



Economy, Environment & Communities

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Date: 27 February 2024
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Dear Mr Miller

Sandwell Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sandwell Local Plan.

At a meeting on 30 November 2023, Walsall's planning committee agreed the basis of a response to the consultation, and authorised the Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, to submit it. The committee also authorised the Head of Planning and Building Control to amend the response as necessary.

Because of the limited time available between the consultation notification and the deadline for preparing reports, it was not possible for the report to planning committee to address all the issues in the draft plan that might be of relevance to Walsall. Our response, as amended by the Head of Planning and Building Control, is therefore attached as an appendix and is set out on this basis.

Yours sincerely

Dave Brown
Executive Director



Appendix: Walsall Council's response to the Sandwell local plan – draft (Regulation 18) consultation

It is recognised that the Sandwell local plan is a draft plan at regulation 18 stage. Its purpose is to set out the policies and site allocations that are proposed for inclusion in the final plan. The policies include a strategic objective to deliver at least 11,167 net new homes (587 per annum) and at least 42 hectares of new employment land over the period 2022-2041. It also allocates 1,177 hectares of existing occupied employment land to be retained in this use.

These figures are well below the identified need based on the government standard method for 29,773 homes (1,567 per annum), and 185 hectares of employment land, by 2041. The plan acknowledges that Sandwell will be unable to meet these needs either within the borough or across the whole of the plan period without resorting to significant and harmful levels of overdevelopment. The identified shortfall in housing provision is 18,606 homes, while the shortfall in employment land is 143 hectares. It will be necessary to 'export' this unmet need to neighbouring authority areas.

Sandwell is heavily constrained, being surrounded by other urban authorities. It has very little Green Belt (most of this comprises Sandwell Valley) and very few vacant or unused open spaces. Walsall's planning committee on 9 March 2023 and cabinet on 22 March 2023 recognised this factor in response to consultation on the earlier issues and options report for Sandwell's local plan. Walsall's response was that the plan should aim to ensure that Sandwell is able to accommodate as much housing and employment as possible to meet its own needs by making effective use of land and maximising densities.

The housing and employment numbers proposed in the Sandwell local plan are higher than in the Draft Black Country Plan (BCP) after allowing for the slightly different time periods to be covered by the two plans. The BCP proposed 9,158 homes (482 per annum) and 29 hectares of new employment land. This increase in provision means that the number of homes and amount of employment land that will need to be exported to neighbouring authorities (including Walsall) will be reduced. As such, the draft plan can be supported.

The Sandwell local plan contains a large number of policies about other topics. Most of these are site-specific or are about development management and are similar to those proposed in the BCP. As such, they raise no direct concerns for Walsall.

We look forward to continuing to work with you as you progress your plan, both as an individual planning authority and on a sub-regional and regional basis.