Luton Local Plan review

Gateway 1 self-assessment summary (22 October 2026) - Regulation 21

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1. Introduction

1.1 We are preparing a new Local Plan for the whole administrative area of Luton. This self-assessment summary sets out how we have got ready for plan making and other key information about the Local Plan at this stage. Its publication is required by Local Plan making regulations and marks the formal start of the plan making process for the Luton Local Plan. Further information about the new Local Plan is available here: luton.gov.uk/newlocalplan.

2. How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

2.1 Luton has a current Local Plan, adopted in 2017. We started preparing a new Local Plan for Luton in 2023. This included early engagement on issues and options including under the 'Duty to Cooperate' with the required statutory stakeholders and organisations and neighbouring authorities. We also engaged with local groups and organisations. This included meetings, workshops and engagement activities, such as school children undertaking a planning exercise and with the disability network.

2.2 Due to the government introducing a new way of producing Local Plans, we procedurally restarted the preparation of the new Local Plan from the beginning, following the new required processes and legislation. We published a notice of intention to commence plan making on 28 May 2026.

2.3 We have already undertaken work for the Local Plan. However, the formal start date of the new Local Plan is 22 October 2026. Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.

3. We published a timetable for preparing the plan

3.1 Our Local Plan timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing a plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe. The timetable was published on 28 May 2026. We'll keep this updated as we make more progress.

3.2 The timetable shows how we plan to adopt the Local Plan within the 30-month timeframe, on 22 December 2028. The timetable is available on our website here: luton.gov.uk/newlocalplan.

4. We established project management and governance arrangements

4.1 Preparing a local plan is a complex process. It involves many people across the council and from other organisations. As outlined in our engagement strategy, we have been working with colleagues across the council, Members and with external stakeholders to understand the key issues and priorities for Luton.

4.2 We have an officer team and budgets in place and project plans to ensure coordination of local making processes, working with the lead member for housing. We have sought to bid for and received government Local Plan funding to supplement our budgets. We are using consultants where needed to assist with Local Plan and related work areas to ensure the Local Plan timetable is met.

4.3 In terms of governance arrangements for the Local Plan, all key stages will be considered and approved by members of the council. In Luton this includes:

- consideration and guidance by the Local Plan Working Party and Overview and Scrutiny Board
- approval by the Executive and/or Full Council

We also hold all member workshops to help inform the process. Consideration and approval processes of the key Local Plan stages will be undertaken in accordance with our constitution and the regulations. It is considered that the current arrangements for governance of the Local Plan enable the Plan to be completed in the 30-month timeframe. This will be kept under review and other member engagement may be required.

5. We planned how we'll consult on the plan

5.1 Public consultation is essential for the Local Plan to represent the needs of our communities. Our engagement strategy sets out:

- how we have engaged so far
- how we propose this engagement is continued through the preparation of the Plan
- the methods we will use for consultation
- the key matters we think we will need to engage with various bodies on

Our approach will be to engage with stakeholders throughout the preparation of the Local Plan, including outside the formal consultation periods and prepare statements of common ground where required.

5.2 It will be important that we continue to engage with neighbouring authorities in preparing the Local Plan, particularly as Luton is built up to its boundaries, considering comments received to our Scoping consultation including on cross boundary matters such as housing needs, transport and infrastructure.

5.3 We will continue to engage with local organisations and groups and build on established forums, such as the Luton Local Access Forum and Be Active, using methods where we can encourage participation.

5.4 Will continue to engage with colleagues across the council to ensure that the programmes and strategies that we are working on are reflected in the Local Plan. For example the new local transport plan and economic growth strategy.

5.5 We have started to collect evidence base for the Local Plan, for example in relation to housing and employment needs and the historic environment. Some of this is near completion.

Forming our evidence base has involved holding workshops with local groups and organisations who have an interest and knowledge on particular issues, such as in relation to green infrastructure and the historic environment.

We have also worked with colleagues across the council on our evidence base. We will publish the evidence base alongside the next stages of the Local Plan for public comment.

5.6 Consultation and engagement will include:

- meetings
- exhibitions
- workshop
- published material for comment both electronically on our Objective portal or alternative methods including downloading documents and bespoke response forms

Email notifications and social media will be used for the required stages of consultation, and all key information and consultations will be published on our website and be available in hard copy at the council offices and in libraries across Luton. We have produced summary booklets and posters/leaflets to highlight consultations. Further information is set out in our engagement strategy.

6. We began scoping the content of the plan

6.1 We have undertaken a scoping consultation between May and July 2026 to seek people's views on what the plan could contain and how we propose to consult on the plan at key stages. This consultation included the publication of following documents:

- a Community Involvement Paper and summary booklet
- an engagement strategy
- an SEA scoping report

6.2 We also undertook a 'call for sites' which asked landowners and developers to submit sites to the council for consideration for inclusion in the Local Plan.

6.3 Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision, making it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it. We identified a draft vision and plan objectives in our Community Involvement Paper.

6.4 Our Community Involvement Paper set out what we considered to be the key issues for Luton and options for the plan, informed by our monitoring and information page (for example, authority monitoring report, five-year housing land supply).

It, and our SEA scoping report, also identified the baseline information, monitoring information and evidence that we already have and that we plan to collect going forward. We will also consider standard information that can be used for preparing Local Plans referenced by government guidance and identified through stakeholder consultation.

6.5 We have considered the comments we received to the scoping consultation, which will inform the proposed content of the plan and which we will publish for public consultation in May 2027.

6.6 Based on information we have collected so far and the scoping consultation outcomes the anticipated content of the plan is set out below. This will be confirmed at the later stages of plan making and following further consultation and any updates in government planning policy, including the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.7 The NPPF already contains national development management policies, so the number of policies in the plan is likely to be more limited with a focus on sites and delivery.

However, at this stage we think that we will need policies for all of the key topics set out in our Community Involvement Paper, particularly where there are key local issues, such as in relation to:

- hot food takeaways
- houses of multiple occupation
- the type of employment development
- affordable housing

We also want to make sure that the plan can help deliver our 2040 vision, including helping to improve health and wellbeing and encouraging fairness.

- A Plan Vision for Luton
- Plan objectives setting out what we want the Local Plan to achieve
- A spatial strategy setting out where development will be located supported by infrastructure
- Measurable outcomes so that the performance of the Local Plan can be monitored after adoption
- Information and assessment about our current Local Plan policies and which ones we think that we should retain.
- Our housing needs and plan requirement, with a plan period from 2025 to 2050.
- The identification of sites to meet housing and employment and other needs, including identifying land for deliverable and developable housing sites over the plan period.
- Policies for:
    - providing sustainable and suitable homes, including affordable homes
    - supporting economic development and the protection of employment land
    - supporting our town centre and local centres
    - addressing and adapting to climate change
    - protecting and enhancing the natural environment
    - community facilities, sport, recreation
    - conserving and enhancing the historic environment
    - ensuring high quality design
    - encouraging sustainable travel
    - providing for key infrastructure to support growth

7. We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

7.1 We're legally required to identify, describe and evaluate likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing the local plan
- reasonable alternatives, taking into account the plan's objectives and scope

7.2 This process will consider how community, national and international environmental protection objectives and any other environmental challenges are taken into account in the plan. It will help us to predict significant environmental effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting these.

7.3 It is important we start this work early and are transparent about how we're doing the assessment when engaging stakeholders and communities.

7.4 We published an SEA scoping report which met the legislative requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of the scoping consultation and consulted the required statutory consultees. We plan to publish a report covering the legislative requirements for SEA alongside the plan at each key stage.

8. How to stay up to date

8.1 At all key stages of the Local Plan information and material for public consultation will be available on our website luton.gov.uk/newlocalplan.

8.2 The Local Plan team can be contacted on localplan@luton.gov.uk for any questions and for requests to be added to our database to informed about the next Local Plan stages.