

Frequently Asked Questions

Bolton Local Plan: Issues & Options Paper

1. What is an Issues and Options Paper?

This document explains the key issues and options for the new Local Plan. It sets out a range of planning issues across the borough, then either recommends a specific approach or a range of options to address them. The Issues and Options document is not a new Local Plan – that comes later. The Council is consulting on the Issues and Options document from 21st August to 2nd October 2025.

2. What is a Local Plan?

A Local Plan is a document produced by the Local Planning Authority for an area, in consultation with local people and the many other organisations whose activities influence or are affected by what happens in the borough.

Local Plans are used to assess and decide on planning applications. They set out where and how development should take place, by means of a series of policies and maps. The policies guide decision-making on whether planning applications are acceptable or not. They aren't just about where new homes and jobs should go, although this is always an important part of a local plan, they are also about identifying areas which need protecting or improving.

A Local Plans is an important document and has a major influence on how the local area will change, develop, look and feel in the future.

3. Why are we producing a new Local Plan?

The Council has a legal duty to produce a Local Plan. Preparing the plan also allows us to look at what's good about the borough and needs to be protected, what challenges the borough may face in the future, and what needs to be improved. The plan sets out a development framework which looks at the whole borough. It will help attract and co-ordinate investment and infrastructure, and it sets out where we will (and will not) grant planning permission for new development.

Without a new Local Plan, the Council would lose control over where development can and cannot happen. Bolton could be subject to speculative development proposals. These proposals could result in unsustainable, unplanned, piecemeal development across the borough without the required supporting infrastructure.

4. What does the Issues and Options Paper cover?

The Issues and Options Paper provides an overview of Bolton borough as it is now, and its opportunities and challenges in the present and near future. The document sets out a number of objectives for Bolton over the course of the next 15 years, and how it will seek to achieve them.

5. What is the Issues and Options consultation?

The Issues and Options consultation is a very early stage of the Local Plan update process. It seeks to identify 'issues' currently facing the borough, and/or 'issues' which we would like the plan to address based on the current situation and evidence. It then considers 'options' for how the new Local Plan might seek to tackle these issues. The current consultation seeks your views on whether you agree or disagree with the issues we have identified, and whether there are any others you think we should also tackle.

6. What is the five-year land supply and the Housing Delivery Test? Why do they matter?

We must show we have five years' worth of deliverable housing sites at any given time. The Housing Delivery Test checks whether we are building enough homes against our annual target. If we fall short on either of these measures, we risk losing control over where new homes go. Developers may get planning permission for schemes that conflict with our local priorities, and it can become harder to defend decisions at appeal.

7. How can I take part in the consultation?

Formal representations and comments on the Local Plan Issues and Options can be made through [Bolton Council Consultations & Surveys webpage](#).

8. Who can comment?

Anyone can comment on the consultation. We would like to hear from residents, businesses and those living, working or studying in the borough.

9. Can I provide the council with documents to support my consultation response?

Yes. Towards the end of the consultation survey, there is an opportunity to upload a document directly to the council. Alternatively, documents can be emailed to consultations@bolton.gov.uk.

Please ensure you provide the same contact details as you have provided in the survey, so that we can ensure the documentation you have sent is filed together with your consultation response.

10. What are our next steps?

After this consultation closes, we will look carefully at all of the responses received and will summarise these in a consultation report, together with our response to each. The responses we receive and the issues raised will feed into a draft Local Plan, which itself will be the subject of further public consultation.

If you have any further questions or comments about this briefing or the process of creating a new Local Plan, please contact us at: ldfconsultation@bolton.gov.uk.