

Wolverhampton

Plan

Scoping Consultation

July 2026



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CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

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1. What is the Purpose of the Wolverhampton Plan?

- 1.1 The Wolverhampton Plan (referred to as the WP throughout this document) will be the Local Plan providing planning policies and land allocations and targets to support the sustainable growth and regeneration of the City of Wolverhampton up to 2045.
- 1.2 The WP will set out a vision and measurable outcomes and a spatial and policy framework for delivery. This framework will guide and shape development across Wolverhampton and set clear parameters for growth and transformation. The Plan will also protect and enhance key environmental assets, support the delivery of key infrastructure and safeguard residential amenity. The policies and proposals will be used to help make planning decisions and guide investment and regeneration in Wolverhampton.
- 1.3 The WP will provide a strategy for bringing land forward with a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development. It will provide certainty and transparency to residents, businesses and developers about how the city is expected to grow up to 2045.
- 1.4 The government requires all local authorities to develop a long-term plan that sets out how and where land can be developed over the next 15 years, to meet the growing needs of local people and businesses.
- 1.5 The WP will provide a policy framework to:
 - a) enable delivery of the right type of development to meet identified needs in the most sustainable places;
 - b) provide certainty about which types of development are likely to be approved where and help prevent uncoordinated development;
 - c) protect and enhance areas designated for their environmental value;
 - d) seek to meet housing needs up to 2045;
 - e) attract new businesses and jobs and offer existing businesses the space to grow by meeting employment land needs;
 - f) ensure infrastructure (such as roads, public transport, schools, healthcare, utilities, broadband, waste and sewage disposal) and services are provided at the right time to serve Wolverhampton, including the homes and employment premises it supports;
 - g) increase employment opportunities to support the delivery of local and regional economic strategies;
 - h) address the issues arising from climate change to support delivery of the Council's Climate Commitment;
 - i) promote and enhance health and well-being to reduce health inequalities.

2. Why is the Plan being Prepared and What is the Timetable?

- 2.1 The WP is being prepared under a new plan-making system which has been introduced in England to speed up Plan preparation and increase housing and infrastructure delivery. Planning regulations and guidance published in 2025 and 2026 clarified that work to prepare a Plan for Wolverhampton under the new system would need to begin by 30 June 2026, followed by a statutory 34 month preparation timetable.
- 2.2 Under the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) transitional arrangements, this timetable must be met because the Wolverhampton Local Plan, that was submitted for examination by 12 March 2025, had a housing requirement of less than 80% of local housing need. Wolverhampton is one of 39 local authorities in this position, including Dudley and Sandwell Councils.
- 2.3 Further information about the requirements of the new plan-making system can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/create-or-update-a-local-plan-using-the-new-system>
- 2.4 The NPPF under which the WP will be prepared has not yet been published in its final form. Consultation on a draft NPPF took place in early 2026 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>). This means that some elements of the new plan-making system are still to be made clear. This document has been prepared using the best information currently available, and some elements may change. For example, it is not yet clear what time period a Local Plan should cover, therefore the 15 year period applied in the previous system has been used in this document as a holding position, until further certainty is provided.

Wolverhampton Plan Timetable

- 2.5 As required, a first Timetable for preparation of the WP was published on 30 June 2026. This sets out the following target dates for key stages of Plan preparation:

Publish first timetable and notice of intention to commence local plan preparation	30 June 2026
Scoping Consultation start	27 July 2026
Scoping Consultation end	8 September 2026
Publish Gateway 1 self-assessment summary	30 October 2026
Proposed plan content and evidence Consultation start	19 July 2027
Proposed plan content and evidence Consultation end	1 September 2027
Seek observations and advice for Gateway 2	1 February 2028
Proposed Plan Consultation start	26 June 2028
Proposed Plan Consultation end	21 August 2028
Seek observations and advice for Gateway 3	4 September 2028
Submit Plan for examination	30 October 2028
Adopt Plan	April 2029

- 2.6 The Timetable above replaces the current Wolverhampton Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2025-28 (www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/local-development-scheme-lds) for the purposes of plan preparation under the new plan-making system. The Timetable may be updated as Plan preparation progresses, where necessary. Any updates will be published on the Council's website.
- 2.7 Work is still on-going to progress the Wolverhampton Local Plan (WLP) under the previous plan-making system, in line with the LDS timetable. The WLP is currently at examination (www.localplanservices.co.uk/wolverhamptonlpexam) and is programmed for adoption in summer 2027.

The Scoping Consultation and Call for Sites

- 2.8 The WP is currently at Scoping Consultation stage – this is the stage before work on the Plan officially starts. The main purpose of the Scoping Consultation is to consult key stakeholders on the proposed scope of the new Plan and how the Council intends to engage local communities throughout the Plan preparation process. Views are also sought on the main issues the Plan will need to address, the key evidence needed to support the Plan, a proposed Vision and key considerations for a spatial strategy.
- 2.9 Details of how to respond to the Scoping Consultation and “Call for Sites” are provided in Section 10.
- 2.10 To make it easier to respond to the consultation, specific proposals are highlighted in ***bold italics*** throughout the document. The exception to this is Section 4 – proposed community engagement strategy, where all of the text is a specific proposal.

3. What is the Proposed Scope of the Wolverhampton Plan and what will it Replace?

- 3.1** *It is proposed that the Wolverhampton Plan will be the single Local Plan (as defined in part 5C of schedule 7 of the www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/schedule/7) for the Wolverhampton City Council area and cover all planning matters relating to this area, including minerals and waste.*
- 3.2** *It is assumed that, as at present, the Plan will need to cover at least 15 years from the year of adoption. As adoption is anticipated to take place during 2029/30, it is proposed that the end date for the Plan will be 2045.*

Relationship with National Decision-Making Policies

- 3.3** Under the new plan-making system the NPPF will, for the first time, set out national decision-making policies which apply to all planning applications, and which the WP must not replicate or contradict. The draft NPPF provides a clear indication of the matters and level of detail which these policies are likely to cover.
- 3.4** *This document has been prepared assuming that the Draft NPPF National Decision-Making Policies are largely taken forward into the final NPPF, under which the WP will be prepared.*

Relationship with the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)

- 3.5** Work has begun to prepare a West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (WM SDS) for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area – covering Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull [<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/housing-property-regeneration/west-midlands-spatial-development-strategy/#provisional-timetable>]. The WM SDS will form a key part of the Development Plan for Wolverhampton, alongside the WP.
- 3.6** The detailed scope, Plan period and timetable for the WM SDS will become clearer when further guidance and the final NPPF are published later in 2026.
- 3.7** *This document has been prepared assuming that the WP will be progressed, examined and adopted alongside or shortly ahead of the WM SDS, and that the two documents will be consistent and complimentary. In particular, it is proposed that the WP will set the housing, gypsy and traveller pitch and employment development land targets for Wolverhampton for the first part of the WM SDS Plan period - based on detailed evidence and consultation with local people – and that these targets will be reflected in the WM SDS.*

- 3.8** *It is assumed that, due to its long-term, strategic nature, the SDS will provide the principal forum for the WMCA local authorities to cooperate on unmet development needs, rather than through Local Plans as was the case under the previous system. It is also assumed that the principal cooperation with local authorities beyond the WMCA (e.g. South Staffordshire, Shropshire) on unmet development needs will be addressed through cooperation between the WM SDS and the SDSs within which these local authorities fall. Cooperation on other planning matters e.g. cross-boundary infrastructure is assumed to take place at a local authority level (see para 5.5 below).*
- 3.9** *However, in the absence of clear guidance on these issues at present, through the Scoping Consultation process the Council will engage with all relevant local authorities on all cooperation issues, including asking these authorities if they are able to help address the known, significant Wolverhampton housing shortfall (see para 9.6).*

Development Plan Documents the WP will Replace

- 3.10 There are currently a collection of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which, together with national policies, and policies in the Neighbourhood Plans www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/neighbourhood-planning for Tettenhall and Heathfield Park (see below), provide the set of rules against which planning applications in Wolverhampton are assessed.
- 3.11 These DPDs are:
- Saved parts of the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006) www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/unitary-development-plan-and-proposals-map
 - Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) 2011 <https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/t1/p2/>
 - Area Action Plans www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/area-action-plans-aaps:
 - Bilston Corridor Area Action Plan (AAP) 2014
 - Stafford Road Corridor AAP 2014
 - Wolverhampton City Centre AAP 2016
- 3.12 As explained above (in para 2.8), the Wolverhampton Local Plan (WLP) is currently at examination stage. The WLP builds on work previously undertaken on the Black Country Plan review, and will replace the BCCS, and housing and employment site allocations in the AAPs, excluding those within Wolverhampton City Centre. The WLP will include all of the strategic policies for Wolverhampton, as defined in the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and housing and employment allocations for the whole of Wolverhampton except for Wolverhampton City Centre. The WLP will sit alongside non-strategic policies for Wolverhampton provided in the saved parts of the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006), and the three AAPs.

3.13 The new WP process will run alongside, and should not materially affect, the current WLP examination and adoption process. For the purposes of this document, it has been assumed that the WLP as submitted for examination will be adopted substantially unchanged. The WLP Main Document Appendix 1 sets out the existing DPD and Neighbourhood Plans policies and policy map designations that are currently in place and would be amended upon WLP adoption. It is hoped that, by the time the WP reaches Plan, Content and Evidence stage in summer 2027, the final WLP will be ready for adoption.

3.14 *It is proposed that, when adopted, the WP will replace all of the existing Development Plan Documents covering Wolverhampton, including the adopted WLP. This will include providing up-to-date site allocations and policies for Wolverhampton City Centre (replacing the City Centre AAP) and all development management policies for Wolverhampton (replacing the UDP and parts of the AAPs).*

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Planning Guidance the WP will Replace

3.15 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – previously called SPGs - are documents that a Council publishes to provide more detailed guidance on how policies in DPDs should be applied or design guidance for specific sites. SPDs are quicker to prepare than DPDs, as they do not have to go through formal stages of preparation or independent examination, and they are a material consideration in planning decisions. A number of SPDs have been prepared for the Wolverhampton area which have served us well, covering important subjects such as housing design, open space contributions, affordable housing and renewable energy. They can be found here:

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/supplementary-planning-documents-and-development-briefs

3.16 SPDs are being phased out under the new plan-making system, therefore when the WP is adopted all existing SPDs will cease effect. Therefore, it is important that key parts of existing Wolverhampton SPDs which are in accordance with national policy are considered for inclusion in the WP. There are also other types of planning guidance which may be appropriate for inclusion in the WP.

3.17 *It is proposed that, when adopted, the WP will incorporate parts of existing SPDs and other planning guidance covering Wolverhampton, updated and aligned with national policy. These include:*

- ***Hot food takeaways SPD 2018***
- ***Day nurseries SPG 1995***
- ***Places of Worship SPG 1995***
- ***Affordable housing SPD 2006***
- ***Open Space, Sport and Recreation SPD 2014***

- **Residential Development SPG 1996**
- **Extensions to Houses SPG 1996**
- **Shopfront Design Guide SPG 1996**
- **Outdoor Advertisements and Signs SPG**
- **Black Country Air Quality SPD 2016**
- **Telecommunications SPG 2002**
- **House in Multiple Occupation Planning Guidance 2019**

Relationship with Tettenhall and Heathfield Park Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.18 Local communities have the ability to prepare their own Neighbourhood Plans (NP), setting out planning policies and site allocations for their local area. These form part of the Wolverhampton Development Plan and apply to planning applications submitted in the area, alongside relevant DPD policies and allocations.
- 3.19 There are two NPs within Wolverhampton, covering Tettenhall and Heathfield Park, which came into effect in 2014. Further information can be found here: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/neighbourhood-planning
- 3.20 The WP cannot replace or change the NPs, as they are prepared under different legislation. However the WP can usefully provide more up-to-date planning policies and designations for the NP areas, which are consistent with those for the rest of Wolverhampton and conform with national policy – giving them more weight in planning decisions. The WP can go further than the WLP in this regard, as it will have a wider scope including more detailed designations.
- 3.21 If the NPs are updated in future they will need to conform with the WP as well as national guidance.
- 3.22 *It is proposed that, when adopted, the WP will include up-to-date planning guidance for the Tettenhall Neighbourhood Plan and Heathfield Park Neighbourhood Plan areas, aligned with national policy. The topics to be covered include:***
- ***Historic Landscape Character designations***
 - ***Recreational Open Space designations***
- 3.23 *As the WP will be required to provide all necessary housing and other allocations for the NP areas over the Plan period it is not considered necessary for the WP to provide a housing target for each NP area. If the community establish a Neighbourhood Forum to update a Neighbourhood Plan, then a housing target figure can be provided to them, based on the most up to date information available at the time.***

Potential for New Policies

- 3.24 There are a number of policy areas which are not covered in existing DPDs, SPDs or other planning guidance, but which may now be appropriate for the Wolverhampton area.

3.25 *It is proposed that the WP includes policies on the following topics:*

- ***Supported housing***
- ***Protection of large family homes***

Proposed Scope of the Wolverhampton Plan

- 3.26 The Wolverhampton Plan (WP) will create one clear, up-to-date and locally responsive planning framework for Wolverhampton. The Plan will cover all planning matters for the city - including housing, employment, town centres, infrastructure, design, climate change, health and wellbeing, the natural and historic environment, minerals and waste. The Plan is likely to cover the period up to 2045, providing a long-term framework for sustainable growth, regeneration and decision-making on planning applications.
- 3.27 The WP will be consistent with and complement the emerging West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (WM SDS). The WP will set Wolverhampton's local housing, gypsy and traveller pitch and employment development targets for the first part of the WM SDS period, informed by detailed local evidence and consultation. Wider cooperation on unmet development needs will principally be addressed through the WM SDS process.
- 3.28 When adopted, the WP will replace all existing Development Plan Documents covering Wolverhampton, including the Wolverhampton Local Plan currently at examination. It will provide up-to-date site allocations and policy guidance for the whole City, including Wolverhampton City Centre.
- 3.29 The WP will also incorporate parts of Wolverhampton Supplementary Planning Documents, where these are consistent with national policy - including guidance on affordable housing, open space, residential design, house extensions, shopfronts, hot food takeaways, air quality, telecommunications and houses in multiple occupation.
- 3.30 The WP will provide updated policies and designations for the Tettenhall and Heathfield Park Neighbourhood Plan areas, including historic and open space designations, and will include new policies on supported housing and protection of large family homes.

QUESTION 1: Do you agree with the proposed scope for the Wolverhampton Plan, including what the Plan should contain?

4. What is the Proposed Community Engagement Strategy for the Plan?

- 4.1 This section and feedback from this Scoping Consultation will help inform the Gateway One: self-assessment of readiness for local plan preparation and the engagement strategy for the Wolverhampton Plan (WP).
- 4.2 The WP community engagement strategy will build on the Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement' <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/statement-community-involvement> which informed the preparation of previous plans.

Stages of Plan Preparation

- 4.3 The new planning system has introduced a series of stages for the preparation of the Wolverhampton Plan. The first stage was publication of a Wolverhampton Plan Timetable and a Notice of Intention to Commence Plan Making, which took place on 30th June 2026 www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wolverhamptonplan. The Plan will then proceed to formal consultation stages with various milestones and gateways (see para 2.5) ending with submission of the Plan to the Government for independent examination.

Availability of Documents

- 4.4 For all of the relevant stages, the proposed locations where documents will be made available are:
- published on the Council's website and;
 - made available for inspection at:
 - the Council's principal office during normal office hours:
Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, and
 - Wolverhampton Central Library, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton WV1 3AX, as this is a highly accessible location and the opening hours extend beyond normal office hours (including evenings and on Saturdays)

These locations will also provide information on how other relevant documents can be viewed.

Engagement Approaches

- 4.5 Work related to this Scoping Consultation has enabled engagement to begin as early as possible in the Plan-making process, before formal commencement of Plan preparation. As there are statutory timetable constraints, the Scoping Consultation is taking place during the summer. Whilst guidance states that consultation should last for at least 21 days, this Scoping Consultation is double the minimum length at six weeks (a full 30 working days, excluding the late summer bank holiday), which includes a full week outside of school holidays.
- 4.6 Representations are invited from general consultation bodies and any specific consultation bodies the Council consider may have an interest in preparation of the Plan. Whilst the Council are not required to consult anyone else, anyone can make representations at this stage. We emphasise, encourage and welcome all representations, particularly given the importance of engaging the public when preparing a new Local Plan. This includes an open invitation for anyone to sign-up to be notified of future updates throughout the Plan-making process (para 4.10 and Section 10 below).
- 4.7 On-going internal engagement will also take place at the Council throughout the Plan-making process, involving all relevant teams and decision makers, including Councillor engagement. This will be guided by preparation of a Project Initiation Document (PID), which will be kept up-to-date throughout the process.

Formal Consultation Stages

- 4.8 Following 'Gateway 1' and the commencement of plan preparation, there will be two formal WP consultation stages, as set out in the Timetable:
- Proposed Local Plan Content and Evidence (where the consultation must last for a minimum period of 6 weeks)
 - Proposed Local Plan (where the consultation must last for a minimum period of 8 weeks)

We will ensure that the timescales of these formal consultations will be maximised, with consultations taking place for at least a full 30 and 40 working days respectively, exclusive of any public ('bank') holidays.

Engagement Methods

- 4.9 As each consultation stage will be different, the approach to consultation will be flexible to adapt to evolving methods of engagement and assist with addressing any specific requirements arising during Plan preparation. Given the WP's wide scope (see Section 3 above, particularly para's 3.1-3.2), consultations will be broad to engage with all communities and stakeholders. In order to gather a wide range of insights, ensure consultations are accessible for all, and to facilitate meaningful engagement and feedback to inform the WP, a mix of engagement methods will be used. Each consultation will specify what the consultation will cover and what is not in scope.

- 4.10 Where relevant, engagement approaches and publicity will be informed by baseline demographic data (such as from the Council's 'WVInsight' <https://insight.wolverhampton.gov.uk>) and tailored to meet the needs and interests of specific target audiences. The Council will be proactive and not assume local people will know how to find and access information. For example, information about the WP will be available from a specific Wolverhampton Plan webpage www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wolverhamptonplan, including information about the formal consultations, however during consultations information will also be provided on the Council's Consultation Hub <https://consultation.wolverhampton.gov.uk>. Links will also be provided to enable people to sign-up for WP updates, and to be notified of consultations and updates on the progress of the Plan's preparation. In addition, consultation information and material will include Council postal and telephone contacts for those not using electronic means of communication (see Section 10). People will also be able to 'unsubscribe' from receiving updates. All personal information will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.
- 4.11 When carrying out consultations, representations will be invited from the general and specific consultation bodies, and residents or people carrying out business in the area the Council considers may have an interest in the Plan, together with anyone who requested to be notified of the consultation.
- 4.12 A variety of digital engagement methods will be used to gather feedback efficiently and inclusively, including:
- Tailoring documents to the consultations, including various formats, such as using text-based webpages, an interactive map of proposed local plan policies, and using a consultation platform where representations can be made in a choice of ways (such as online and with writeable pdfs); and publishing the local plan in a searchable electronic format.
 - issuing media releases, which will also be hosted on the Council's news page: <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/news> advertising the consultation and inviting representations
 - using Council communication channels, including publicity in stakeholder newsletters such as: 'Wolverhampton Weekender' residents' newsletter; 'Re:new' regeneration newsletter for individuals, businesses and stakeholders; and 'Relight' business newsletter for stakeholders and businesses
 - social media posts
 - digital advertising, with consultations advertised on digital display screens in the Council's Civic Centre, 'WVActive' Leisure Centres and Wolverhampton Central Library
 - publicity material to include user-friendly 'web short cuts' to maximise digital access and electronic material to include a 'QR' code.
 - online meetings with stakeholders, and, where appropriate, offered to residents who are not able to visit consultation locations in person.

- 4.13 This engagement will be complemented by having non-digital options and traditional consultation methods, for those ‘hard to reach’ people with limited online access and to maximise responses from a diverse range of stakeholders, including:
- hard copies of main consultation documents and representation forms being made available at Wolverhampton Civic Centre and Wolverhampton Central Library as a minimum, but also at other locations where relevant and appropriate to the consultation, such as other Libraries in the City. In addition, information will be provided about how other documents relating to the consultation (e.g. evidence documents) and copies of documents can be provided (para 4.4).
 - main consultation documents will include information about requesting alternative document formats, and postal and telephone contact details will enable people not using email to make enquiries, sign-up for updates and submit representations relating to the Plan (see para’s 4.6 and 4.10 and Section 10).
 - consultations will be advertised with a press advert in the local press.
 - posters advertising the consultations in relevant libraries.
 - use of in-person engagement, where relevant, to reach people who cannot use other methods and enable more detailed face-to-face discussions to take place about the WP, for example drop-in sessions at accessible locations such as at the Wolverhampton Civic Centre and Central Library covering a mix of days of the week and times of day; and further locations (e.g. other libraries) in different parts of the city, when appropriate.
- 4.14 In addition to formal consultation stages, further engagement on an on-going basis will take place with key stakeholders throughout the Plan-making process, such as through:
- "Call for Sites" process (para 2.8 and Section 10)
 - evidence preparation (Section 6)
 - co-operation with other Councils, particularly on cross-boundary planning issues (para’s 3.7-3.9)
 - West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) preparation process, particularly with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and other WMCA Councils
 - Council regeneration work that is directly related to the Plan e.g. Our Future City Centre Plan
- 4.15 Views and feedback are welcomed to help inform our proposed community engagement strategy. Your views will help shape how we undertake consultation throughout the process of preparing the Wolverhampton Plan.

QUESTION 2: Do you agree with the proposed elements of the community engagement strategy for the Wolverhampton Plan – in particular who should be consulted, when, and how we should engage with them in the preparation of the local plan?

5. National, Regional, Black Country and Local Policy Context

- 5.1 The WP is being prepared in the context of national, regional, sub-regional (Black Country) and local policy, guidance, strategies and evidence. The following section summarises the key elements of this context, however this is not intended to be exhaustive and more detailed work will be used to inform the approach to developing specific planning policies.

National

- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2026 under which the WP will be prepared, will set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It will provide the framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.
- 5.3 Planning law requires that applications for planning permissions are determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF must be taken into account when preparing the Development Plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and other statutory requirements.
- 5.4 The new NPPF will bring in a new co-operation duty which replaces the "Duty to Cooperate", which is likely to require ongoing, constructive, and effective engagement on areas of plan-making which may have strategic cross-boundary implications. As set out in para 3.8 above, at this stage it has been assumed that the principal forums for cooperation on unmet development needs will be through the WM SDS preparation process and between SDSs.
- 5.5 *It is proposed that cooperation on other cross-boundary planning matters (e.g. school place and GP surgery planning; highways infrastructure; and impacts on Special Areas of Conservation) will take place between the relevant local authorities and bodies (e.g. Natural England), as appropriate.***

Regional – West Midlands Combined Authority

- 5.6 Wolverhampton is a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) which was established in 2016. The WMCA overarching objective is to build 'a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands'. To deliver this objective, the WMCA have developed a number of strategies and associated programmes relevant to the preparation of the WP.
- 5.7 The West Midlands Growth Plan, adopted in 2025, sets out a long-term vision to transform the region's economy over the next decade, with the overarching aim of raising living standards and ensuring growth benefits all residents. It is built on strong regional foundations—including a large and diverse population, a £77 billion economy, a central location, and globally competitive sectors—but acknowledges persistent challenges such as lower productivity, high unemployment and inequality.

- 5.8 The plan proposes targeted economic growth driven by more productive businesses, higher employment (including 93,000 more people in work), improved skills, and investment in innovation and infrastructure, alongside a commitment to net zero. Crucially, it identifies four core priorities: empowering people through skills and inclusion, boosting business productivity and growth, improving places and infrastructure, and strengthening the region's identity and partnerships. To deliver this vision, the plan focuses on developing key growth sectors (such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, digital technology and health innovation), improving business investment and access to finance, and strengthening the "everyday economy" so that all jobs offer better pay and security. It emphasises major regeneration and infrastructure programmes—including housing delivery, transport connectivity like HS2, and investment zones—to create more attractive, well-connected places.
- 5.9 The plan also stresses the importance of partnership between local authorities, government, businesses and communities, supported by increased devolution and coordinated investment. Overall, it serves as a strategic blueprint to reposition the West Midlands as a leading UK growth region, combining economic competitiveness with inclusive and sustainable development.
- 5.10 The Growth Plan, and the strategies which preceded it, have formed the basis for a range of investment programmes supported by Government funding packages. One of the priorities for this funding is the delivery of projects which provide land for new homes and employment. WMCA has led the way nationally in the delivery of brownfield land, including sites in Wolverhampton, and moving forward, over the lifetime of the WLP, this activity will continue, providing valuable support to unlock constrained sites and deliver critical infrastructure. The focus of this future work includes supporting projects in town centres to enable them to thrive again, innovative approaches to the delivery of sustainable homes, carbon net zero homes and the delivery of land to support business needs. WMCA and partners have also developed a Design Charter.
- 5.11 In March 2023, the WMCA agreed a new Deeper Devolution Deal with Government, securing new and significant longer-term funding agreements and a range of new powers. From the next spending review, the WMCA will have a departmental-style arrangement with a single pot of funding negotiated with Government. This financial certainty will enable local authorities and the WMCA to better plan and fund transformative investment in the region to create a fairer, greener and better-connected West Midlands. The deal also included further commitments for City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, Investment Zones and Levelling Up Zones, and a landmark housing deal worth up to £500 million, offering greater flexibility to drive brownfield regeneration and unique powers and funding to deliver affordable housing at pace.

- 5.12 As a member authority of the WMCA, the Council is a partner in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP). The current LTP, “2011-2026 Movement for Growth” sets out clear objectives for dealing with transport issues, problems and challenges in the wider region and within Wolverhampton. It draws on a number of national, regional and local planning and transportation policy documents to ensure that the strategy guides the delivery of wider objectives. A new LTP is being developed which will set out overall aims, vision and approaches to guide the development and delivery of transport policies until the end of 2041. The emerging strategy sets out five motives for change: sustaining economic success; creating a fairer society; supporting local communities and places; becoming more active; and tackling the climate emergency.
- 5.13 The Council will continue to work closely with the WMCA to drive forward investment in housing, regeneration, transport and employment to deliver a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands.

Sub-regional – The Black Country

- 5.14 The Black Country – made up of the local authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton - forms a distinctive sub-region on the western side of the West Midlands conurbation. It shares an eastern boundary with the City of Birmingham and to the north, west and south it is bounded by districts in Staffordshire and Worcestershire, and it is in relative proximity to Shropshire and centres such as Cannock and Bromsgrove. The Black Country sub-region has a unique economic history, settlement form and topography and is very much shaped by its industrial past. The four Black Country Authorities (BCAs) have a shared set of social, economic, and environmental issues and challenges, and have a long history of successful joint working most notably through the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP was established in 2011 with an overarching objective of creating jobs and building a strong economy by tackling barriers to sustainable growth, securing and delivering a total of £2.4bn of funding. The LEP has now been disbanded, along with others throughout England, with key functions transferred to other organisations including WMCA.
- 5.15 The WLP, Dudley Local Plan and Sandwell Local Plan currently at examination draw on work carried out to prepare the Draft Black Country Plan (BCP), which was firmly rooted in a robust understanding of sub-regional as well as local issues. Sub-regional issues are still of significant relevance to the WP, as reflected in the issues and challenges set out below.
- 5.16 There are many planning issues which have cross-boundary impacts across the Black Country and continue to benefit from a common evidence base, assumptions and approach. These issues include:
- **Employment** – there are strong trading and commuting links between the BCAs.
 - **Housing** – there are strong migration and commuting links between the BCAs and they form a sub-market of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBC HMA).
 - **Transport** – much transport infrastructure and strategic transport planning is shared and access catchments overlap for some residential services. The BCAs carry out traffic modelling jointly to support Local Plans.

- **Centres** – retail, leisure and commuting catchments overlap across the Black Country and the four Strategic Centres have complementary roles.
- **Sport** – access catchments overlap for some facilities and there is a proposed sub-regional strategic approach to forward planning, based on jointly commissioned Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategies and Built Facilities planning.
- **Nature Conservation** – the Black Country and Birmingham have a common Local Sites system and the BCAs have developed a common tree evidence base and a Nature Recovery Network approach which reflects the cross-boundary nature of wildlife corridors across the sub-region and has supported development of the statutory West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- **Historic Environment** – the BCAs have adopted a common approach to Historic Landscape Characterisation which seeks to protect areas of highest landscape character and was a key factor in the Draft BCP site assessment process.
- **Air Quality** – the BCAs currently have an agreed approach to air quality impact mitigation set out in a joint SPD. This is based on regional work which is currently being updated through the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- **Waste** – Waste planning policy requires a strategic cross-boundary approach to ensure waste is appropriately managed and facilities appropriately located.

Local

Our City: Our Plan

- 5.17 Our City: Our Plan is the City of Wolverhampton Council's strategic framework for improving outcomes for local people and co-produced with over 4,500 local people and stakeholders. It sets out how the City of Wolverhampton Council will work with their partners and communities to build a more prosperous and inclusive Wolverhampton where everyone can share in the opportunities and success of our city. The plan is structured around six key priorities:
- Strong families where children grow up well and achieve their full potential
 - Fulfilled lives for all with quality care for those that need it
 - Healthy, safe and inclusive communities
 - Good homes in clean, well-connected neighbourhoods
 - More local people into good jobs and training
 - Thriving economy in all parts of the city
- 5.18 Four cross cutting principles support the delivery of the plan: driven by digital; climate action; fair and equal; and Wolverhampton Pound. High quality and aspirational physical development and land use is an important element to realise and deliver the priorities of Our City: Our Plan, which will help to create a virtuous cycle of: attracting further investment; widening local demographics and increasing local spend; advancing pride in place and local aspirations; and increasing economic productivity.



Vision for Public Health 2030 and Health Inequalities Strategy (2021 – 2023)

- 5.19 The City's Vision for Public Health 2030 envisages that in 2030 Wolverhampton will be a healthy, thriving city of opportunity where we are serious about boosting health and wellbeing. Actions to achieve this include driving a city-wide focus on tackling the wider determinants of health and wellbeing by seeking improvements to the broad factors which impact on people's lives. These factors relate to lifestyle choices and socio-economic factors which are heavily influenced by the built environment and the housing, employment, education, leisure and other opportunities which it offers.
- 5.20 The Health Inequalities Strategy provides the strategic framework for addressing the stark and entrenched health inequalities within Wolverhampton. The framework provides an overarching set of guiding principles and tools that facilitate and embed an agreed approach to tackling health inequalities in a way that is tangible, and outcome focused. The strategy sees health inequalities as the result of the interplay between:
- Short term causes (ability to access a service or manage a condition)
 - Medium term risk factors (e.g. lifestyle, uptake of vaccination, access to healthcare information)
 - Longer-term causes (education and skills, economy, housing, and environment)

- 5.21 One of the key guiding principles is to “Pro-actively identify opportunities to have a positive impact on the wider determinants of health for example through planning, licensing and housing functions, use of assets and green space and provision of facilities for usage by community groups.”

Our Climate Commitment (2020)

- 5.22 Our Climate Commitment is the Council’s commitment to action following its declaration of a Climate Emergency in July 2019. The Council pledged to make all council activities carbon net zero by 2028, and to ensure all strategic decisions and budgets are in line with the shift to carbon net zero. The Council have also pledged to work with partners across the city and region to make Wolverhampton carbon net zero by 2041, and produced a Wolverhampton Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan that was consulted on in autumn 2024.
- 5.23 Progressively and actively working towards this target will require the Council to embed low carbon practices within planning policy, development and regeneration, and to work closely with public and private sector partners to maximise the use of low carbon solutions.

Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus (2019 onwards)

- 5.24 The Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus, originally produced in 2019, is now a live digital document which is regularly updated in response to changes in economic conditions, project development and delivery and the changing needs of the City, businesses and residents. The Prospectus reflects the City’s ambitions for growth and presents a vision of how the city can grow through investment, development and regeneration - highlighting opportunities to build on the billions of pounds of public and private sector investment already on site or in the pipeline in Wolverhampton.
- 5.25 The Prospectus underpins the City’s Levelling Up ambitions and Our City: Our Plan principles - providing inspiration and improving the quality of life for residents – and is supported by influential city partners, including Homes England and WMCA. The Prospectus will maximise opportunities to secure even more investment by prioritising, packaging and promoting key projects.

Extract from Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus 2026



This map includes concept layouts and buildings on opportunities sites to stimulate discussion on how to deliver the vision for the city, it does not represent a fixed proposal or plan.

Good Growth Strategy (2025-2026)

- 5.26 The City Council has developed a Good Growth Strategy to enable all businesses, residents, families and communities to benefit from the growth and new opportunities in our city. The strategy outlines the Council's proposed approach to economic development and how the Council will work alongside partners to support the local economy to grow. The strategy is based on three interconnected themes of Place, Productivity and People and a central principle of 'good growth'. This means achieving both the right quantity and the right quality of growth; creating a strong, productive and resilient economy where a radical uplift in business competitiveness, productivity and profits goes hand in hand with access to good jobs that pay higher wages, and where all residents have access to opportunity and enjoy improved quality of life. The strategy explains the main focus of the Council's work, and actions that can propel Wolverhampton's economic prospects and, fundamentally, the life chances and wellbeing of residents.
- 5.27 The "Place" element of the strategy sets out our commitment to creating high quality environments where people can live, work and thrive. It focuses on building a more connected city, strengthening links between neighbourhoods, services and opportunities, and supporting vibrant centres that are attractive, inclusive and active throughout the day and into the evening, helping to drive economic activity and community life. Delivering these aims will require a positive planning framework.

6. What evidence is needed to support the Plan?

- 6.1 A considerable body of evidence, background documents and data covering a range of planning issues supported the preparation of the WLP, and much of this is still relevant to the WP, subject to updating in some cases. This evidence is available at: www.localplanservices.co.uk/wolverhamptonlpexam. Further evidence is being produced specifically to support the WP, and other evidence being produced to support the WM SDS will also support the WP. The availability of key evidence at appropriate stages of the Plan preparation process will be crucial to meeting the tight timetable for the WP.

6.2 Table 1 lists the key new evidence proposed to support the WP preparation process.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 6.3 Proposed plans, policies and strategies must be tested using a systematic, high level process to evaluate their potential environmental effects before being approved. This is usually carried out through the process of SEA.
- 6.4 For the new planning system, the Government is intending to replace SEA with Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs). At the current time these requirements have not been formalised through regulations. SEA will therefore be undertaken iteratively to inform key stages of WP preparation.
- 6.5 Historically, the Council undertook SEA as part of a broader Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Local Plan, which considered social and economic effects alongside environmental effects. Under the proposed new planning system, the focus is expected to shift toward SEA and, in due course, Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs).
- 6.6 Under the Habitats Regulations, a HRA of the Plan must also take place, to assess whether it is likely to have a significant effect on any European sites and their qualifying features (or equivalent).
- 6.7 It is proposed to carry out SEA and HRA to inform preparation of the WP, at each key stage of plan-making. A SEA Scoping Report will be published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency) during winter 2026/27. This will allow the SEA framework to be finalised before SEA of the Plan Content and Evidence report takes place.**
- 6.8 The Council will also undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment at each stage of the plan preparation, as part of the SEA assessment process.**

Table 1 – Key New Evidence Proposed to Support the Wolverhampton Plan

Name	Purpose	To Be Completed By
Wolverhampton Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)	To provide an up-to-date and detailed assessment of the availability of suitable land and buildings for housing development.	2025 SHLAA – Completed 2026 SHLAA – Summer 2027 2027 SHLAA – Summer 2028
Wolverhampton Housing Market Assessment	To determine detailed local need for different types and tenures of housing.	Plan Content and Evidence Stage
Wolverhampton Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment	To determine local need for gypsy and traveller accommodation.	Plan Content and Evidence Stage
West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (WM SDS) Housing and Economic Land Needs Assessment	To determine local need for employment development land and high level need for different types and tenures of housing across the WM SDS area.	Plan Content and Evidence Stage
West Midlands Strategic Growth Study	To consider housing need and supply across the study area up to 2050, and develop options to address housing shortfalls.	Plan Content and Evidence Stage
Our Future City Centre Plan (2026)	To inform and evidence a detailed planning framework for Wolverhampton City Centre.	To be finalised following consultation summer 2026
Wolverhampton Plan Site Assessment Reports	Results of rigorous site assessment process to be carried out for all “call for sites” in light of up-to-date evidence.	Plan Content and Evidence Stage To be updated for Proposed Plan Stage
Wolverhampton Plan Viability Study	To assess the viability of the planning obligations set out in the WP, for typologies of development proposed in the WP.	Proposed Plan Stage
Black Country Traffic Modelling	To assess the likely traffic impacts of development proposed in the WP, in combination with that proposed for neighbouring areas.	Proposed Plan Stage
Wolverhampton Centres Study including Centres Survey	To assess the vitality, health and future potential of Wolverhampton Centres, providing evidence to inform planning policy, investment and decisions on retail and other town centre and related uses.	Part Plan Content and Evidence Stage / Part Proposed Plan Stage

Name	Purpose	To Be Completed By
Wolverhampton Waste and Minerals Study Updates	To provide up-to-date waste and minerals data for Wolverhampton.	Proposed Plan Stage
Wolverhampton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	To provide up-to-date flood risk data for Wolverhampton.	Proposed Plan Stage
Wolverhampton Green Belt Study (2026)	To assess parcels of Wolverhampton green belt to a national methodology, and determine which parcels are defined as grey belt.	Completed
Wolverhampton Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Update	To assess how sensitive different landscapes are to development by evaluating the extent to which their character and quality could be affected.	Plan Content and Evidence Stage
Wolverhampton Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy Assessment and Action Plan (2022)	To provide a strategic framework for assessing need and guiding the protection, provision, maintenance and improvement of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities to meet current and future community demand.	To be updated for Proposed Plan Stage
West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025)	To identify priorities and target locations for restoring and enhancing habitats so that nature recovery delivers the greatest environmental and wider societal benefits across the region.	Completed
Wolverhampton Local Site Assessments programme	To assess the current ecological value of sites with known or potential wildlife value - for SLINC / SINC designation and Biodiversity Net Gain purposes.	A number of reports completed in recent years Summer 2026 Summer 2027 (as resources and time allow)
Wolverhampton Infrastructure Delivery Plan	To detail the strategic infrastructure required to support proposed development in the WP, and timescales and resources for delivery.	Proposed Plan Stage

QUESTION 3: Do you agree with the key new evidence proposed to support the Wolverhampton Plan?

7. A Spatial Portrait of Wolverhampton and the Big Issues

A Spatial Portrait of Wolverhampton

- 7.1 Wolverhampton is the city of the Black Country, forming the gateway between the West Midlands conurbation and the countryside of Staffordshire and Shropshire. The city has excellent transport connectivity with the sub-region and the rest of the UK. It is well served by the M54 and M6 motorways and benefits from good public transport links through the Metro, cross-country railway links and in its role as a hub of the sub-regional bus network.
- 7.2 Wolverhampton is a young, vibrant and diverse city with a population of around 280,000 people. The city covers an area of 70 sq km and is served by Wolverhampton City Centre and the town centres of Bilston and Wednesfield.
- 7.3 While the city has the smallest population of the four Black Country local authorities, it is the second most densely-populated and the administrative boundary is very tightly drawn around the urban area. The northern, western and south-western fringes of the city lie within the West Midlands Green Belt, which also extends into the urban area via a series of green 'corridors'.
- 7.4 Wolverhampton has a long history as a settlement going back to the 10th century, and in the Middle Ages was a small market town specialising in the wool trade. From the 18th century, the industrial revolution transformed Wolverhampton into an important manufacturing town and a major centre for coal mining and lock-making and subsequently the manufacture of cars and motorcycles. This history has created a rich legacy of historic buildings and attractive parks and open spaces. The City has a strong sporting, cultural and leisure offer, and is home to Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, the Grand Theatre and nationally important Civic Halls concert venue.
- 7.5 Until the 1980s, Wolverhampton, together with the wider Black Country and Birmingham, was the powerhouse of Britain's manufacturing economy. The decline in heavy industry, and jobs associated with it, has left a legacy of difficult ground conditions and brownfield sites that present redevelopment and regeneration challenges.
- 7.6 There were 102,000 jobs in the city in 2025, concentrated in the city centre and a series of employment areas that are home to a wide range of manufacturing and logistics businesses. The city economy has traditional strengths in high value manufacturing and construction and is also developing clusters in other key sectors and retaining a strong focus on investing in skills. Wolverhampton is home to the University of Wolverhampton, which is investing £100m in the Springfield super-campus and international centre for urban innovation, and the City of Wolverhampton College and its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) orientated academies, which is investing in a new city centre campus.

- 7.7 Covid-19 hit the city hard, exacerbating existing social and economic challenges, including lower-than-average earnings, relatively high levels of unemployment and a need to enhance the skills base of the local workforce. But the city is bold and ambitious and has been driving forward, forging economic recovery and regeneration. The city is going through a period of significant transformation with new investment, new opportunities and new challenges. With effective planning, Wolverhampton has the right local conditions to deliver transformational and sustainable regeneration to benefit all of its people.

The Big Issues

- 7.8 This section summarises the big issues which the Wolverhampton Plan (WP) needs to respond to. They draw on local issues identified in Our City: Our Plan and themes identified in the WLP Sustainability Scoping Appraisal Report (2022) and form the main opportunities and challenges which the WP seeks to address.
- 7.9 The big issues are:
1. A growing and changing population
 2. Health and wellbeing
 3. Economic recovery and growth
 4. Centres
 5. Transport and connectivity
 6. The natural and built environment
 7. Climate change and carbon net zero
 8. Infrastructure
- 7.10 The role of the WP in addressing these big issues is set out below.

Issue 1 – A growing and changing population

- 7.11 Wolverhampton has a growing and changing population, which presents a range of planning and regeneration challenges. Wolverhampton is a young and diverse city. The population increased by 6% between 2011 and 2021 and is projected to rise to around 300,000 by 2045, a further increase of 12%. As the population continues to grow, the city will also see changes in its characteristics and structure.
- 7.12 Although the city is younger than the England average, it still faces challenges from an ageing population. Between 2011 and 2021 the number of residents aged 90+ grew by 26%. A growing dependent population is likely to place significant pressure on services and housing.

- 7.13 Wolverhampton is proud of its diverse population. In 2021, 45% of the population were from ethnic minorities, compared to 23% in the Black Country as a whole, and 27% in England. 15% of Wolverhampton residents have a main language which is not English, compared to 9% in England. Wolverhampton will continue to harness the talents of different groups of people to create a more robust and resilient economy, and rich and vibrant culture.
- 7.14 Wolverhampton is the third most densely populated of the 30 West Midlands local authorities. The city is continuing to see an increase in new homes built, despite a slowdown in 2020/21 due to Covid-19. In 2025, Wolverhampton provided 115,600 homes, an increase of 7,500 (+7%) since 2015. Given the increasing shortage of land available for new build housing, a growing proportion of these new homes are building conversions and high density apartment blocks.
- 7.15 A growing and changing population adds to local housing need pressures. The WP has a role in addressing this key issue by providing a range and choice of accommodation, house types and tenures to improve and diversify the Wolverhampton housing offer, and meet the needs of current and future residents.

Issue 2 – Health and wellbeing

- 7.16 Stark inequalities continue to exist in the conditions in which people are born and live in Wolverhampton, which in turn has an adverse effect on people's health and wellbeing. Wolverhampton is the 24th most deprived local authority out of 317 using the ONS indices of deprivation measure. The city also experiences high levels of child poverty - 33.3% in 2022 compared to a national average of 20.1%.
- 7.17 Wolverhampton has lower rates of physical activity than the national average. In 2024, 32.9% of Wolverhampton's adult population were classed as inactive (doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity each week) - significantly higher than the regional (25.1%) and national (22.6%) averages. For children aged 5-16 years, 33% are less active (completing less than 30 minutes of physical activity a day) – close to the regional (32%) and national (30.2%) averages. Inactivity levels are higher than average amongst women and girls. Both male and female life expectancy were lower in Wolverhampton (76.3 and 80.4 years respectively), than the national average (78.9 and 82.8 respectively) in the period 2020/22. Wolverhampton also has higher rates of obesity than the rest of England, and residents suffer from higher levels of alcohol abuse, smoking, depression and social isolation. There is also evidence to suggest that a high number of individuals in Wolverhampton are affected by gambling related harm.
- 7.18 These issues vary significantly across Wolverhampton, with pockets of deprivation and poor health scattered across the city. Covid-19 further exacerbated these existing health inequalities with negative impacts falling disproportionately on more deprived, disadvantaged and excluded groups. The role of the environment in shaping the social, economic and environmental circumstances that determine health and wellbeing is increasingly recognised and understood. There is also evidence to suggest that a high number of individuals in Wolverhampton are affected by gambling related harm.

- 7.19 The WP has a role in addressing existing health and wellbeing issues in Wolverhampton by providing a built and natural environment that protects health and wellbeing through: supporting the making of healthier choices; minimising pollution (air, noise and other forms); providing healthy homes; providing a range of employment opportunities; supporting and facilitating investment in health infrastructure; reducing the negative health effects of climate change; and providing streets safe for active, low emission travel for all.

Issue 3 – Economic recovery and growth

- 7.20 Wolverhampton, like many post-industrial localities, faces long term social and economic challenges. Wolverhampton's economy and business community was hit hard by the major shocks of recent years. During this period, output and productivity decreased faster than the national average, and Wolverhampton had a significant "output gap", which has increased long-term. However, since 2019, Wolverhampton's GVA (per head) has grown from £20,010 to £23,367 (in 2023). Despite this growth, Wolverhampton still has a significant output gap, with English GVA (per head) standing at £36,479 in 2023.
- 7.21 Wolverhampton had a working age employment rate of 71.9% in 2025, compared to 75.8% in England. Average hourly weekly pay for Wolverhampton residents working full-time was £711 in 2025, lower than the England average of £769.5.
- 7.22 The Claimant Count rate for Wolverhampton (working age group) was 6.8% in April 2026. Wolverhampton now has the 10th highest working age Claimant Count rate in England; Birmingham (10.0%) had the highest rate at that point in time. Wolverhampton has a lower long-term business survival rate than the national average, with 34.7% of businesses founded in 2019 surviving for 5 years until 2024, compared to the 38.3% over the same timeframe for England.
- 7.23 Skills levels in Wolverhampton remain below the national average, and the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of the barriers young people face in accessing good skills training and employment prospects. Participation levels for 16- and 17-year-olds are amongst the best in the country, however these levels are not sustained and there is a drop off in participation in education, training or employment post-18 which is demonstrated by the high level of youth unemployment in the city. Around 1 in 10 adults in the city have no formal qualifications. This is a key area of focus for the Council through an Education, Skills and Employment Strategy.
- 7.24 Wolverhampton has significant economic potential, and an economy predicted to be worth £6.7 billion pounds by 2040, an increase of 43%, with particular strengths in Advanced Manufacturing (comprising 16% of the city's GVA), Health & Wellbeing, Public Administration and Building and Environmental Technologies.
- 7.25 The WP has a role in addressing these issues by providing a balanced portfolio of employment sites with more energy efficient buildings, protecting and enhancing existing sustainable employment areas and encouraging new investment, allowing some poorer quality employment sites to be redeveloped for more beneficial alternative uses and enabling communities to share the benefits of economic growth through securing access to new job opportunities and enhanced skills and training programmes.

Issue 4 – Centres

- 7.26 Centres play a crucial role in contributing to the distinctive spatial character and identity of Wolverhampton, being focal points to sustainably provide services to meet the needs of communities, from shopping and leisure to housing and education. Wolverhampton is served by a hierarchy and network of centres, with Wolverhampton City Centre acting as the key strategic centre, two town centres at Bilston and Wednesfield, and numerous district and local centres.
- 7.27 There are a number of challenges facing Wolverhampton's centres, such as the prevailing economic climate and changing shopping patterns resulting in high vacancy levels, which mean centres are struggling.
- 7.28 The WP has a role to play in enhancing the vitality, diversification and performance of centres, to serve the current and future needs of communities as places to live, shop, work and visit. The Plan can help address challenges facing centres by:
- providing a flexible policy framework to allow centres to diversify and serve realistic ambitions for future mixed use growth;
 - ensuring that future growth (particularly housing and employment) is well served by the existing network of centres, to help support their future vitality and viability;
 - setting out tests to prevent proposals which could undermine centres by causing significant adverse impacts, such as out-of-centre developments; and
 - maximising the extent, safety and security of the public realm and open space.

Issue 5 – Transport and connectivity

- 7.29 Wolverhampton has excellent transport connectivity with the sub-region and the rest of the UK. It is well served by the M54 and M6 motorways and benefits from good public transport links through the Metro, inter-city and cross-country railway links and in its role as a hub of the sub-regional bus network. All of these networks are effectively linked through the Wolverhampton Interchange in Wolverhampton City Centre.
- 7.30 Key current and planned transport projects which will improve connectivity within Wolverhampton and with the wider Black Country include A454 Wolverhampton-Walsall Corridor, A449 Stafford Road Corridor, A4123 Birmingham New Road, Wolverhampton City Centre public realm and cycling schemes, new active travel routes including A4124 Wolverhampton to Wednesfield, Fordhouses to Heath Town and Wednesfield to Darlaston, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- 7.31 A balanced approach to transport investment is required that recognises the need to invest in all modes of transport but prioritises increasing the proportion of people using sustainable and active modes such as public transport, walking and cycling.
- 7.32 The WP has a role in addressing these issues by seeking to improve transport infrastructure to ensure efficient and sustainable accessibility within an integrated network, prioritising sustainable and active travel and supporting electric vehicle infrastructure.

Issue 6 – The natural and built environment

- 7.33 Wolverhampton is rich in both its natural and built heritage and its environmental assets. There is an extensive waterbody and canal network which has the potential to provide a wide range of ecosystem services, including recreation, land drainage, flood protection, water supply, energy generation, carbon storage, heritage preservation and nature conservation. Water Framework Directive designated water bodies in Wolverhampton are currently classed as ‘moderate’ status due to diffuse and point source pollution, physical modifications and groundwater abstraction. The Plan can help deliver River Basin Management Plan measures and objectives for these water bodies by protecting and enhancing water quality. Parts of the Wolverhampton landscape have been recognised for their importance for nature and are protected under various laws or designations. The area is home to the Smestow Valley and Wyrley & Essington Canal Local Nature Reserves, as well as Ancient Woodlands such as Tettenhall Ridge.
- 7.34 The City’s Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (2024) identifies where there are surpluses and shortfalls in a range of types of open space across the City. It identifies a broadly adequate level of open space in Wolverhampton, although there are significant variations across the City producing some local surpluses and shortfalls, as well as an overall shortfall in allotment provision. The City’s Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (2022), whilst it identifies some local shortfalls in sports provision, suggests these can largely be addressed by improvements to existing facilities plus provision of additional 3G (third generation) pitches.
- 7.35 There are around 473,000 trees across Wolverhampton, that cover an area equivalent to 1,150 ha. They filter 14.5 tonnes of airborne pollutants and remove an estimated 6,150 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere, each year. They also intercept around 151,000 m³ of rainwater each year, equivalent to an estimated £149,000 in avoided water treatment costs.
- 7.36 While the City has the smallest population of the four BCAs, it is the second most densely populated, the administrative boundary being very tightly drawn around the urban area. The northern, western and south-western fringes of the City lie within the West Midlands Green Belt, which also extends into the urban area in a series of green ‘corridors’.
- 7.37 In the industrial revolution Wolverhampton became a major centre for coal mining, lock-making and subsequently the manufacture of cars and motorcycles. This has created a rich legacy of historic buildings and attractive parks and open spaces. It has a strong sporting, cultural and leisure offer, and is home to Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, the Grand Theatre and nationally important The Halls Wolverhampton concert venue. The City’s industrial heritage is an asset to the economy, but it has left a legacy of brownfield sites that can present redevelopment challenges.
- 7.38 The WP will need to create a strategy for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and strengthen the environmental infrastructure network to support sustainable growth. It will also need to protect, sustain and enhance the quality of the built and historic environment whilst ensuring the delivery of distinctive and attractive places.

Issue 7 – Climate change and carbon net zero

- 7.39 The climate emergency remains one of the biggest long-term challenges facing the world today. In July 2019, the City of Wolverhampton Council became the first local authority in the Black Country to declare a Climate Emergency. The Climate Emergency Declaration pledged to make all council activities carbon net zero by 2028, ensure all strategic decisions and budgets are in line with the shift to carbon net zero, and work with partners across the city to work towards a carbon net zero future.
- 7.40 The Council has made good progress towards becoming a net zero council. The Council's carbon footprint for 2025/2026 was 7,870 tCO₂e, compared to the 2019 Base Year of 16,128 tCO₂e, a reduction of 8,258 tCO₂e (50%). The majority of progress over the last 3 years has resulted from a reduction in emissions due to the LED Streetlight Programme, partial fleet electrification and interim use of Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) and national grid decarbonisation.
- 7.41 The Council has also committed to supporting Wolverhampton to become a carbon net zero city by 2041. As of 2021, energy only emissions from the city were circa 900,000 tonnes (900KT) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), from the following sources: Domestic (39%); Transport (27%); Industry (20%); Public Sector (7%); Commercial (7%). The city's per person emissions remain the joint second smallest across the region. Since 2005, Wolverhampton has seen a 44% reduction in absolute emissions, compared to 36% across the region, and 39% across the UK.
- 7.42 The WP has a key role to play in delivering carbon net zero by: reducing carbon emissions from new developments; reducing the need to travel and enabling a shift to more sustainable travel modes; maximising the use of low carbon energy solutions; seeking to reduce the impact of flooding; and enhancing Wolverhampton's green and blue infrastructure, to protect the people, environment and economy of Wolverhampton.

Issue 8 – Infrastructure

- 7.43 Physical and social infrastructure is required to enable and support the growth required over the Plan period. New housing and economic development will put pressure on existing services and utilities, including transport, wastewater treatment and electricity networks, but may also create opportunities to provide infrastructure solutions.

- 7.44 Future-proofed digital infrastructure is the backbone of a modern thriving economy, driving productivity and spreading growth. Wolverhampton is making significant progress upgrading its digital infrastructure with gigabit coverage at 98% and full fibre coverage at 96% (Connected Nations Interactive Report 2025), with all providers upgrading to full fibre in the city. Wolverhampton has an extensive digital infrastructure and is at the forefront of digital innovation. The City has also made significant progress supporting the upgrade of mobile connectivity, with 5G available for 100% of the city from at least one operator and 95% of the city from all operators, although there is still a requirement to fill 'not spots' in the city. Digital connectivity will increasingly become important, with the switch over from analogue to digital, to support new ways of working, service delivery and consumer demand, so we need to continue to support the rollout to ensure digital infrastructure meets our needs now and in the future.
- 7.45 Wolverhampton remains at very high risk of digital exclusion (2026 Digital Deprivation Index). Although older people generally use the internet less, 44% of those that are offline are under the age of 60. Digital is increasingly important for accessing services, skills, job search and employment along with keeping in touch with families and friends, with digital considered the 4th utility.
- 7.46 To maximise the benefit locally, the city is proactively supporting residents to get online by providing devices and connectivity through a network of trusted partners to improve digital skills and supporting businesses to digitalise and introduce smart technology to support the delivery of services.
- 7.47 The provision of high quality and aspirational physical development is an important element to help to create a virtuous cycle of attracting further investment; widening local demographics and increasing local spend; advancing pride in place and local aspirations; and driving productivity. Social infrastructure is also necessary to create capacity and resilience within communities.
- 7.48 The WP has a role in addressing these issues by ensuring that Wolverhampton has the infrastructure in place to support its existing and future growth and prosperity.

QUESTION 4: Do you agree with the big issues identified for the Wolverhampton Plan to address?

8. A proposed Vision for the Plan

- 8.1 The WP will be guided by a Vision which reflects what the city will be like in the future if the needs and aspirations of those who live, work in or visit the area are to be met, whilst also ensuring that it retains the characteristics that make it attractive and distinctive. The Vision will need to be flexible, to allow the city to respond to future challenges in a way that is right for Wolverhampton, its residents and its businesses.
- 8.2 *It is proposed to use the Vision for Our City: Our Plan to provide a strong local vision and strategic priorities for the WP. This is the Vision used in the WLP and so will provide consistency.***
- 8.3 Our City: Our Plan sets out an ambition that ‘Wulfrunians will live longer, healthier lives’, and is focussed on delivering three cross-cutting principles and six priorities. Of these six priorities, the WP will be directly relevant to four:
- healthy, inclusive communities
 - good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods
 - more local people into good jobs and training
 - thriving economy in all parts of the city
- 8.4 The WP will support the delivery of these four priorities by harnessing opportunities for strategic planning policies and land allocations to support the growth and regeneration of the City of Wolverhampton up to 2045, to benefit local people.
- 8.5 As the WP is developed, a focused set of measurable outcomes will be developed to monitor the success of the Plan in delivering the Vision.

QUESTION 5: Do you agree with the proposed Vision for the Wolverhampton Plan?

9. How will the Plan Deal with Development Pressures?

High Development Pressures

- 9.1 Wolverhampton is a densely developed urban area, with small pockets of semi-rural green belt. In recent years, as the supply of developable land and buildings has started to dry up, it has become more and more difficult to meet local housing and employment development land needs within the City boundary. National policy sets out the methods for calculating these need figures.
- 9.2 The WLP (2025) concluded that there was a shortfall of 11,400 homes, 83.5 ha of employment development land and 19 gypsy and traveller pitches in Wolverhampton over the period 2024-42.
- 9.3 Most of the sites in the urban area which are proposed for allocation for housing, gypsy and traveller pitch and employment use in the WLP are still considered suitable to include in the WP.
- 9.4 To try and identify more land and buildings suitable for development, a continual “call for sites” in Wolverhampton has been open through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for over ten years. Since submission of the WLP, the SHLAA process has generated some new sites suitable for housing, which are included in the 2025 SHLAA report.
- 9.5 During 2025/26, work has also taken place to develop Our Future City Centre Plan (OFCCP) [<https://www.investwolverhampton.com/our-future-city-centre/index.html>], informed by consultation with stakeholders, land owners and developers. This work has provided detailed evidence of the suitability and deliverability of City Centre sites. The OFCCP is currently out for consultation and due to be finalised in September. The OFCCP supports the ambitious 4,676 home target for Wolverhampton City Centre set out in the WLP, which makes up 50% of planned new homes in Wolverhampton up to 2042.
- 9.6 Over the WP Plan period (2025-45), local housing need is currently 21,720 homes. Even taking into account all suitable sites in the urban area, uplifting housing densities and making reasonable assumptions about windfall sites, housing supply over this period is only 9,450 homes - leaving a shortfall of 12,270 homes (56% of need). Further evidence is needed to determine up-to-date employment development and gypsy and traveller pitch need, however, it is likely that these will also demonstrate shortfalls against supply.
- 9.7 The housing shortfall alone means that Wolverhampton is under high development pressure, and the WP process must look at all potential opportunities to increase housing development over the Plan period.

Green Belt

- 9.8 When the WLP was being prepared, Plans had to provide enough land to meet the development needs for their local area unless this need was outweighed by a strong reason to restrict development, for example green belt designation. Areas of green belt are strongly protected from development under national policy.
- 9.9 In December 2023 there was a key change to national policy through a new NPPF, which went further than this – stating explicitly that there was: *“no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated.”* (para 145)
- 9.10 This change meant that, when preparing a Plan for an area without enough land to meet development needs, local authorities **could choose whether or not to review the green belt** to release more land for development.
- 9.11 Wolverhampton is a densely developed and constrained urban area with a small amount of green belt land on the fringes and in wedges along the Smestow Valley corridor. These green belt areas form only 11% of the total area. Much of this green belt land is of significant value for wildlife, historic character or landscape character, or provides important services for the urban area, such as public open space, education and sports facilities, essential infrastructure and cemeteries.
- 9.12 Taking these factors into account, when preparing the WLP, the Council chose not to review the green belt to address development shortfalls arising in Wolverhampton. This meant that none of the spatial options which were consulted on involved release of green belt land for development, and no green belt sites were considered for development.
- 9.13 However, recent national policy changes have significantly altered the national approach to green belt, compared to that which underpinned the WLP. Where there is unmet development need, Local Plans are now required to consider green belt release to help address that need. They are required to identify parts of the green belt which are defined as “grey belt”, through a local assessment process applying a national methodology. Where no other planning constraints exist, grey belt sites promoted for housing development must be considered through the Plan process. Development of such sites must meet the “golden rules”, which means that larger sites are required to deliver higher than normal levels of affordable housing and good quality open space.
- 9.14 In addition, where there is not a five year housing land supply (as is currently the case for Wolverhampton, until the WLP is adopted in 2027) planning applications for housing on grey belt land with no other planning constraints, and which meet the “golden rules”, must now be considered for approval.
- 9.15 A Wolverhampton Green Belt Study, which carries out the required local assessment of green belt land, has been completed to inform the Plan and to help determine any planning applications which may be submitted ahead of WLP adoption. This Study has been published alongside the Scoping Consultation.

Call for Sites

- 9.16 In order to start work on the WP in late 2026, the Council has issued a “Call for Sites”, to enable land owners and developers to propose sites for development. The purpose of this exercise is to find out which sites having a willing land owner and are potentially developable over the Plan period - up to 2045. These sites will then be subject to a rigorous site assessment process, and suitable sites will be put forward in the Plan Content and Evidence consultation due to take place summer 2027. The site assessment process will be informed by the most up-to-date evidence.
- 9.17 The “Call for Sites” will take place from the start of the Scoping Consultation (27 July 2026) to the end of 2026. This is to allow for site assessment and evidence work to be progressed to inform the Plan Content and Evidence stage in summer 2027.

Key Considerations for a Spatial Strategy

- 9.18 Given the constrained supply of land and buildings suitable for development, spatial options for the WP to consider are limited. Urban intensification has been explored extensively through the WLP, as explained above in para's 9.3-9.5 and detailed in the 2025 SHLAA. This exploration has included looking at areas of poorer quality occupied employment land which are potentially surplus and could realistically be developed for housing over the long term. A very limited number of such sites were allocated for housing in the Area Action Plans, however none have since come forward for development, and their financial viability would be poor, requiring substantial external funding to support delivery.
- 9.19 The only other potential option available within the urban area would be to consider if there are any surplus green open spaces which may be suitable for development. However, there is a limited amount of green open space in Wolverhampton, and the existing network makes a vital contribution towards the health and wellbeing of local residents and local wildlife, as set out in the Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (2024) and West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025). Therefore, there is very little scope for such development.
- 9.20 Following exhaustion of all potential development opportunities within the urban area, national policy requires the Plan to consider any sites promoted for development in the green belt which have no other planning constraints (e.g. wildlife, historic or landscape value). The planning constraints affecting each site will be determined through a robust site assessment process, based on detailed evidence.
- 9.21 Under national policy, any grey belt sites and previously developed land (PDL) in the green belt with no other planning constraints should be considered first. Beyond this, it is for the Council to decide which other green belt sites with no other planning constraints should be considered - taking into account the scale of development pressures, the availability of land and the characteristics of remaining green belt.

- 9.22 Therefore, one potential spatial option could be to consider only grey belt and PDL for development. Another spatial option could be to consider grey belt and PDL first, and then to look to other areas of green belt. Both of these options would still result in a significant proportion of the City's development needs being 'exported' to neighbouring areas.
- 9.23 By way of background, when the Draft Black Country Plan was produced in 2021, there was a thorough consideration of all available green belt sites, and the proposals for Wolverhampton were limited - providing only 1,014 homes on 27 ha of green belt land (just 3% of the total 800 ha of green belt). No green belt sites were suitable for employment use.
- 9.24 While the national policy context may have changed, and without pre-judging the "Call for Sites" stage, the available sites for consideration through the WP are likely to be similar. Therefore, it is likely that new sites could meet only a small proportion of the Wolverhampton housing shortfall - currently standing at 12,270 homes.
- 9.25 The remaining shortfall will need to be addressed through preparation of the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), covering the wider West Midlands Combined Authority area (see para's 3.5-3.9 above). The SDS will also need to address any employment development land and gypsy and traveller pitch shortfalls which may emerge following updates to evidence of development needs.

QUESTION 6: What spatial options do you think that the Wolverhampton Plan should consider to meet local development needs?

QUESTION 7: Do you have any other comments to make about the Wolverhampton Plan Scoping Consultation?

10. How to respond to the Scoping Consultation and Call for Sites

- 10.1 Have your say – we welcome your views on the Wolverhampton Plan Scoping Consultation
- 10.2 Please visit the webpage: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wp-scoping where you will find links to sign up for Wolverhampton Plan updates, relevant documents, a representation form and other information.
- 10.3 Paper copies of this document are available for inspection, and representation forms are available at:
- Wolverhampton Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH (at the business reception by the mayoral entrance)
 - Wolverhampton Central Library, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, WV1 3AX
- 10.4 Drop-In
You can view the consultation documents and speak to Planning Officers at the following drop-in sessions:
- The "01902" Shop Unit, Queen Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1TQ
Wednesday 5 August, 2026, 1pm – 3pm
- Wolverhampton Central Library, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, WV1 3AX
Thursday 6 August, 2026, 3pm – 7pm
Saturday 8 August, 2026, 10am – 2pm
- 10.5 If you need help understanding the documents or completing the representation form; would like to view other documents or documents in other formats; or would like to discuss the Plan with Planning Officers, please contact the Local Plan Team at: wolverhamptonplan@wolverhampton.gov.uk, Tel: 01902 551155 or write to the postal address below, including if you would like to sign-up for Wolverhampton Plan updates but are unable to do so electronically.
- 10.6 We would encourage you to complete the online representation form: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wp-respond. This is designed to be quick and easy to complete. Alternatively, please send completed representation forms to the above email address, or completed paper representation forms to:
- Wolverhampton Plan, City Planning, City of Wolverhampton Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH, or hand them in at Wolverhampton Civic Centre.

What is the deadline for responses?

- 10.7 The consultation will end on Tuesday 8 September 2026. Please submit your completed representation forms by the end of this date.

How will my representation be used?

- 10.8 We will consider the responses received to inform the preparation of the Wolverhampton Plan that will commence after the Scoping Consultation, with the first formal consultation stage scheduled to take place in Summer 2027.
- 10.9 Please note that representations will be made public (see www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wp-privacy for further details)

Call for Sites

- 10.10 As part of the preparation of a new Wolverhampton Plan we are refreshing our invitation for land owners, developers and others to submit details of sites they think would be suitable for housing, employment or other types of development in future years.
- 10.11 The purpose of this Call for Sites exercise is to find out which sites having a willing land owner and are potentially developable over the Plan period - up to 2045. These sites will then be subject to a rigorous site assessment process, and suitable sites will be put forward in the Plan Content and Evidence consultation due to take place summer 2027. The site assessment process will be informed by the most up-to-date evidence.
- 10.12 Site details can be submitted to us by completing the relevant Call for Sites Form available at www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wp-cfs and emailing this to: wolverhamptonplan@wolverhampton.gov.uk
- 10.13 The deadline for submission of site details is 31 December 2026. However, the earlier details can be submitted the better – to allow for site assessment and evidence work to be progressed in a timely manner to inform the Plan Content and Evidence stage in summer 2027.
- 10.14 Where a site is being promoted for housing, the site will be considered for inclusion in the next published Wolverhampton Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) report as a site suitable and developable for housing under current planning policy. If the site is considered not suitable or developable for housing it will also be listed in the SHLAA, with a clear explanation provided. Please visit: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/housing-site-information for further details

Thank you for your interest in the Wolverhampton Plan



You can get this information in large print, braille,
audio or in another language by calling 01902 551155
or emailing translations@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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