**ASHFIELD LOCAL PLAN**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

20th February 2025

# General

## What’s Happened Since the Last Consultation?

Following the Regulation 19 Consultation that the Council undertook between December 2023 and January 2024, the Council made the decision to submit its Emerging Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) under Section 20 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (as amended) in April 2024.

Two Inspectors, Mr Philip Mileham BA(Hons) MA MRTPI and Mr Graham Wyatt BA (Hons) MRTPI, were appointed to lead the examination. The first week of public examination hearings took place during 12th – 14th November 2024 to discuss matters 1-3 relating to procedural and legal requirements including duty to co-operate, meeting Ashfield’s housing needs and the spatial strategy and the distribution of development.

A post hearing letter from the Inspectors was received by the Council on 6th January 2025. The letter asked the council to undertake further work before hearings may continue for Matters 4 to 12. The hearings have now been postponed until further notice.

The Council responded to the Inspectors letter setting out the intention to undertake immediate work in identifying further sites of less than 500 dwellings, in accordance with the submitted plans spatial strategy.

Following a decision at Full Council on 17th February 2025, the Council made the decision to undertake a consultation on the additional housing sites.

## Why Are we Doing a Plan?

A plan is needed to shape the long-term future of Ashfield, guiding the district forward in a sustainable positive direction, responding to challenges and enabling important decisions to be taken for the benefit of local communities. It is a statutory / legal requirement from Government for the Council to have an up to date approved local plan.

## What Happens if we Don’t Have a New Local Plan?

Without an approved up to date local plan, the Council has a reduced ability to guide and influence where new development is located across the District, with the possibility of larger scale housing and employment development taking place in unsustainable locations. It also would be increasingly difficult to secure developer contributions for essential infrastructure such as schools, roads, transport, affordable homes and healthcare in areas where there is community need.

## **How Has The Local Plan Been Prepared**?

The Draft Local Plan has been prepared by planning officers within the Forward Planning Team at Ashfield District Council, incorporating the requirements of both local and national policy. Specialist studies and in-depth assessments (the evidence base) have been used to guide and support the content of the plan.

Extensive work has also been undertaken with elected members and key stakeholders, such as Nottinghamshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board, to ensure the Plan is responsive to local needs. A Local Plan Development Committee (formerly the Local Plan Working Group) consisting of local Councillors has guided and steered decisions on the various elements of the plan.

## The Government Has Announced and Made Big Changes to the Planning System, Doesn’t This Mean the Local Plan is a Waste of Time?

Under the transitional arrangements at the time of submitting the plan, the Council had until June 2025 to submit its Local Plan for examination using current guidance.

The recent government changes have put increased emphasis on the number of homes being built, with the introduction a new standard method for calculating housing need at local authority level. If a new Local Plan was to be prepared under new guidance, additional land would need to be allocated to accommodate a further 1500 dwellings in approximation.

In addition to the above, the Draft Local Plan is at an advanced stage and any further delay in adopting the new Plan will leave Ashfield vulnerable to unplanned development. There would also be a reliance on other outdated local planning policy which could jeopardise successful sustainable development, for instance, affordable housing and other developer contributions.

Given the above, and the fact that the Ashfield Local Plan was last adopted in 2002, it is considered critical that the district has an up to date, approved local plan in place as soon as possible.

# Consultation

## What Are we Consulting on Now?

The Council has identified 13 additional proposed housing sites which are now being consulted upon. The additional proposed sites together with amendments to Policy H1 supporting text have been assessed through an update to the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitat Regulations Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment. Under the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Council is required to carry out a minimum of six-week consultation on the potential new housing site allocations.

The 13 additional proposed housing sites are as follows:

* Central Avenue, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Kl)
* Abbey Road, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Km)
* Southwell Lane, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Kn)
* Former Kirklands Care Home, Fairhaven, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Ko)
* Pond Hole, Pond Street, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Kp)
* Former Wyvern Club Site, Lane End, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Kq)
* Ellis Street, Kirkby-In-Ashfield (H1Kr)
* Pendean Way, Sutton-In-Ashfield (H1Sai)
* Between Redcliffe Street and Leyton Avenue, Sutton-In-Ashfield (H1Saj)
* Rookery Lane, Sutton-In-Ashfield (H1Sak)
* Newark Road/Coxmoor Road, Sutton-In-Ashfield (H1Sal0
* Beck Lane South, Skegby, Sutton-In-Ashfield (H1San)
* Radford’s Farm, Dawgates Lane, Sutton-In-Ashfield (H1Sao)

The consultation is open from 20th February 2025 to 3rd April 2025. The opportunity to make comments on the Local Plan is open to everyone.

Whilst additional housing sites have been proposed, the Submitted Local Plan still seeks to:

* Deliver high quality design and sustainable placemaking
* Capitalise on the accessibility of the M1 transport corridor
* Locate growth in sustainable and accessible locations
* Ensure a strong regeneration focus on Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield
* Allow proportionate and sustainable growth in the villages of Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood
* Facilitate the delivery of new infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, transport
* Take advantage of the district’s location close to Nottingham

The purpose of the consultation is to provide an opportunity for representations to be made on the additional proposed housing site allocations before the examination of the Submitted Local Plan is progressed by the planning inspectors. Representations should relate to the following aspects:

* **Legal compliance** – does the plan meet the legal requirements made under various statutes?
* **Soundness** – has the plan been positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy?
* **Meeting the duty to cooperate** – has the council engaged and worked effectively with neighbouring authorities and statutory bodies?

## Where Can I View the Consultation Documents?

You can view a copy of the consultation documents alongside Policy Map (North) at the following locations:

* Kirkby in Ashfield Library
* Sutton in Ashfield Library
* Hucknall Library
* Selston Parish Hall
* Ashfield District Council Offices, Kirkby in Ashfield

Documents are also available online through the Additional Housing Site Allocations Consultation page on the Council’s website, including the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitat Regulation Assessment and all accompanying Evidence Base studies.

Posters and official media regarding the Local Plan will also have a QR code which can be scanned to take you directly to the relevant part of the Council’s website to view the documents and to make comments.

## How Can I Comment on the Additional Proposed Housing Allocations?

The easiest and most efficient way to view the Additional Proposed Housing Allocations and submit any comments you have on the policies and proposals is via the interactive form which can be found on the Councils website here: <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/additional-housing-site-allocations-consultation>

Comment forms will also be available at the main libraries within Sutton, Kirkby and Hucknall, at Selston Parish Hall and at the Main Council Offices in Kirkby. Please post these in the comment boxes provided or send your written response to

localplan@ashfield.gov.uk

or to:

Forward Plans,

Place and Communities,

Ashfield District Council,

Urban Road,

Kirkby-in- Ashfield,

NG17 8DA.

If you need any further information, please contact the Forward Planning Team at localplan@ashfield.gov.uk or call the team contact number on 01623 457302.

Please note that any responses must be received in writing using the above methods and no later than the consultation deadline **of 5.00pm 3rd April 2025**.

## I commented on the Submitted Local Plan, can you use the comments I made previously?

Comments received during the Ashfield Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation in November-December 2023 have already been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and will therefore be considered as part of the wider Local Plan examination.

New comments must relate to the additional proposed housing sites and the planning inspectors will only be sent responses that are made as part of the additional housing site allocations consultation. Those who submit representations to this consultation may request to present evidence orally at one or more of the hearing sessions that the planning inspectors will arrange as part of the ongoing examination process. Note that this will be arranged at the discretion of the Inspectors.

## How do I Know if You Have Taken any Notice of What Has Already Been Said?

The Council has produced a Statement of Consultation document on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. This statement summarises all responses received as part of the Regulation 18 consultation. These summaries are grouped by policy, site allocation and section of the draft Local Plan and into background documents, sustainability appraisal and other parts of the evidence base.

Whilst the document sets of the main aspects identified by the respondents from the consultation, further details regarding individual representations and the Council’s response can be found in the appendices. Documents relating to the Regulation 18 consultation are available on the Council’s website: <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/planning-building-control/local-plan/emerging-local-plan/ashfield-draft-local-plan-consultation-regulation-18/>

A statement of consultation was also produced subsequent to the Regulation 19 Consultation in November-December 2023 and provides a summary of the key issues raised. This document can be found on the Council’s Local Plan Examination web page here: <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/media/k4em0cnw/sd-08-statement-of-consultation.docx>

## Where Can I Find Information Which Supports the Local Plan?

The extensive evidence base which has helped to develop and inform the Local Plan can be found on the Council’s website here: https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/local-plan-examination/submission-documents-and-evidence-base/

In addition, 4 Background Papers support the Local Plan and give more technical detail regarding specific topics. These are:

* Background Paper 1: Spatial Strategy and Site Selection
* Background Paper 2: Housing
* Background Paper 3: Economy & Employment
* Background Paper 4: Green Belt Harm Assessment

Legally required documents can also be found on the Local Plan Examination webpage. These include:

* Sustainability Appraisal
* Habitat Regulations Assessment

## How do I keep Up-To-Date With The Local Plan Process?

If you do not wish to submit representations, but would like to receive updates, please contact the Council by email at localplan@ashfield.gov.uk and your details can be added to our consultee database.

In addition, the Local Plan Examination webpage has a latest news section in which you can find updates on the Local Plan process, this ican be found on the Councils website here: <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/local-plan-examination/local-plan-latest-news/>

## What Happens Next?

Whilst the Council will be compiling a summary of the representations received to this consultation, it will not be responding to them. Representations received will be submitted to the Planning Inspectors for consideration. A summary will be made available on the Council website. Following the completion of the consultation, a summary of comments will be presented to members in order to determine the appropriate way forward in relation to the Council’s response to the ongoing Local Plan Examination.

If the Council then decides to submit the additional proposed housing site allocations, the Inspectors will consider the representations, alongside the evidence presented throughout the Examination. They will determine whether the Local Plan is ‘sound’ and produce a written report outlining final recommendations.

**General Questions on the submitted Local Plan**

# Housing

## Why so Many Houses?

Houses are needed to provide homes for the expanding communities in Ashfield. Young people need somewhere to live if they are to stay and work in the district. The number of residents is set to increase over the life of the Local Plan, and it is appropriate that we should plan to give them somewhere to live. The government also sets out a standard method for assessing the number of new homes which should be provided.

## Why is New Housing Good for us?

New housing not only provides new homes but brings many benefits. It creates high quality, well designed sustainable places, with homes designed to meet accessibility standards, whole of life living and adaptions to cope with climate change. Money may be negotiated from housing developers, new housing brings the potential to revitalise our town centres, enhance our parks and play areas, build new schools, and improve doctors’ surgeries. The benefits through the social value of building new housing also extend to bringing more local people into employment and improving their skills.

## What About Existing Empty Homes?

Existing empty homes do not contribute to the overall numbers of houses required. Like many councils, Ashfield is actively tackling the issue of empty homes, most of which are long-term empty and most of which are privately owned. Empty properties brought back into use by the Council only represent a change in tenure (from private to affordable rented), rather than additional supply since they are already included within the existing housing stock.

## How are we Delivering Affordable Housing?

The provision of affordable housing is vital as not all residents can afford to buy their own home. As part of any new housing development, the Submitted Local Plan outlines a requirement to include affordable houses which can be rented or shared ownership. This is negotiated with the developer as part of a developer contribution / Section 106 Agreement.

A Viability Study (whether development will be profitable or not) has been undertaken to understand the level of affordable housing that can be achieved in the District.

# Site allocations

## How Have the Housing Sites Been Selected?

The housing sites have been submitted to the Council for assessment. Only those housing sites considered to be deliverable or developable through the Council’s Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) have been considered. The Council uses its map-based information to gain an understanding of any physical constraints on the sites, such as mine shafts, flooding, and contamination. Assessments have been undertaken working closely with Nottinghamshire County Council Highway Department to understand any highway constraints. Further evidence that has been considered before taking any sites forward as proposed allocations in the Submitted Local Plan includes:

* A Sustainability Appraisal, assessing the economic, social, and environmental characteristics of each of these sites, has been undertaken by external independent consultants.
* A Green Belt Review has been undertaken to understand how sites fulfil the purposes of Green Belt.
* Background Papers have considered specific aspects of the Plan including spatial strategy, housing, employment, Green Belt harm and infrastructure.

Having undertaken these assessments, the Council has used this evidence to propose the most sustainable and deliverable sites (as is required by the Government) to meet the District’s housing requirement.

## Will the Policies and Site Allocations be the Most Sustainable Options for the District?

A Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken to test all proposed policies and housing /employment site allocations. This has involved assessing the characteristics of each site and content of the policy in relation to 17 Sustainability Objectives which encompass environmental, social, and economic factors. This appraisal has enabled the identification of constraints to the site or policy; and any subsequent mitigation measures or improvements that could be made to improve their sustainability.

# Economy

## Will the Local Plan Support our Town Centres?

Town centres are a major focus for this plan and the Council. The plan supports and encourages appropriate development for town centre uses appropriate to the scale and individual nature of each area. This has been informed by a Retail Study which provides a detailed assessment of key shopping areas and makes recommendations to inform the Local Plan. Key opportunities to support town centres are also identified in the plan through previous work on the Town Centre Masterplans, which each cover Sutton, Hucknall and Kirkby.

## Where are the Jobs?

The Plan sets out an ambitious vision to deliver a more diverse and thriving economy with quality jobs and opportunities for a skilled workforce. It aims to create a climate for business and enterprise growth with an emphasis on securing investment. The Plan makes provision for up to 81 hectares of employment land up to 2040.

The evidence base identifies a significant demand and limited supply for logistics and distribution (the transporting of goods to customers) along the M1 corridor. Areas of land adjacent Junction 27 of the M1 have been allocated in response to this demand. The plan has specific policies which protect existing employment sites and support employment in rural areas. Town centres will be a focus for a high-quality mix of retail, health, culture, and leisure – all providing opportunities for employment.

# Infastructure

## How are you Ensuring Enough Infrastructure is in Place?

The Council has identified in broad terms the infrastructure required, within the Local Plan policies and within the evidence base. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan includes details of the infrastructure identified by the Council and other service providers as being needed to support the delivery of the Local Plan. It explains the approach the Council has taken to identifying this infrastructure, how it will be delivered and an assessment of the associated potential risks.

When a planning application is submitted, the approved Local Plan and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan are used as a guide for agreeing with the developer which new facilities may need to be provided and where to meet the local community’s needs.

## Where are the Schools and Where is the Healthcare?

Nottinghamshire County Council has responsibility for education. Ashfield Council works very closely with the County Council to plan for sufficient school places. Having an approved Local Plan in place will mean that as part of a new housing development, the Council can ask for money from a developer to fund new school places and school buildings.

The local Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for providing the health services needed to support communities. The Council works closely with them to ensure that they can plan for the increase in households that will be proposed as part of the planned new housing. Money may be negotiated with a developer as part of a new housing scheme to fund improvements to doctors’ surgeries and health care centres.

Infrastructure planning, i.e., for schools, health centres, open space etc. is a key part of the Local Plan process. The Submitted Local Plan identifies in broad terms the infrastructure required both in the Local Plan policies and within the evidence base. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been produced that includes details of the infrastructure identified by the Council and other service providers as being needed across the District to support the delivery of the Local Plan. The IDP explains the approach the Council has taken to identifying this infrastructure, how it will be delivered, and an assessment of the associated potential risks.

# Green Belt and Environment

## What is the Difference Between Green Belt and Countryside?

Green Belt refers to a specifically designated area of land surrounding a village, town, or city, creating a ‘buffer’ which prevents settlements from merging with one another, thereby safeguarding valuable countryside from encroachment and helping to preserve the special character and distinct identity of the settlements. Ashfield lies within the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt, the primary role of which is to prevent Nottingham and Derby cities from merging with surrounding towns and villages. Within Ashfield, the Nottingham Green Belt extends from the south of Kirkby down to Hucknall, including the rural wards west of the M1.

The Green Belt and non-Green Belt countryside areas within the District, lying outside the District’s main urban areas (the towns and suburbs) and named settlements (the larger villages) are proposed to be protected under the Submitted Local Plan Countryside policy.

## Why are you Releasing Land From the Green Belt?

The Council reviewed a number of options as part of the decision to release areas of Green Belt for new housing and employment. The release of land in the Green Belt for development is required to be justified by what are known as ‘exceptional circumstances. Guided by the Submitted Local Plan’s vision, the evidence base and the key issues faced by the district, the Council considers that there are exceptional circumstances to justify releasing Green Belt land to meet Ashfield’s housing need and to contribute towards employment requirements, mainly in the logistics industry. Additional information can be found in Background Paper 1: Spatial Approach and Site Selection which supports the Local Plan.

## What are Greenfield and Brownfield sites?

Greenfield sites are land that has never been built on or where the remains of any structure or activity have been blended into the landscape over time. Such sites are not the same as Green Belt land. Brownfield sites, otherwise known as previously developed land (PDL), is land which in the past has been a developed site, and where there remains some evidence of a previous use. Examples of this may include old factory or colliery sites.

## Why is Building on Green Fields Necessary?

The Council has undertaken an analysis of the land available within the urban areas of the District (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment or SHELAA). This identified land which is suitable and available for housing development within the District including brownfield land. There is insufficient brownfield land to meet the District’s housing requirement. As such, the District has no other choice but to develop sustainable sites within the countryside. The District has been very successful in developing brownfield sites, such as old collieries, in previous years and the supply of these sites has now been largely exhausted. Policies in the Submitted Local Plan ensure that new developments are sustainable including through the conservation and enhancing of the natural environment.

## Why are we Having More Growth When There is all This Climate Change?

The plan sets out the basis for future growth to meet the needs of the district, whilst rising to the challenge of climate change. A core element of the plan is sustainable development, whether it is new housing, industrial units, schools, healthcare, or transport. Through the plan, the Council is committed to supporting proposals and initiatives that seek to achieve zero and low carbon development, put in place low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure and contribute towards the creation of well-designed sustainable places which mitigate against and adapt to climate change and contribute to national targets on reducing carbon emissions and energy use.