site allocations and identifies any measures needed to mitigate the impacts.
- Water Cycle Study

A document which assesses the capacity of water-related infrastructure to accommodate the levels of growth proposed within the new Local Plan.

- Viability Assessment

  Tests whether the policies and proposed site allocations in the Local Plan can realistically be delivered without making development economically unviable.

Looking Forward – developing the city's new Local Plan

The format of the new Local Plan is also likely to be different to the CSDP. The Government is proposing to set topic-based policies for Development Management at a national level, which will reduce the requirement for these within the Local Plan. The content of the new Local Plan will therefore be more streamlined and focussed on matters that are locally specific.

New style local plans are also required to take a digital-first approach, prioritising digital formats and complying with defined data standards.

We recognise that the previous Vision and Objectives/Strategic Priorities generally remain relevant to Sunderland. However, it is considered that they are quite long and wordy. Our intention is therefore to keep the Vision for the new Local Plan as short and concise as possible, and to include clear and measurable Objectives. As national guidance indicates that a Local Plan should include up to 10 measurable Objectives, there will also be a requirement to reduce the overall number of Objectives identified when compared against the number of Strategic Priorities identified within the CSDP.

4. How do I get involved in the Local Plan process?

How we have engaged previously

We have previously engaged with the local community and other important stakeholders in accordance with the Council's agreed Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/14275/Statement-of-Community-Involvement). The SCI sets out how and when the community will be involved in the preparation of the Local Plan and other planning documents and how they will be consulted on planning applications. As we consider how we are going to consult on our new Local Plan, we want your views on most effective ways that we could consult with you.

How can we improve engagement?

During the preparation of the CSDP we engaged with stakeholders in the following ways:

- Placing all content for the consultation on the planning policy webpages;

- Sending e-mails/letters to those who were on the Local Plan consultation database;
- Sending e-mails/letters to those we are required to consult as part of the regulations;
- Sending a leaflet to each household in Sunderland;
- Having copies of the consultation documents available at Council offices, customer service hubs and libraries throughout the city and having drop boxes for responses;
- Sending e-mails and e-bulletins;
- Holding public exhibitions and drop-in events city wide for the public to ask questions and discuss the plan with officers;
- Using the Council's website and social media channels to advertise dates of public exhibitions/drop-in events;
- Placing details in the local press of the consultation and advertising dates of events;
- Holding meetings with key stakeholder groups;
- Placing posters in public buildings, schools and doctors' surgeries throughout the city;
- Having an animation video available on social media explaining what the Local Plan is about.

As we start to prepare this new Local Plan we are considering the best ways to consult and engage with the local community and other stakeholders as we go through the process. We can use the methods that we have identified above and also consider other means of communicating material, such as:

- Providing more interactive web-based consultation material and events;
- Ensuring web-based content and response mechanisms are easy to use on smart phones and tablets;
- Targeted events to more specific age groups;
- Virtual events for those residents/groups who may not be able to attend in-person events.

We welcome your views on which of these methods would be the most effective for you and whether there are other engagement methods we should consider, to ensure that all of our communities within Sunderland can have meaningful participation in the Local Plan process. Your feedback on this will help shape our engagement strategy, which we are currently preparing.

5. How to respond to this consultation

The Council is seeking feedback on what the new Vision and the Objectives/Strategic Priorities of the Local Plan should be, the proposed content of the plan and what key issues it should address. We also want your views on how the Council should communicate and engage with you as we prepare the new Local Plan.

You can access our online survey to provide your feedback here: https://sunderlandcitycouncil.info/local-plan. The consultation period will run from 1 September – 29 September 2026.

Representations can also be made by:

- Email to planningpolicy@sunderland.gov.uk
- Post to Local Plan, Strategic and Sustainable Plans Team, Sunderland City Council, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA.
- Hand delivery to the Reception at City Hall is available from 8:30am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

6. What are the next steps?

After this scoping consultation ends, all feedback will be reviewed and will help shape the drafting of the new Local Plan alongside national policy/guidance the evidence base documents identified earlier. This will help us ensure we are taking account of the views of our communities right from the start of the process and that we are engaging with you in the most effective ways.

At the end of October, we intend to publish our Gateway 1 Self-Assessment which will set out the new Local Plan timetable, the project management and governance arrangements for preparation of the new Local Plan, the proposed approach to consultation and engagement in preparing the new Local Plan, and the anticipated content of the new Local Plan.

After passing through Gateway 1, we will aim to publish a summary of the responses to this scoping consultation as soon as possible.

There will be two further formal consultations to help shape the Local Plan: the first is expected to take place in Summer 2027 and will focus on the draft plan, its policies and proposed site allocations (proposed Local Plan and content). The second is anticipated to take place in Winter 2028 and will be a consultation on the full draft Plan (proposed Local Plan) before it is submitted to Government for an independent examination.

All information on the Local Plan process can be found on our consultation web page: https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/sunderlandlocalplan. This will be kept up-to date throughout the plan making process.

If you would like to automatically be consulted on future consultations on the Local Plan, you can ask to be added to our Local Plan consultation database. If you would like to be added to the database, please contact planningpolicy@sunderland.gov.uk.

Sunderland City Council

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